



PAKISTAN STUDIES
ASSIGNMENT 2

Democracy is the best
political system for Pakistan

SUBMITTED

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Thesis Statement

The paper provides references, discusses and concludes to the following idea:

“Democracy is the best political system for Pakistan.”

Hypothesis

Democracy in Pakistan is at a stage of infancy and will prove to be the ideal political system for the state with time. Hindering democratic progress through interventions will inhibit that growth and in turn will create a state dependent on temporary regimes rather than its own permanent political system.

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Introduction

Defining Democracy

Democracy is a Greek term originating from two different words “*Demos*” meaning “*People*” and “*Kratos*” meaning “*Rule*” which simply translates to “*Rule by the people*”.

*A democratic government is a government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system.*¹

In a democratic state, people express their opinions by the right to vote which is one of the fundamental rights of the citizens of the state.

Earliest Democracy

The earliest remnants of democracy can be found in the Greek city state of Athens. In a Greek democracy, any citizen could speak in the assembly and vote on the issues. The majority’s vote was accepted. Thus the basic essence of democracy was fulfilled as early as the 5th century B.C.²

Over time democracy evolved from form to form until ending up with two main forms i.e the Parliamentary and the Presidential democracies of today.

Foundation of Pakistan as a Democracy

The Founders of Pakistan envisioned Pakistan as a Democratic Republic following the main Islamic tenets. Jinnah affirmed that

“Pakistan is made for the betterment of the people living in it. People will themselves select their Leader and it’s the responsibility of the Leader to fulfill the needs of the people and work day and night for this Motherland”

¹ <https://www.quora.com/What-was-Abraham-Lincolns-definition-of-democracy>

² <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?ParagraphID=chy>

Thus, the seed for democracy in Pakistan was planted as early as its inception on the world stage. Sadly, the expectations from the process were kept too high at such an early stage that it failed to be up to the mark. Democratic growth is a slow process and one with far reaching productiveness but setting expectations from it in the stage of infancy was a prime mistake on the part of its people.

It is true that the state needed a strong government to support its deeply disaster stricken people after the deaths of leaders like Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan. This is perhaps the excuse dictator's in the past have used for their takeovers but the fact remains that these are mere temporary solutions for a permanent problem. Democracy on the other hand is a system that once nurtured provides a permanent solution to the permanent governing dilemma of the state.

Literature Review

Throughout history we've seen that states forsaking dictatorships in favour of democracies have attained their own salvation and that of their subjects. In his book, *The Discourse of Livy*, Nicollo Machiavelli writes:

*"It is marvelous to consider the greatness Rome reached when she freed herself from her kings. The reason is easy to understand, for it is the common good and not private gain that makes cities great."*³

Even today, most of the nations such as Tunisia and Libya are becoming self-aware and have raised voices against their dictatorial rulers. The shift from dictatorship to democracy occurs only by the will of the people but same cannot be said about the shift from democracy to any other form of government.

Merits of Democracy

Democracy in its most basic nature is one of the simplest yet effective governing systems in the history. It has been accepted by majority of the states in the world as part of their respective constitutions. Following are some of the reasons for such a favorable majority:

- Since a state works for the welfare of its citizens, it is imperative that the citizens play a vital role in choosing its statesmen. Democracy enables the citizens to embody the role of the decision maker in selection of the government.
- A democratic government works on a give and take relationship with its citizens. The government must be consistent in its performance to be elected for a second term and thus is dependent on the will of its people to take them to their seats in the parliament.

³ Discourses, Book II, Chapter II (Niccolo Machiavelli)

- Democratic shifts of power, throughout the world have been peaceful ones rather than violent as seen in the case of other regimes. This peace in ways reflects the image of a state and thus better its outlook on a global stage. Moreover democracies are somewhat hesitant in engaging in arm conflict against other democracies thus promoting peace globally.⁴
- Democracy ensures political freedom and fair relations with the people which is a prerequisite for economic development in particular and all developments in general. Thus in order for a state to develop in a sufficient manner, it is paramount to follow the ideals set forth by democratic values.⁵

Why is Democracy necessary in Pakistan?

It is not that Pakistan has developed more under democratic governments than dictatorial regimes. It is just that democracy is the most reliable and long lasting way of achieving that end.

- According to the Democracy Index of 2011, Pakistan is on 106th number with a score of 4.55. Norway on the other hand is on top of it with a score of 9.5. If we look at the Poverty Index, Pakistan is on 100th position and Norway is on top of it with the least poverty in the world. We can thus see a clear relationship between democracy and prosperity. With the increase in level of political ideals, the country's development is catalyzed. Pakistan, therefore requires to pursue the same ideals with a better implementation of the democratic systems for prosperity⁶.
- In Pakistan, in times of a stable democracy, foreign investments have been sufficiently increased as can be seen in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the current time. Foreign companies prefer stability within a state in order to invest in a given sector and this stability can only be guaranteed by a democratic government rather than a dictatorial regime.
- A successful state is one which treats all its subjects with equality, regardless of their religion, caste or creed. In the democratic system like that of Pakistan, minorities are allocated separate seats of representation in the Parliament. Women are treated in a similar manner. Thus this promotes cohesion within a nation and provides security to the Non-Muslim members of the state.
- It is not that no progress has been made in the dictatorial regimes like that of Ayub Khan, Zia ul Haq and Pervaiz Musharraf. It is just that even these dictators had to rely on democracy in their policies of governance. Ayub Khan introduced a system of Basic Democracies through which 120,000 members were elected throughout the country.

⁴ Democratic Peace Theory

⁵ "*Development as Freedom*" by Amartya Sen

⁶ "*Prosperity Democracy Theory*" by Robert Petric

Pervaiz Musharraf introduced the Devolution of Power and Responsibility Plan in 2000 which also was established on the basic principles of democracy. Thus, even the dictators believed in the principles of democracy for the benefit of the state.⁷

- All great states are welfare states. According to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Shareef

“We will make Pakistan a Welfare state through our policies and hard work”.

In order to enliven that dream, the citizens ought to be able to choose the government they believe in so that it might help elevate and alleviate their backward condition.

- In the recent histories, the decisions made by the dictators have impacted Pakistan’s current position. The pro-western diplomacy has not been a reliable one. Zia ul Haq’s diplomacy in the Afghan War created the Taliban and Al Qaeda. This further led to Pakistan being a part of the War on Terror, a decision made by another dictator, Pervaiz Musharraf. The US has forsaken Pakistan whenever its interests did not align with it. Thus dictators have not been such good diplomats. Moreover, they increased Pakistan’s dependency on foreign aid and thus spoiled Pakistan’s hope for self-reliance and self-development.
- Even though, dictatorial regimes have somewhat elevated Pakistan’s position economically in the past. We have seen that the elevation had not been a long lasting one. The regimes stay for a time but the state stays forever therefore both cannot work hand in hand for long. Democracy on the other hand, is a system as long lasting as a state. Therefore, in its fullest form, it is more reliable than any form of government.
- Democracy has been an injected ideology in the subcontinent. The indigenous feudal system was insufficient when it came to countering British ideals in the past. Thus British democracy proved to be a stronger contender for the system of government in the region rather than the local feudal one.

Why is Democracy struggling in Pakistan?

There have been negative sentiments and doubts towards democracy among the citizens of Pakistan mainly because it hasn’t yet provided what constitutional democracies provide i.e free and fair elections, a supreme constitution, a sovereign parliament, provision of basic human needs and guarantees of freedom. This lack of provision is due to several factors which have influenced the free flow of democratic ideals and has time and again tried to hinder its growth.

- First among them is the institutional imbalance. Pakistan inherited a strong bureaucratic system from the British. With time, the military grew in strength as a substantial player of the national scale. What did not grow and what needed to grow were the civil institutions

⁷ <https://presidentmusharraf.wordpress.com/2005/01/13/devolution-of-power/>

and administration. Thus they provided room to be coerced by the non-civilian institutions formerly mentioned. These non-civilian institutions time and again have influenced democratic institutions one way or another and have polluted the freedom that is offered by the democratic ideals.

- The frequent military interventions such as in 1958, 1977 and 1999 have hindered the growth of democracy and in a way have restarted that growth with every intervention. This continuous blockade to the free flow of democracy has thus deprived the state from benefitting from the real fruit offered by the democratic system. In public, the concept of democratic growth is not realized and thus a negative opinion regarding democracy is generated.
- One person one vote principle is effective in societies with higher literacy rate. Sadly, the literacy rate in Pakistan is 58% which is remarkably low on the world standard.⁸ Thus, the uneducated people are more vulnerable to coercion and lack the insight that goes into matters as delicate as voting. Thus the people feel that one person one vote is not a suitable principle to follow in conditions like that of Pakistan.⁹
- The strongest guardians of the democratic systems are the political parties. Pakistan has been unlucky in having purely democratic political parties. There has been a rift among the political parties throughout the history of Pakistan which has allowed the non-state actors to take advantage of the situation. The party system is not based on merit and has been indulged in nepotism throughout the course of time. They have rarely provided the public with statesmen of value that the public can believe in and back in the elections. Numerous candidates have been involved in corruption allegations and cases of one sort or another. These cases create a negative outlook of democracy in Pakistan.¹⁰
- Feudal system, though lost against the British ideals of democracy, provides a tough opposition to its Pakistani version. Mostly elections in the feudal areas are one sided with the feudal lord coercing the people in his locality to vote for him. The citizens in the rural area, being backward and weak are rarely left with a choice to choose from. This system, though has been limited in recent times, still exists in enough quantity as to influence the elections on the national scale and tilt the balance scale in favor of a certain political party.
- It is not that the people of Pakistan do not believe in democracy. They simply believe that democracy in Pakistan has been coerced and polluted. This point is somewhat true as there have been constant claims of rigging in the elections throughout the years. From stuffed ballots to dishonest staff to forceful voting, the electoral system of Pakistan has

⁸ Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) Survey 2013-14

⁹ <http://www.urdumania.net/which-political-system-is-best-for-pakistan-democracy-or-dictatorship/>

¹⁰ "Why Democratic System is Weak in Pakistan: Causes and Solutions" by Jamil Hussain Junejo

been in shambles and is direly in need of reforms. Only then can the trust of the people be generated in the political and electoral system.

Steps for promoting Democratic Ideals in Pakistan

Steps need to be taken for the proper working of democratic ideals in Pakistan. Without these steps, the democratic growth will keep on restarting every time a non-state actor comes into play.

- The Feudal System needs to be abolished in all sorts of ways. The system not only exploits the weak and poor but also strengthens itself and its future generation of feudal lords. For democracy to grow, the feudal system needs to end.
- Land reforms need to be introduced to end any remnants of pseudo-feudalism in Pakistan. The division of land will not only weaken the feudal lords but also provide an incentive for the farmers and small land owners to work on their land and provide income for their families as well as the state.¹¹
- Judiciary should be made independent so that no entity can influence justice and the court of law. The Election Commission will automatically be strengthened by the process as most of its members are members of judiciary and thus people will start believing in the political and electoral process.¹²
- To strengthen the constitution and parliament, Article 6¹³ needs to be fully implemented so that no future constitution is abrogated by any means. This will ensure the sovereignty of the government and safeguard the democratic ideals and its evolution into a stronger system.
- Political Party Order 2002 needs to be implemented to ensure the proper conducts of the various political parties working within the state¹⁴. As an initial step, the military factions of political parties need to be de-weaponized for people to start believing in the democracy¹⁵. The membership of the political parties should be based on properly defined merit so that better statesmen can be provided to the masses in the future.
- For a democracy to work in the best of ways, the citizens of the state need to be literate therefore the focus of the state should be on the development of human resource and in turn education of its subjects to perfectly execute the one person one vote principle.

¹¹ *“Governance and Democracy in Pakistan: Weaknesses, Strengths and Prospects”*
by Dr. Noor ul Haq.

¹² Pildat Paper: *“Assessment of Quality of Democracy in Pakistan”*

¹³ <https://pakistanconstitutionlaw.com/article-6-high-treason/>

¹⁴ <http://www.slideshare.net/fatanews/political-parties-order-2002-final-amended-200220042011>

¹⁵ *“Democracy in Asia: A case study of Pakistan”* by Dr Syed Jaffar Ahmed

Moreover, democracy needs to be imparted among the general public through educational literature so that people understand the concept of democracy and growth.

Conclusion

After constant research on the current state of democracy in Pakistan, it is understood that democracy has been a misunderstood concept in the general public. The repeated strikes of dictatorship have somewhat weakened the position of democracy in Pakistan but it is yet to achieve its full form. Democracy in Pakistan is like an infant in a cradle. It needs time to grow up and become a man of value and worth. One cannot expect the infant to take care of the general masses and neither does one start executing the infant every time he makes a mistake. Democratic growth is a slow but fruitful process and with time will show its benefits to the general public. For now, it is the responsibility of the people of Pakistan to guard it so that it might guard them in the future.