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Pakistan Affairs (Test-2)

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Q. No. 2

1- Introduction

Since its inception in 1947, Pakistan repeatedly oscillated between parliamentary and presidential forms of government, a reflection of its broader struggle to balance democratic representation with effective governance. The parliamentary model, inherited from the British colonial framework, was intended to deliver inclusive democracy; however in Pakistan, it has often been associated with political instability, corruption, and weak institutional performance. In contrast, periods of presidential rule, mostly under military regimes, witnessed stronger administrative control and economic growth, albeit at the cost of democratic freedoms.

This persistent back-and-forth raises a fundamental question: Which system is better suited for Pakistan's socio-political realities and economic development? Analyzing both systems' structures, historical outcomes, and lessons

from Pakistan's experience helps in identifying the way forward toward sustainable governance.

2- The Parliamentary System in Pakistan

Pakistan's parliamentary structure places executive authority in the Prime Minister, elected by and accountable to the National Assembly. This model emphasizes representative democracy and legislative oversight. The Pakistani adoption of this system has suffered from elite domination, political patronage, and frequent government collapses—undermining stability and economic policy continuity.

3- The Presidential System in Pakistan

It was introduced through the 1962 Constitution by Ayub Khan. The ~~present~~ presidential system, in contrast, features a directly elected head of state who independently controls the executive branch. This separation of powers ensures administrative efficiency and shields the government from constant parliamentary pressures. This system is not inherently undemocratic; it offers

clear accountability, depoliticized administration, and stronger governance, provided institutional checks and balances exist.

Under Ayub Khan, Pakistan saw rapid industrial and agricultural growth referred to as "the Golden Sixties." Similarly, under Musharraf regime, FDI increased and governance was more centralized. Conversely, parliamentary regimes, despite being democratic, were plagued by coalition break downs, corruption, and inefficiency.

However, presidential eras were authoritarian, lacking true democratic legitimacy and often suppressing political freedoms. These regimes equated ~~presidential~~ presidential rule with military dominance, not democratic presidentialism.

4- Comparison Between the Two Systems

Aspect	Parliamentary System	Presidential System
a- Head of Government	Prime Minister	President
b- Separation of Powers	Overlapping between executive and legislature	Clear separation of powers

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	Aspect	Parliamentary System	Presidential System
c-	Tenure and Stability	Prone to no-confidence motions	Fixed tenures ensure stability
d-	Decision-Making	Slow and consensus-based	Centralized and quick decisions
e-	Representation	Ensures provincial participation	Risks over-centralization.
f-	Accountability	PM accountable to Parliament	President accountable to electorate
g-	Cabinet Composition	Politically appointed MPs	Technocrats and specialists
h-	Example in Pakistan	1973 Constitution (Bhutto, post-2008)	1962 Constitution (Ayub), Zia, Musharraf

5- Lessons from Pakistan's Oscillation Between the Two Systems

a- Political Stability Determines Economic Progress

IMR studies and local evidence show that political instability depresses GDP growth and human capital formation. Frequent shifts between systems disrupted continuity in policy,

detering foreign investment and institutional trust.

b- Authoritarian Presidentialism is NOT Equal to Democratic Presidentialism

Pakistan's presidential regimes were military dictatorships, not true democratic presidential systems. ~~like the~~ Thus, their apparent economic "success" stemmed from centralized control, not sustainable governance.

A democratic presidential model, like the U.S. or Turkey's reformed system, can ensure efficiency if balanced by judicial and parliamentary oversight.

c- Technocratic Inclusion Enhances Economic Governance

Presidential cabinets, free from parliamentary constraints, could induct economic experts, an area where parliamentary governments lagged due to political patronage.

d- Institutional Checks and Balances

Both systems suffered from weak institutional checks.

In parliamentary system, executive

~~extra~~ Overreach compromised the judiciary and accountability bodies. In presidential regimes, military dominance stifled political evolution.

c- Economic Reforms Require Continuity

Pakistan's economic potential — demonstrated in the 1960s and early 2000s — was undermined by disruptive political transitions. Sustainable growth depends on policy consistency rather than mere system type.

f. Conclusion

Pakistan's repeated shifts between parliamentary and presidential systems highlight a deeper issue: institutional weakness, political immaturity, and governance failure, not just structural flaws. While the presidential system has historically delivered stronger governance and economic growth, it lacked democratic depth. The parliamentary system, though democratic, has failed to ensure stability or performance due to widespread corruption and elite capture. The lesson is clear: Pakistan must strengthen democracy through accountability, institutional checks,

and empowered local governance rather than oscillating between systems. The focus should not be merely on which system Pakistan adopts, but how effectively it is implemented to serve the people at the grass roots level.



Q. No. 1

1- Introduction

Since 1971, Pakistan's democracy has gone through ups and downs, moving between civilian rule and military control. After the separation of East Pakistan, efforts were made to rebuild democracy, but the army's powerful role in politics kept disturbing the process. Civil-military relations have been crucial in shaping political stability and governance. While civilian governments sought to promote democratic norms, the military's influence persisted through coups and hybrid governance, explaining the interruptions and limited consolidation of democracy in the country. This push and pull between politicians and

the military explains why democracy in Pakistan has struggled to become strong and stable.

2- Evolution of Pakistan's Democratic System since 1971

a- Bhutto's Civilian Rule: 1972-1977

~~After the~~ After the dismemberment of East Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government symbolized civilian revival. He gave Pakistan the 1973 Constitution, which made the country a parliamentary democracy and introduced civilian supremacy. But, Bhutto's authoritarian style, opposition suppression, and centralized governance alienated both political actors and the military, leading to ~~unrest~~ unrest following the controversial 1977 elections and paving the way for a coup.

b- Zia-ul-Haq's Regime: 1977-1988

General Zia-ul-Haq overthrew Bhutto in a coup and imposed martial law. His rule brought Islamisation in politics, non-party elections, and the Eighth Amendment, which gave the

president power to dismiss the government under Article 58 (2)(b).

This weakened parliament and made the army stronger in politics.

c- The Unstable Democracy, 1988-1999

Following Zia's death, elections were held, and Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif alternated in power.

However, both governments were removed before completing their terms due to political rivalry, corruption, and establishment interference. Presidents

frequently invoked Article 58(2)(b)

under military influence to dissolve

assemblies, resulting in this period

being termed the "lost decade

of democracy", marked by the

failure of civilian governments to

provide stability or effective governance

d- The Musharraf's Era: 1999-2008

General Pervez Musharraf's 1999

coup resulted in the suspension of the Constitution and establishment of a

military-led hybrid system. The Legal

Framework Order (LFO) and the 17th

Amendment restored ~~provide~~ presidential

powers, creating a compliant political setup

(PML-Q). Although elections were held, the regime stayed authoritarian. The Lawyers' Movement (2007-08), driven by civil society and the judiciary, was crucial in abolishing direct military rule.

e- Democratic Consolidation and Hybrid Regimes: 2008-Present

The 2008 general elections restored full civilian rule. The 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010) reversed presidential powers, ensured provincial autonomy, and declared the abrogation of the Constitution as high treason. Peaceful transitions took place from PPP (2008-2013) to PML-N (2013-2018) and then to PTI (2018-2022). However, ~~even~~ behind the-scenes military influence persisted, most visible in the PTI government (2018-2022), described as a "hybrid regime" where civilian authority operated under military shadow.

3- Civil Military Relations: Shaping Democratic Continuity and Instability

Civil-military relations remain the central variable explaining Pakistan's democratic trajectory. The military's

institutional strength, economic stakes, and control over security and foreign affairs have made it a de facto power center.

a- Political Instability

Repeated coups (1977, 1999) and political manipulation hampered institutional growth and public trust in democracy. Civilian leaders were often dismissed under military-backed presidents or judicial doctrines such as the "Doctrine of Necessity." No prime minister completed a full term ~~until~~^{until} 2013.

b- Influence over Policy and Politics

The military shaped foreign policy, Kashmir and national security policies, even during civilian rule. It controlled outcomes by developing political allies, influencing elections, and utilizing intelligence networks.

c- Weak Political Institutions

Constant interference prevented the development of strong political parties, autonomous parliaments, and effective accountability mechanisms. This imbalance created dependency on military mediation during political crises.

d- Hybrid Continuity

Since 2008, Pakistan's democracy has continued but remains hybrid, where civilian authority coexists with military dominance, reflecting partial continuity without full sovereignty.

4- Conclusion

Pakistan's democracy since 1971 shows a constant struggle between civilian rule and military power. Every time democracy was restored, it weakened again due to political rivalries, corruption, and military interference.

The 18th Amendment, peaceful power transfers, and active judiciary show progress, but full democratic stability is still missing because of the establishment's strong role. For lasting democracy, civil-military relations must be balanced, institutions strengthened, and politics kept free from military control so Pakistan can move from a hybrid setup to a truly democratic system.



The End