

What is Democracy? Challenges for Democracy in Pakistan

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Abstract *This article aims to explore what democracy is and what are the key tools for the success of democracy. Democracy is a famous form of government in contemporary world politics. There are few key characteristics of true democracy, for instance; free and fair elections, the role of media, education, judiciary, political parties, and religious tolerance, etc. Pakistan has experienced authoritative and democratic forms of government since independence. Many democratic governments have governed the country but despite that politicians in Pakistan could not provide the basic facilities of life to the general public. Lack of timely, free and fair elections, the gap between political elite and public, martial-laws, civil-military relations, lack of education and awareness in the general public are some key hurdles in the success of democracy. Therefore, for the success of democracy in Pakistan, it is also necessary to improve these tools.*

Key Words: Democracy, Education, Media, Judiciary, Religious Freedom, Tolerance.

Introduction

In a democracy, people elect their representatives to govern them or the citizens govern themselves. Although, it is believed that ancient Greece was the origin of this form of government. However, the notion of democracy basically stemmed after the treaty of Westphalia (1648). Democracy became socially more favorable after the French revolution in 1789 and thinkers like Rousseau also advocated and wrote about democracy as the justifiable form of government. On the other hand, monarchy and the supremacy of the Church were challenged and attracted widespread criticism. Since then, these ruthless forms of government were started relocating with a democratic form of government in many countries of Europe and the West.

Despite such a sparking entry into the system of the world's government system, the concept of democracy in Europe, especially after 1648, did not prevent the penetration of nationalism; thereby leading to the distortion of the genuine concept of democracy. Therefore, until the mid-20th-century democracy did not have smooth sailing. Partly because democracy had to compete with the challenges of Nazism, Fascism and totalitarianism till the end of the Second World War. Eventually, after 1945 the norms of democracy became more famous and spread across the world. The word, *democracy* derives from the Greek word a demo which means people. In this form of government, the supreme powers are vested in people. Moreover, in large societies democracy can be exercised by the people of that society/state directly or it can be exercised through the elected representatives of citizens. According to President Abraham Lincoln,

"Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people (Pitkin,2004)".

Democracy is more than just a set of some government institutions; it depends on some well-understood set of norms, values, mindset, and practices. However, all these may take different types and

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interpretations amongst diverse traditions and civilizations throughout the globe. Democracies rest upon some essential values and, not identical practices.

Literature Review

The literature found on the subject can be categorized into three main sections; where each serves the purpose of highlighting the fundamental tenets of democracy with prospects of success and failure.

The first category is based on the literature which emphasized the importance of democracy. In this regard, Philippe C. Schmitter, Terry Lynn Karl (1991) argues that in democracy rulers are accountable for their actions to the general public and this is the major difference between the democratic and non-democratic system of governments. However, previously severe restrictions were imposed in partial democracies and only a few people were eligible for vote. While in contemporary world politics different types of democracy are prevailing. On the other hand, Lisa Müller argues the role of vibrant media is very vital. As free media help to promote democratic norms in a society which further encourages public participation in politics. Media also helps in the promotion of election as candidates advertise their manifesto and policies in newspapers, social media and on television.

In this regard, the second group argues that democracy is not the only system that guaranteed the welfare of States. In this regard, the most important views are presented by Aristotle. Aristotle's states that democracy is the worst form of government and he was not in favor of democracy. Furthermore, the Muslim thinker Allama Iqbal was also not in favor of the western style of democracy. This is, however, important to note that Iqbal dislikes democracy and not the representative government. As a western version of democracy, all powers are to be vested which is contradict the Islamic concept of Sovereignty. As in Islam all powers and sovereignty belong to Allah Almighty alone and the people and leaders are answerable to Allah. Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, analyzed that during the 1950s economy of Romania progressed speedily and it was a communist state. During the 1970s, a steady economic Progress and developed was recorded in Brazil under a military rule. In the same way during the 1980s the economic growth of the economic tigers including China, Singapore and South Korea reveals the rest of the story; where and all these countries hosted autocratic regimes and were far from not democratic practices. (Halperin, Siegle, & Weinstein, 2009). The third group highlights democracy in the context of Pakistan. In this regard, Hassan Askar Rizvi (1974) states that since independence, Pakistan is suffering due to political instability and civil and military both have ruled over the country. Furthermore, Pakistan has experienced a parliamentary system of government under the constitution of 1956 and 1973 and a presidential form of government under the constitution of 1962. Moreover, the country also experienced a number of martial law periods but the law and order situation remained poor. Therefore, Pakistan is still facing a serious problem due to the undemocratic norms of politicians. However, Ahmed Hussain Shah (2013), states that Benazir Bhutto struggled a lot for the development of democracy in Pakistan. He further analyzed that Benazir Bhutto fought against military dictator Zia-ul-Haq for the restoration of democracy. In her whole life, she tried to provide basic facilities and to ensure the welfare of the people of Pakistan.

Research Questions

- What are the key characteristics of Democracy?
- What democracy is and is not?
- What is the role of politicians in the development of democracy in Pakistan? Does democracy remain a successful form of government in Pakistan?

Aims and Objective

The aim of this study is to explore the concept of democracy and define the key features of democracy.

This study is also highlighting what democracy is and what is not. The one key aim is to critically analyze the democracy in Pakistan.

Democracy through the Lens of Constructivism

Social constructivism states that norms, identities, and ideas help to understand the world. This view is presented that all worldly affairs are socially constructed (Ruggie, 1998). Furthermore, Wendt argued that “a global normative structure shapes the identities and interests of states, and through their practices and interactions states re-create that very structure (John, Steve, Patricia, 2011).” Social Constructivism helps to understand the concept of democracy. After world war two and particularly after the end of the cold war democracy becomes the famous form of government in many countries. In the contemporary world politics, U.S is the major dominant power is a democratic State. Mostly, American leaders President Reagan, George W. Bush claimed that the spread of democracy in the world is the keystone of their foreign policy. On the name of democracy, the U.S invaded war on Iraq and Afghanistan. Though, the U.S leadership could not get real success in this objective. After American withdrawal from Iraq, sectarianism is on the peak which has destroyed the law and order situation.

Three decades ago hardly few countries were democratic states. India is also among the world's largest democratic states. However, many people are still living below the poverty line. The Indian governments could not provide the basic facilities of life to many citizens (Gupta, Sankhe, Dobbs, Woetzel, Madgavkar, Hasyagar, 2014). Though, it is assumed that a real democratic state should grant basic facilities to its general public. Therefore, a real democratic state means a welfare state. On the other hand, many scholars like Aristotle stated that democracy is the worst form of government and he had supported the monarchy. In the contemporary world, China is a non-democratic State, is progressing speedily. Therefore, it is a constructed reality that only a democratic State can progress well.

Core Democratic Characteristics

There are some key characteristics of democracy, for instance, free and fair elections, the role of media, education, the role of the judiciary, freedom of express and religious freedom and tolerance.

Free and Fair Elections

For the success and progress of democracy, free and fair elections are prerequisites. Free and fair elections mean that all citizens have equal access to the electoral process and ballots which are secret and free. Additionally, fair elections will help citizens to elect the representatives of their own choice and if they do not work for the welfare of citizens than voters can reject them in the next elections.

Role of Media and Democracy

In the Modern States, the role of media, newspaper and television is very important to create awareness among the public as free media will encourage citizens to take part in politics. Moreover, highly public participation in politics has been observed in those countries where media is free. For the success of democracy and good governance, the role of mass media is vital. Media shapes public opinion creates awareness and provides a platform for discussions on political and social issues, helps to educate voters and also encourages tolerance for others which can play a positive role in the progress of democracy. Furthermore, for the election campaigns and coverage, the media can play both positive and negative roles. Though, even in the U.S, the presidential candidates spend a huge amount on their advertisement on television and in newspapers. (Müller, 2014).

Education and Democracy

Democracy has never been a natural phenomenon emerged out of nowhere. It has certainly been cultivated through a number of forces. One of the key forces includes education as educated citizens can play an active and positive role in state affairs. Benjamin Barber, a political scientist from the University of Maryland argues that “democracy is not a natural form of association. It is an extraordinary and rare contrivance of cultivated imagination.” Also, humans are not born as democrats rather they have engaged for centuries in war and conflicts with no sign of democracy. They strived to achieve the values of democracy only after educating themselves and their generations. Therefore, education lies at the heart of democracy and is vital to its survival in human society (Coronel, 2003).

Role of Judiciary

Judiciary is regarded as one of the fundamental essentials of democracy. It ensures timely and fair justice to each and every citizen of the society irrespective of any status or privileges. The pressure is often hurled upon the judges, even in the democratic societies, but the judges are ought to ‘withstand’ such pressure with no ‘depart from the rule of law.’ Fair judicial practices are vital for peace and economic progress because it establishes the rule of law and prevents the exploitation of the poor. Carl Gershman explains that there are two distinct variables that enhance economic growth which includes institutions and policies that are characterized by the ‘rule of law enforced with fairness and justice (Cook & Westheimer, 2006). Alexis de Tocqueville called the American Jury as the pre-eminently a political institution, partly because it plays a vital role in social governance. However, the role of the judiciary should not cross the boundaries set by the constitution but be limited to fact-finding. This is because the judiciary is to determine any particular happening based on factual pieces of evidence (Muñoz, 2006). This adds to the beauty of democracy as it demoralizes illegitimacy with no concession for unfair means.

Freedom of Speech

One of the key essences of democracy is freedom of speech and expression, particularly on societal and political issues. A democratic government supposed not to restrict the different voices, opinions and contrary ideas on public and political issues. However, democracy depends on educated, well aware and knowledgeable citizens who help them, and they criticize the oppressive and unfair policies. Besides the fact that freedom of expression and speech is the basic right of all citizens in democracy but the governments cannot allow anyone to use this freedom for negative purposes or against the State. Therefore, many democratic governments ban hate speech against any community, religion or group. Therefore, this is the challenge for all democratic countries to deal with freedom of speech carefully.

Religious Freedom and Tolerance

In a democracy, all citizens should be free to follow the religion of their own choice. It also includes that all citizens have the right to worship publically or in private or not to worship. The citizens should not be the fear of harassment from the government or any other community or group. While religious freedom is not created by the State, but a democratic country must protect this right of its citizens without any discrimination. In the 17th and 18th centuries, many American colonies developed the concept of secular democracy and religious freedom. On the other hand, many totalitarian dictators in the 20th century had wiped out religion from State, for instance, Mussolini in Italy (1922-1943) did this during his regime (Millon, 1993).

What Democracy is not?

Democracy has become successful in many countries around the world. However; we cannot say that democracy is the only solution to all societal, economic and political problems. Different democratic States

could not bring the same outcome due to differences in their culture, values, literacy and public participation in politics. Therefore, one cannot assume that democracy is the only solution to all problems at the state level. Unfortunately, "all good things do not necessarily go together (Maier, 2004).

Firstly, a democratic state may not be successful and proficient economically more than other types of government. A non-democratic State may be much better from a democratic State in its policies, investments and economic growth. For instance, China a communist state has initiated the One Belt One Road is the major project of the 21st century. According to Parag Khanna "It is the largest coordinated infrastructure investment plan in human history. *Secondly*, a non-democratic State can be better in administration than a democracy. In a democracy, a leader has to make decisions with the support of legislation which takes time. On the other hand, in non-democratic regimes, a leader has all powers of legislation, the executive which may help him to take sudden decisions for the betterment of his/her nation (Kirchheimer, 1965).

Thirdly, good governance is the key challenge for all kinds of governments not only for democracy. Historically it has been proved that in many countries. democracy could not prove a sustainable government. For instance, since independence (1947), Pakistan has experienced democracy under the constitution of 1956 and 1973 but the general public remained to dissatisfy due to poor governance (Karl, 1990). Moreover, a democratic State may have broader societal and political setup than autocracies but may not have a more open economy (Przeworski, Alvarez, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 2000). Democracy may not bring positive changes in a country where it replaces autocracy. For instance, the Arab Spring in the Middle East could not bring real democracy. Tunisia is the only single example of success. Since the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt (2011) there was the hope of democracy in the country. However, the new rules and laws also imposed restrictions on public protests. Elections in these countries also give way to the rise of extremist groups in politics. Egypt and Tunisia are key examples of it.

Moreover, in Libya after Col Muammar Gaddafi their situation is not satisfactory. On the other hand, in Iraq sectarianism has become a major phenomenon even after Saddam Hussain. The country's circumstances are getting worse and extremist group Islamic State (IS) has abolished the law and order situation. Therefore, western-style democratic norms could not develop in the Gulf region. Moreover, China is a non-democratic country and its tremendous economic development and progress over the last few decades is the major example that only democracy is not the key to development. Therefore, authoritarian leaders in the Middle East and Asia are increasingly justifying autocratic politics, arguing that pressure to democratize their political systems may endanger economic growth and other vital objectives (Rakner, Menocal, & Fritz, 2007).

Promotion of Democracy and U.S

Many leaders of the United States claimed that they are struggling for democracy to make the globe safer since World War One. For instance, President Reagon, George W. Bush, Clinton and President Barack Obama also claimed that the promotion of democracy is the keystone of their foreign policy. Moreover, President George W. Bush administration initially stated that the main reason behind the invasion of Iraq is weapons of mass destruction. Besides this Bush government used the tool of democracy to invade Iraq and Afghanistan and presented it as an instrument to end autocracy and terrorism around the world. Furthermore, the policy of regime change was also included in the form of promoting freedom in Iraq. Consequently, the concept of the promotion of democracy got badly affected particularly in the case of Iraq. In Iraq, the Bush administration had failed to maintain stability and peace post-American invasion era. Therefore, sectarian violence has been increased in Iraq, following the execution of the Saddam Hussain. Moreover, various terrorist groups including Daesh was successful in gaining control of the main cities of Iraq and Syria (Fortin, 2013).

Democracy and Pakistan

Jinnah believed that Islam taught us about the values of democracy such as equality, justice, and tolerance almost fourteen hundred years ago. "Democracy is in the blood of Musalmans who look upon complete equality of manhood and believe in fraternity and liberty" (ibid, p. 12), "Brotherhood, equality and fraternity of man, these are all the basic points of our religion, culture and civilization"(ibid, p. 29). Islam teaches its followers to be tolerant, kind and passionate. "The tenets of Islam enjoin upon every Muslim to give protection to his neighbors and to the minorities regardless of caste and creed (Zarrin, 2013).

Since independence Pakistan has experienced different forms of government which include Parliamentary, Presidential systems, martial law, and democracy. Under the constitution of 1956 Pakistan had experienced a parliamentary system but within two years, the constitution was suspended, and martial law had been imposed by General Ayub Khan in 1958. In 1962 Ayub Khan introduced the presidential system under the constitution of 1962 in which he launched the system of basic democracies in Pakistan. However, due to corruption, rigging in elections and nepotism this system also could not succeed in Pakistan (Pardesi, 2012). After the martial law regime, the new civilian government introduced the new constitution in 1973. Under the 1973s constitution Parliamentary form of government has been implemented again. Moreover, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the first elected Premier of Pakistan who had completed his five years tenure. However, this democratic process was again distorted by Zia-ul-Haq, who imposed martial law in Pakistan in July 1977. Therefore, Pakistan again remained under the control of an undemocratic government from 1977 to 1988. After the death of Zia-ul-Haq, the election had been conducted in 1988 and Benazir Bhutto became the premier of Pakistan. However, in 1990 the Pakistan people party (PPP) government was suspended under the allegation of corruption and poor governance. From 1993 to 1996 PPP again remained as a ruling party but could not complete its tenure and got dismissed due to corruption charges. On the other hand, the Pakistan Muslim League (PMLN) ruled from 1991 to 1993 and 1997-1999. Here again, the elected government of PMLN could not complete its tenure and in October 1999 General Musharraf had imposed Martial law in the country. The process of democracy was again and again derailed in Pakistan. However, President Musharraf had claimed that he will leave a sustainable democracy set-up in Pakistan which will stop military takeover in the future. He also claimed that his government will create enough job opportunities, human resources, alleviate poverty and will improve the basic facilities of life but he also did not fulfill all these promises.

Moreover, before elections, almost all political leaders promised that they will work for the welfare of the country when they came into power. However, still, all governments could not cope with the basic issues of common citizens. Therefore, the general public is still suffering from basic facilities of life, food and water shortage, energy crisis and poor health facilities. The former Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Nawaz Shareef claimed that through our policies and hard work we will make Pakistan a real welfare state. However, like the previous government, his government could not fulfill their promises.

Lack of Democratic Norms

Despite the fact that almost all political parties struggle for the restoration of democracy whenever the country faced dictatorships. However, in Pakistan real democratic norms could not be prevailing due to many factors: such as clashes and conflicts between governments are very common in Pakistani politics. Therefore, the contradictory and undemocratic behaviors of political elites are the major problem in the development of true democracy in Pakistan. From 1988 to 1999 and 2008 to 2013 PPP and PMLN have ruled. In May 2013 elections, PMLN made the government again. Though both parties under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Shareef had struggled for the restoration of democracy both paid little attention to the rights of the common public especially the rights of minorities, basic facilities of life and rule of law. Consequently, both have encouraged undemocratic norms at the societal and political level (Shafiqat, 1998). So, in the case of Pakistan, the real problem is not in the democratic form of government but in the autocratic attitude of the governments and leaders. As mostly politician does not bother about

their promises when they came into power. Premier Nawaz Sharif also claimed his real purpose is the restoration of democracy but his government could not address the issues of a common citizen such as poverty, unemployment, energy crisis etc.

Constitutions and Ruling Parties

Since independence, Pakistan has experienced three constitutions in 1956, 1962 and 1973. Which also includes two acting constitutional arrangements (in 1947 and 1972), and two foremost attempts of constitutional engineering (in 1985 and in 2002). Most importantly, all these attempts were to swing the power pendulum towards the government.

Role of Political Parties and Democracy

For the progress and development of democracy, the role of political parties is important. The political parties are a tool of mass mobilization and patronage in Pakistan. However, the major challenge for political leadership is to alter the role of political parties to interest representation and advocacy in the legislature. Unfortunately, the politicians adopt authoritarian policies and attitudes rather than encouraging and promoting democratic values, policies, behaviors, rule of law and tolerance for opposition parties. In November 1997, the supporters of PMLN attacked the premises of the Supreme Court of Pakistan but the leadership did not discourage their supporters.

Role of State Institutions in Protecting Citizens

In a democracy, the role of a State is to protect the lives and assets of its citizens. In this regard, the role of the police and the judiciary is also very important. However, all democratic governments failed to maintain peace and law and order in the country. Therefore, terrorism and extremism have been increased in Pakistan. Even, many innocent citizens are dying in the targeted killing and police failed to protect citizens from such crimes. Though, the government and Pakistan army has initiated operation Zarb-e-azab to eliminate terrorist groups from Pakistan and getting triumph in this operation. As a result, the image of Pakistan is restoring at national and international levels.

Lack of Credibility of Elections

Free, fair and regular elections are the real essence of true democracy. However, the record of Pakistan's elections in this regard is a bit poor. Therefore, after elections, all defeated parties blamed the winning side of allegedly rigging and terms the elections unfair. Furthermore; the parties also manipulate election results when they came into government. It is hard for a party to get a clear majority due to the multi-party system in Pakistan. As a result, mostly a coalition government has to be established and many parties remained in government despite their fewer seats in elections. For instance, in May 2013 elections PMLN got majority votes and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has emerged as a second major party in the country. After 2013 elections PTI chairman Imran Khan blamed that the elections were rigged; thereby raising serious questions over the transparency in this vital political activity.

The Communication Gap between Political Leaders and the General Public

In Pakistan, Civil and military leaders have ruled. Despite the fact the almost all political leaders are in favor of democracy they find little interest in the development and progress of the genuine democratic norms and behaviors in this democratically deprived country. Political leaders come in public to get votes but once they came in power they try keeping themselves at distance from common citizens.

Findings

The diversity in the system's pattern of understanding has challenged the idea of democracy as a solution to everywhere. Rather, it is growingly becoming evident that western democracy is hardly surviving in the West including the US. The backsliding of democracy in the US is more visible with the US President Donald Trump's arrival in the White House and his attacks on media while calling it 'enemy of the people' and the associated democratic instruments. Similarly, the Hungarian President is snubbing his own country's democratic institutions which widely suggest a wave of democratic backsliding in the Western Hemisphere. The sensitivities regarding culture, geography, political, religious and social make-up of a state is of vital importance to introducing any particular system within a state. Eastern states, especially Pakistan and the rest of the Asian region are witnessing a volatile democracy which is an outgrowth of the western liberal democracy imposed with no address to the aforementioned analysis.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Having explored the positive and negative aspects of democracy, it can still be termed the famous form of government due to its concept of the welfare state. However, a truly democratic State has to follow the basic norms for the success of democracy. For instance, a democratic state has to provide basic facilities of life to its citizens, education, food, health facilities and freedom of speech. On one hand, democracy is successful in many countries like in the U.S, U.K, and India etc. On the other hand, a democratic form of government could not flourish in many countries like in Pakistan. The major reason behind this is the differences in norms and identities of these countries. Constructivism helps to understand the concept of democracy and its tenets at the national and international levels.

- For the success of democracy, the role of government institutions such as the legislature, executive and judiciary are important. The role of elected politicians is to work for the welfare of their citizens. Free, fair and timely elections are necessary for the peaceful transition of power. The fair role of the judiciary is significant to build public trust in their institutions.
- The role of politicians is also important in this regard, as basic facilities of life, basic human right, justice, and economic progress is the right of every citizen. Democracy is famous because its works for their citizens and a real democratic state is a welfare state who works for their public.
- The role and influence of big money donors should be controlled and decreased. Some people also criticize the monopoly of two political parties in the US and the UK. As more than two political parties can provide more choices for the public to elect their representatives.
- For the success of democracy in Pakistan, there is a need to bring merit in all institutions and eliminate corruption, especially among politicians. The only merit can help to bring talented people in all fields of life particularly in politics.
- The cooperation between civil-military leadership is also important to deal with poverty, terrorism, corruption at the domestic level and will also helpful for our foreign policy.
- Education is vital to create awareness among citizens for their rights and to elect honest leaders in elections. Only education can bring true change in society and also beneficial for the success of democracy. Through education, the general public would be able to learn about true democratic norms, values, and tolerance.
- The date of elections after five years should be decided once and all parties must follow that like in the US the date of the election has been decided and after every four years, both political parties have to follow that. In Pakistan, economic growth and progress is prerequisite for real change. The betterment in the socio-economic and political setup will enhance the public trust in democracy.

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