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CIVIL DEMOCRACY AND MILITARY RULE IN PAKISTAN

By
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The debate concerning system of governments, especially military rule, monarchy and democracy is often discussed among scholars, philosophers and journalists. Although most agree that democracy is the system of government which allows the most freedom to people, but opposing arguments have been presented that some developing countries are not yet ready for democracy. Many countries of the world have gone through monarchy, military rule and democracy; but the case of Pakistan is unique in that there is a constant power struggle between the military and political leaderships and the presidency has changed hands between the two factions many times. In terms of number of years, the military has dominated most of Pakistan's years since 1947, the year when the country was established. The challenges of Pakistan's politics have been shaped by the dynamics of civilian-military relations.

Pakistan's history has been characterized by periods of military rule and political instability. Pakistan thus swings back and forth between military and civilian rule on one side and capitalist economies on the other. Seven different prime ministers and eight different cabinets took oaths of office during this disorderly period, resulting in the domination of bureaucracy in the decision making, with the tacit support of the military. The reason why it is important to find out what the people of Pakistan want; lies in the fact that in any given region, no democracy or any other type of leadership can survive in the long run if the people of the region are against it.

A government that strives to survive without popular support often turns into oppression, and dictatorship can provide temporary stability at best. Pakistan has always had two political regimes in democracy and dictatorship in military rule and there is a need to know the people's choice of leadership especially their role in economic performance. Democracy means the freedom of speech, right to vote and control of

government through majority whereby everyone has equal rights. In this aspect we consider democracy as the typical civilian rule. In Pakistan dictatorship is related to military rule where it is defined as the overthrow of a civilian government by the military power. Pakistan has faced three successful and three unsuccessful military coup attempts spanning for almost thirty five years.

Until 2013 Pakistan has not faced a single transfer of democracy to other democratic government. In 2013, for the first time the control of government was peacefully transferred from one democratic government to the other. The first and foremost objective of democracy is to accomplish the objectives that best serve the interests of the people, whereas the military is relegated to the role of defending the state.

A politically and economically stable Pakistan would be beneficial for the law and order situation of the South Asian region, and would also help greatly in the global war on terror. In order to bring stability, one of the two existing factions, military or political, has to have power and has to be accountable to its people and to the world regarding the responsibilities of leadership. To an observer the current democracy in Pakistan would appear to be in its initial stages after a long military regime, but to a student of history, it would appear as a repeat of what has happened many times. In Pakistan's history, the power changes hands between military and political factions and both blame each other for the country's increasing debt, weakening currency and worsening law and order situation.

The first and foremost victims of this power struggle are the people of Pakistan, and therefore it is important to realize which side they are on. Pakistan's hold on democratic governance principles remains fragile. Time and time again, democratically elected civilian governments have been troubled by either indirect or direct military intervention. The resulting political instability and near constant state of crisis have arguably limited the country's opportunities for political, social, and economic growth. Moreover, Pakistan's incomplete democratization has resulted in a prolonged transitional period, which may contribute to an increased risk of interstate conflict.

Unfortunately democracy has failed to fulfil desired results and true democracy could not be formed. Most political parties lack resources, trained human power and strong educational background which caused enough hurdles in the way of socio-political and economic growth. Pakistan political leaders and political parties also lack the perspective of a long-term visionary approach toward governing and leadership, they are also responsible for controlling state institutions for their own benefit. Nationalization and socio political system resulted in political instability and sluggish growth which is a curse of democracy.

The 2013 elections show that the first transition from an elected government that completed its term to another elected government. The recommendations for and subsequent challenges for Pakistan for President Nawaz Sharif's is to reinstate include political stability, address widespread corruption and increase of law enforcement which will hamper private investment and foreign aid in the long run. These recommendations

include Pakistan's regional and security relationships and internal relationship with the military which will be tested when the military's interests over vital elements of foreign and security policy are reconciled with civilian control. The onus is on the mainstream current civilian political forces to define the fundamentals of a sustainable and effective framework for Pakistan's economic management. This is a prerequisite to creating future dividends, both at macroeconomic front and for the people of Pakistan.

At such there is need to gauge the economic performance under military and democratic regimes using macroeconomic variables such as Foreign Direct Investment, Real Gross Domestic Product, Unemployment, Per capita income and Inflation Rate.¹An economic performance research reveals that that on average, economic performance of Pakistan was significantly better in military coups than democracy. However, unemployment rate and Foreign Direct Investment was not statistically different under military and democratic regimes. Nevertheless, Pakistan consistently enjoyed economic boom during military regimes. The research also concluded that that military governments performed better in terms of Gross Domestic Product and controlling Inflation while democratic government performed better in terms of Per Capita Income.

The proven escalated economic performance and consistent high growth in GDP during the military rule has provided a major challenge for the current democratic civilian rule to further enhance the Pakistan economic development for the masses that are more interested in a stable and peaceful country and doesn't care which faction rules Pakistan.

The military has repeatedly demonstrated that it can and will influence the nature and direction of political change without necessarily assuming power. Civilian governments have come and gone with bewildering rapidity, whether overthrown by military coups or stranded by the constantly shifting loyalty of their political supporters. Yet the same people have gone on running these parties, and leading the same people or kinds of people at local level. It is proven that the people of Pakistan does not care who rules the state whether military or civilian rule although at one time military rule was more acceptable due to the weak civilian rule. The people of Pakistan wants a stable country and with basic supportive requirements for them such as modern infrastructures, medical facilities, schools etc. and this relates to the fact that in any given region, no democracy or any other type of leadership can survive in the long run if the people of the region are against it. Although democracy is the way forward for the country, it needs an agreement on basic framework for economic and social management.

Some might argue that military rule would resolve Pakistan's problem of instability. Yet Pakistan's military regimes like its civilian governments have not been sustainable over the long term. Moreover, military governance has been associated with a number of disadvantages compared with democracy. One of the most widely accepted arguments in favour of

¹ Muhammad Nauman Hayat, Kaneez, Uzma Mukhtar and Safia Bano, "Economic Performance of Pakistan Under Democracy and Military Regimes," Journal of Economics, Business and Management Vol 4, No 12, pp 690-694, 2016

democratic governance is that mature democracies are, in fact, less likely to go to war with each other. But, if nothing else, democratic civilian governance is preferable in Pakistan because it is preferred by a majority of Pakistanis. Durable civilian control of the military may therefore be the best solution for Pakistan's persistent instability.

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