

GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN: WEAKNESSES, STRENGTHS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Pakistan had no worthwhile civil society and hardly any middle class in 1947 due to rampant illiteracy and absence of an independent media. The masses were poor, the country was described an “economic desert” and there was an unprecedented influx of refugees. The country lacked the necessary infrastructure and institutions. The capability to develop them was lacking. The external and internal threats to the security of the country turned it into a security state. Weak political leadership created space for civil-military bureaucracy. This led to the cut-off periods in democratic governance, which was derailed thrice in 1958, 1977 and 1999. At present, the country is partially developed, the middle class is growing and civil society is assertive; a vibrant media has come up, and majority of the population is literate. There is an overall urge for peace. The people have demonstrated their preference for constitutional government and the rule of law, and to have an independent judiciary to strengthen democratic governance.

Introduction

Democratic governance implies a system of government in which all the people of a country can vote to elect their representatives, who in turn govern the country in the light of the mandate given to them by the people. Pakistan and India emerged as independent democratic nation-states in August 1947, inheriting the same constitution (i.e., Government of India Act 1935), the same system of civil administration, legal apparatus and the armed forces. But unlike India, the governance in Pakistan has been alternating between civilian democratic governments and military-dominated autocratic or partially democratic governments.¹ After several pitfalls, Pakistan has reached a

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¹ Civil supremacy (1947-58); military supremacy (1958-71); civil supremacy (1971-77); military supremacy (1977-88); civil supremacy (1988-99); military supremacy (1999-2008); and civil supremacy (2008 onwards). It may be added

stage where it seems that the people of Pakistan, its vibrant middle class, the civil society, the intelligentsia and the media are convinced that the supremacy of the constitution, strengthening of state institutions, independence of judiciary, and the rule of law are necessary if Pakistan is to become a modern democratic state. Currently, a democratically elected government is keen to strengthen such a system.

Initial Difficulties Obstructing Democratic Governance

There are a number of factors responsible for initial setbacks to democratic governance in Pakistan. For instance:

Ramshackle Infrastructure

Initially Pakistan was lacking in the necessary infrastructure. For instance, it had no federal government, no secretariat, and no State central bank. "Militarily the country was defenceless and Indian policies were calculated to stifle the new state."² It had to start from a scratch.

that "some of the military dominated regimes were very liberal in their outlook, or tried to be (notably President Pervez Musharraf) whereas some of the civilian governments were quite abusive of their authority" (notably Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad).

² I.H. Qureshi, ed., *A Short History of Pakistan Book Four* (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1967), 228. In 1947, the British Indian Army was approximately 500,000 strong and the Muslim element in it was about 33 percent. According to British Viceroy in India, at the time of partition, out of 67 battalions available in West Pakistan, only 35 would be left behind. Most of these would be at half strength owing to the movement of Hindu/Sikh companies without Muslim companies being available in Pakistan for replacement. (Viceroy's personal report, no. 16, August 8, 1947, para 43, Mansergh and others, eds., *The Transfer of Power 1942-47*, vol. XII, 599-600). These battalions constituted into about 10 infantry brigades at less than 50% strength and an armoured brigade with only 13 runner Stuart tanks, less than one weeks ammunition with the Army, no mines, no man-made or natural obstacles. They were required to guard about 5000 miles of frontier of East and West Pakistan. (Noor A. Hussain, *Fifty Years of Pakistan Army 1947-1997* (Rawalpindi: ISPR Publication, 1998), 4). In fact, the regiments of the Indian Army were scattered throughout Indian subcontinent and "overseas mainly in Iraq, Malaya, Burma and with the Allied Contingent in Japan". (Fazal Muqem Khan, *The Story of the Pakistan Army* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 24). These scattered regiments and their equipment had to be brought back and organized into a coherent army. "Thus what was at first only a paper army gradually took shape." (Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army* (New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1984), 17).

Due to extreme level of illiteracy³ the capability to develop the infrastructure was also limited. The country needed time to build and nurture the state institutions which could sustain democratic governance.

Leadership Void

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the nation and the first Governor-General, died just one year after the establishment of Pakistan on September 11, 1948 and his right hand lieutenant Liaquat Ali Khan, who was the first Prime Minister, was assassinated on October 16, 1951. About the capability of other leaders of Pakistan Muslim League (PML), the party which had successfully piloted the movement for Pakistan, Jinnah had ruefully remarked that “he had false coins in his pocket”.⁴ Consequently, several ministers appointed initially were not politicians and did not have a seat in the Assembly.⁵ Similarly, in 1954, there were several members of Prime Minister’s cabinet without a seat in the Parliament.⁶ “The cabinet and other high political appointments reflected a paucity of talent among the politicians.”⁷

Unprecedented Migration and Settlement of Refugees

Due to the partition of the Punjab, where most of the ex-servicemen and war veterans lived, communal riots erupted into a carnage causing an unprecedented refugee influx. There was an inter-state migration of more than 12 million and killing of about one million human beings across the Pakistan-India borders. There is a long background of riots especially in

³ The overall literacy in West Pakistan was hardly five per cent. Government of Pakistan, *Census of Pakistan 1951, vol. 1* (Karachi: Census Publications, n.d.), 77.

⁴ Hamid Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 853.

⁵ Qureshi, *Pakistan*, 229-230. Jinnah’s first cabinet included A.M. Malik, who was a medical practitioner, Finance Minister Ghulam Muhammad was a former civil servant, and Foreign Minister Zafarullah Khan was a lawyer. They had practically no political following.

⁶ In 1954, Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad, who was himself a bureaucrat, asked Muhammad Ali Bogra, another bureaucrat, to form a cabinet, which included, among others, Major-General Iskandar Mirza, a bureaucrat, and General Muhammad Ayub Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

⁷ Hamid Yusuf, *Pakistan: A Study of Political Developments 1947-97* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1999), 34.

northern India.⁸ It seems that Indian anger against the partition of “mother India” was also a cause of the intense feeling of hatred.⁹ The carnage in the Punjab was caused by “the chaos and anger” owing to the “surprise of partition” when no one was prepared organizationally to cope with the change, for the British government had advanced the date of transfer of power from June 1948 to August 1947. The Radcliffe Commission’s boundary award was announced three days after partition. It was “mostly the British fault” but local grievances and hatred created a bloodbath which has left its own “lasting scars” in both states. Till 1955, about seven million refugees from India entered West Pakistan and about 5.6 million Hindus and Sikhs left Pakistan.¹⁰ It was relatively easier for India to absorb the calamity of migrants given its size, resources and available infrastructure, as compared to Pakistan, where one out of every ten persons was a refugee. “But it was the patriotism and self-denial of the people that pulled the country through the most precarious phase of its existence.”¹¹

Illiteracy and Extremism

Due to the migration of literate Hindus and Sikhs to India, the literacy rate in Pakistan sharply declined. There was about 95 percent illiteracy in Pakistan in 1947¹², which acted as a hindrance to the growth of a civil and democratic society. Feudalism and economic constraint did not permit any Pakistani government to launch a “crash course to expand literacy and grow higher standards.”

⁸ See Appendix 20, “Hindu-Muslim Fighting during July 1946-June 1947”, Noor-ul-Haq, *Making of Pakistan: The Military Perspective* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1993), 231-34.

⁹ Hamid Khan, 82; Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Rawalpindi: Services Book Club, 1958), 256; quoting Jhon Cornell Auchinleck (London: Cassell, 1959), 906.

¹⁰ Viqar Ahmad and Rashid Amjad, *The Management of Pakistan’s Economy 1947-82* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 71, cited by Hamid Yusuf, 35.

¹¹ Qureshi, *Pakistan*, 228.

¹² The province-wise literacy was: Punjab 7.3 percent; Sindh 6.1 percent; NWFP 5.2 percent; Balochistan 3.9 percent. This does not include tribal areas. The percentage should be less in 1947 after the migration of literate Hindus and Sikhs, *Census of Pakistan 1951*.

Poverty and Scarcity of Essential Goods

Pakistan was established in the northwest and northeast of the South Asian subcontinent. These areas were neglected by the British being closer to the borders. It was considered safer to invest in central India which was beyond the reach of enemy air force. The affluent class in Pakistan was mostly Hindus and Sikhs and they transferred their wealth to India. Thus, at the time of its birth, Pakistan was virtually an “economic desert”¹³ and the masses were abysmally poor. There was “an acute famine of commodities of every day use.”¹⁴ The authorities, who were administering the country, were more interested in the procurement of goods and development of the country rather than promoting the cause of democratic governance. Pakistan’s low literacy, bad infrastructure, and instability made it difficult to take advantage of what is commonly called “globalization”. It did not produce much to offer in the exports market except low value primary goods, its work-force was not educated, and the government controlled trade and investment suffered for political reasons, partly due to mutually constrained relations with neighbouring India.

Persisting Problems*Quasi-Federalism and Conflict between Eastern and Western Wings*

One of the main bottlenecks in the constitutional development in Pakistan was that its two wings were separated by about 1000 miles of hostile territory. The eastern wing consisted of one province but was more populous than the western wing which was much larger in area and had as many as four provinces. The western wing was not prepared to concede majority representation to the eastern wing in the parliament. After a confrontation of nine years between the two wings, the solution was evolved in the 1956 constitution in the shape of parity of representation in a quasi-federal structure, neutralizing the majority of the eastern wing and paving the way for the manipulated domination of the western wing. The domination of the western wing in governance led to an insurgency in the eastern wing which culminated in the separation and independence of Bangladesh in 1971.

¹³ Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 101.

¹⁴ Qureshi, *Pakistan*, 228.

In the post-1971 Pakistan, it came to be realized that ideological moorings alone could not easily overcome ethnic and economic differences. Yet the anti-ethnic attitude and anti-modern thinking prevalent in certain segments of society lean towards a unitary or quasi-federal state as against a true federation.

Religion vs. Secularism

Pakistan was not created as a theocracy but as a place where an economically marginalized minority could operate a democracy independently. It was to save the people from religious discrimination and domination by an overwhelming religious majority. Moreover, it emerged as a territorial state in the Muslim majority areas of the subcontinent. But the religious and secular groups soon started making conflicting demands while formulating the constitution of Pakistan. The speech of Mr Jinnah of August 11, 1947, addressed to the first legislative and constituent assembly of Pakistan, had advocated political pluralism and declared that the “religion or caste or creed has nothing to do with the business of the State”.¹⁵ This was not adhered to. The Objectives Resolution passed by the Constituent Assembly in 1949, pacified demands of Muslim religious parties and elements, but was not supported by religious minorities. The compromise solution attempted to balance the values and the spirit of Islam with requirements of secularism.

Due to lack of competent and visionary political leadership, and the fact that Muslims constituted 98 per cent of the population, the conservative religious leaders, partly due to their conviction and partly owing to their parochial interests, advocated and preached the establishment of a religio-political system based on Al-Quran and Sunnah.¹⁶ They were skeptical of the politico-social development of modern times and western political institutions and form of government.

¹⁵ *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah: Speeches as Governor-General of Pakistan 1947-48* (Karachi: Pakistan Publications, n.d.), 8-9.

¹⁶ “The field of medieval political theory has already been subjected to intensive investigation by Von Kremer, Arnold, Sherwani, Rosenthal, Hamidullah, Tyan and others, and movements of modernism in contemporary Muslim world have also been extensively surveyed by scholars such as Smith, Gibb, Adams and Aziz Ahmad.” Manzooruddin Ahmed, *Islamic Political System in the Modern Age: Theory and Practice* (Karachi: Royal Book Coy, 1983); Justice Hamoodur Rehman, *Islamic Concept of State* (Karachi: Begum Aisha Bawany Waqf, 1978).

Their dogmatic theology clashed with the democratic culture envisioned by the founding fathers.

Another adverse impact of the adoption of religion as a guiding principle in the constitution, was the promotion of religious sectarianism, especially between the two major sects inhabiting Pakistan, i.e., Sunnis and Shi'as. Some sections of these sects, instead of peaceful negotiations to overcome their differences, often resort to violence, which is against the spirit of both Islam and democracy. These rivalries fostered reliance on the security forces for maintenance of law and order, which eroded the hold of democratic institutions in governance.

Delayed Framing of the Constitution

The immediate and foremost requirement of the Constituent Assembly was to frame a democratic constitution for the country. The constitution had to lay down the form of government, the role of judiciary, military, and bureaucracy. It had to decide the basic issues about provincial autonomy, religion and the state, joint or separate electorate, representation of minorities and women in assemblies, fundamental rights and civil liberties. The debate over the representation of eastern and western wings of the country and religion versus secularism were the two main hindrances in the way of framing the constitution. As against India, which was able to frame the constitution of the country within two years of independence in 1949, Pakistan took nine years to finalise the constitution in 1956, which did not work for more than two years and was abrogated. The second constitution was framed by a military ruler General Ayub in 1962 which could last as long as he was in power. Finally, it was after the separation of East Pakistan and a lapse of more than quarter of a century (1947-1973) that the elected representatives of the people under the leadership of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto framed a consensus constitution envisaging a federal, democratic structure for the country and a parliamentary form of government. This constitution has survived in spite of the breakdown of democracy twice in 1978 and 1999, and hopefully has come to stay. But the delay in framing the constitution harmed the growth of political democracy, as it allowed the authoritarian rule of the Governor-General to continue for seven long years (1947-56), which set this inglorious tradition in the country.

Weak Political Parties and their Infighting

For any healthy constitutional and political system to function smoothly, strong and well-entrenched political parties are essential. ... Unfortunately, political parties in Pakistan have failed to develop into strong vehicles of national political will.¹⁷

The main responsibility for safeguarding democracy in a country falls on political parties¹⁸. Pakistan, since its inception, was lacking in well organized and well established political parties that could carry the representative system of governance forward. The All-India Muslim League, which had piloted the movement of Pakistan during 1940-47, was not a well organized political party, but it was primarily a movement. "Leading a movement and organizing a political party are two different things."¹⁹ Most of its leaders belonged to areas which became part of the Indian Union and their majority did not come to Pakistan. Of those who were in Pakistan, barring a few exceptions, belonged to feudal and landowning classes that in their nature were in conflict with democratic dispensation. In fact "the leadership of Pakistan movement had few roots in the land that became Pakistan." Their incompetence and constant wrangling for power in the initial nine years (1947-1956) was also responsible for the delay in constitution-making. Instead of cooperation and mutual accommodation there was ceaseless infighting. For instance, as early as 1953, a clash between the leadership of the Punjab and the central government led to intense communal riots and imposition of Martial Law in Lahore, the provincial capital.²⁰ Even as late as the decade of 1988-99 of civil supremacy, the fight between the PML and the PPP led to repeated dissolution of national and provincial assemblies and dismissal of prime ministers and their cabinets.²¹ Finally, it ended with the military take over in 1999.

¹⁷ Hamid Khan, 852.

¹⁸ "Any satisfactory analysis of the practice of Western democracy – and any discussion of how it might be made to work better – must recognize and account for the role of political parties." Geoffrey Brennan and Alan Hamlin, *Democratic Devices and Desires* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 185.

¹⁹ Hamid Khan, 856.

²⁰ Punjab Chief Minister Mian Mumtaz Muhammad Khan Daultana and Prime Minister of Pakistan Khawaja Nazimuddin, both belonging to PML, were at logger-heads. Hamid Yusuf, 52.

²¹ The conflict between President Ghulam Ishaq Khan (1988-1993) and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (1988-1990) resulted in the dissolution of the

Delayed Elections, Rigging and Violence

The representative character of the civilian parliamentary government during the first decade of Pakistan's existence was eroded because the country was governed under Government of India Act of 1935. The purpose of the Act was "to make the appointed governor-general exert dominance over the elected prime minister."²² The Act had introduced a representative and a centralized system of bureaucratic governance, which was an imperative requirement of the colonial government but not of democratic governance.

The first general elections in the country should have been held in 1951, i.e., five years after the previous elections in 1946, but this could not happen till 1970. The reasons for the delay were that the ruling elite, i.e., civil bureaucrats, migrant political leadership, and weak political parties, had few roots in the masses. As a consequence, general elections could not be held for 23 years (1947-1970) of the country's initial history.

On the expiry of the five years term of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1972-1977), the second general elections on the basis of adult franchise were held on March 7, 1977 which the PPP won with a vast majority. The opposition parties alleged that the elections had been "rigged on a massive scale". It has been commented:

National Assembly and the dismissal of the Prime Minister and her cabinet on August 6, 1990. Again differences and confrontation between Ishaq and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (1990-1993) made both of them to resign on July 18, 1993. The differences between President Farooq Leghari (1993-1997) and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (1993-1996) ended with the dissolution of the National Assembly and dismissal of the government on November 5, 1996. Thereafter, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (1997-1999), in a bid to become an authoritarian ruler, is discredited for an assault on the Supreme Court (Hamid Khan, 827), declaring a state of emergency in 1998, allowing establishment of military courts for trial of civilians, amending the Constitution taking away the discretionary powers of the President, preventing the floor-crossing in the assemblies, and introducing the Fifteenth Constitutional Amendment Bill which was "apparently a blatant attempt by Nawaz to introduce dictatorship in the country in the name of Islam" (Hamid Khan, 929). Finally, on October 12, 1999, he sacked the Chief of the Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf while he was officially visiting Sri Lanka. This resulted in a *coup d'etat* and dismissal of Nawaz Sharif. (Hamid Khan, 219-249).

²² Shahab Usto, "Mosquerades of Dictatorship", *Dawn*, August 22, 2008.

Elections in Pakistan had been rigged before, notably the presidential election in 1965 and the Provincial Assembly elections in early 1950s, but rigging in these instances did not arouse the mass uprising as it did in 1977. The people of Pakistan were evidently not of the same mind now as they were in those earlier periods.²³

Civil-Military Bureaucracy vs. Politicians

The greatest factor impeding the development of the country was the evasion of land reforms in the western wing which strengthened the feudal hold on the instruments of governance. Feudalism was one of the main factors responsible for the weakness of the political parties and the supremacy of the bureaucracy. In West Pakistan (present Pakistan), leaders were mostly drawn from the feudal class. Pakistan being an agricultural country, the landed aristocracy almost dominated the political, social and economic life. Since the feudal leadership of political parties was not capable of dealing with the multifarious problems faced by the country, it depended heavily on the civil and military bureaucracy.²⁴

It is indeed a sad commentary on the elected members of the first Legislature and Constituent Assembly of Pakistan that they could not find a suitable head of state from among their own ranks. Most of them came from the civil bureaucracy or the military.²⁵ The civil-military bureaucracy did not have a favourable opinion about the competence of political leaders and often took decisions without consulting them. This adversely affected their political training, development and growth. The inability to control the Anti-Ahmadiya Movement in the Punjab in 1953 was blamed on an inept political leadership. This religious movement was spearheaded by the religious Ahrar Party which had opposed the

²³ Hamid Khan, 571.

²⁴ Even after six decades of the establishment of Pakistan, Iftikhar Hussain, Minister of Information, NWFP has blamed “feudal, capitalist and tribal systems” responsible for “all social ills and backwardness”. *Dawn* (Islamabad), August 24, 2008.

²⁵ During 61 years (1947-2008) of existence of Pakistan, civil bureaucrats or military generals governed the country for as long as 45 years. These were: Mr. Ghulam Muhammad (1951-55); Mr. Iskander Mirza (1955-58); General Muhammad Ayub Khan (1958-69); General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan (1969-71); General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1978-88); Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan (1988-93); and General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008).

establishment of Pakistan and now wanted again to come into limelight. They were supported by other religious parties, i.e., Jamaat-i-Islami, Jamiatul Ulema-i-Pakistan, and Jamiatul-Ulema-i-Islam. The movement was exploited by politicians in their own political interest.²⁶ But the civil-military bureaucracy was against the religious parties to dominate the power structure either in the provinces or the centre. To rescue the city of Lahore where Ahmadis were in a “virtual state of siege” and their properties were being “burned or looted”, General Azam Khan, the Area Commander, was ordered by the Defence Secretary, to impose martial law in Lahore. It was met with general approval of the people. It was demonstrated that the civil-military bureaucracy “would not let politicians or religious ideologues lead the country to anarchy”.²⁷ This also laid down the foundations of the supremacy of military and orchestrated the initial rehearsal for recurring imposition of Martial Law in the country and its acceptance by the people.

In fact, “since its birth, Pakistan has been governed by bureaucratic, military and political elites. The bureaucratic elite generally became more assertive, steadily increasing their power at the expense of the political elite.”²⁸ “Ayub’s term of office [1958-69] was the golden era for the bureaucracy, which exercised its powers, unbridled by any political interference.”²⁹ The weakness of political elites can be demonstrated from the fact that during seven years from 1951 to 1958, as many as seven Prime Ministers had been changed.³⁰ During 1988-1999, four democratically elected governments³¹ were replaced on charges of corruption, inefficiency, security risk, etc. The civil-military bureaucracy has dominated governance owing to the inherent weakness of the political parties and their incompetent leadership, resulting in the derailment of democracy thrice in the history of Pakistan, i.e., in 1958, 1977 and 1999.

²⁶ Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule*, supra, note 70, 151, cited by Hamid Khan, 119.

²⁷ Hamid Khan, 120.

²⁸ Ibid., 878.

²⁹ Ibid., 345.

³⁰ After assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan on October 16, 1951, Khawaja Nazimuddin (1951-53), Muhammad Ali Bogra (1953-55), Chaudhry Muhammad Ali (1955-56), Husain Shaheed Suhrawardy (1956-57), I.I. Chundrigar, and Feroz Khan Noon (1957-58) became Prime Ministers.

³¹ Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto (1988-90), Mian Nawaz Sharif (1990-93), Benazir Bhutto (1993-96), and Mian Nawaz Sharif (1996-99).

Kashmir Dispute and Security of the Country

The persistence of external and internal threats to its security converted Pakistan into a security state which thwarted the country's march towards democracy. The security of Pakistan was threatened externally from its bigger neighbour and internally from communism,³² religious extremism and ethnic ambitions of the rulers of the princely states. The first threat originated in October 1947 when the Indian Army occupied the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which geographically and demographically should have formed part of Pakistan³³, and the second one came to surface through the Socialist inspired Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case (1951), the Anti-Qadiani Movement (1953) by religious parties, and declaration of cessation by the ruler of the state of Kalat (1958).

The external threat resulted in Indo-Pak wars and border clashes and threats of war a number of times (i.e., during 1947-48, 1951, 1965, 1971, 1984, 1999, and 2002). Ari Fleischer, a White House spokesman, speaking on December 20, 2002, about the 2002 situation between India and Pakistan said:

the tension reached alarming level ... As a result of the intervention of the President, the Secretary of State, and numerous leaders around the world including [Russian] President

³² The Communist Party of Pakistan was banned in 1950s mainly because of own conservative leadership.

³³ All the rulers of Princely states were told "You cannot run away from the Dominion Government which is your neighbour any more than you can run away from the subjects for whose welfare you are responsible" (British Indian Viceroy's address to the Chamber of Princes, July 25, 1947). "Keeping in view the geographical conditions, 80% Muslim majority ... the passage of the important rivers of the Punjab through the State, the language, cultural, racial and economic connection of the people and the proximity of the borders of the State with Pakistan ... the Jammu and Kashmir State should accede to Pakistan" (Resolution of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, July 19, 1947). The accession "of the State of Jammu and Kashmir will be made in accordance with the will of the peoples expressed through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations" (UNSC Resolution (S/3779) of January 24, 1957). Also see Richard Symonds, *The Making of Pakistan* (London, 1949), 157-58; Alistair Lamb, *Incomplete Partition: The Genesis of the Kashmir Dispute* (Hertford, 1997); A. H. Suhrawardy, *Trajectory in Kashmir* (Lahore, 1983), 203).

[Vladimir] Putin and [British] Prime Minister [Tony] Blair, there is now a markedly diminished point of tension.³⁴

As for earlier internal threats, the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case was quelled by the Armed Forces in 1951, the Anti-Qadiani movement was suppressed when Martial Law was enforced in Lahore in 1953, and military action led to the absorption of the state of Kalat. All this was possible because the British trained Pakistan's Armed Forces were mostly secular in outlook and motivated to ensure the integrity of the country.

The security threat and the need for defence forced the nation to strengthen the armed forces rather than democratic governance. The priority to defence can be judged from the fact that, in the beginning, most of the annual budget of the country, was allocated for this purpose which has gradually been scaled down to about 17 per cent in the last budget.

Immediate Challenges to Governance

Corruption and Nepotism

According to Transparency International, Pakistan got a score of 2.7 out of 10 in 1998, followed by 2.2 in 1999, 2.5 in 2008 and 2.4 in 2009.³⁵ Corruption³⁶ in bureaucracy and among political leaders poses a grave threat to good democratic governance. Quaid-i-Azam had termed corruption as "poison" and asked to put that down with an "iron hand".³⁷ Now that the National Reconciliation Ordinance, which had withdrawn from prosecution any person "falsely involved for political reasons or through political victimization" between 1986 and 1999, has lapsed on November 28, 2009, the concerned individuals should get themselves cleared in a court of law in a transparent manner. The tribal nature of society in Pakistan is susceptible to nepotism. As an antidote,

³⁴ *Dawn* (Islamabad), December 21, 2008. Also see Noor ul Haq, "Indian Quest for Hegemony", *IPRI Journal*, vol. III, no. 2, (2003): 21-48.

³⁵ Mansoor Ahmad, "Poor ranking in corruption index no surprise", *The News* (Islamabad), November 21, 2009.

³⁶ Corruption, violence and lack of accountability and transparency have been termed as fault lines in Indian democracy. G. Rana Chandhra Reddy, *Fault Lines in Indian Democracy* (New: Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, 2007), xi-x. The same applies to Pakistan.

³⁷ *Quaid-i-Azam Mahomed Ali Jinnah Speeches* (Karachi: Pakistan Publications, n.d.), 7.

accountability and transparency are necessary. It is a challenge to the people to reject those leaders and political parties which indulge in corruption and nepotism.

Unprecedented Inflation and Rising Prices

Another threat to the government comes from inflation and unprecedented rise in prices of daily needs, as this adds to poverty of the people.³⁸

Terrorism and Extremism

The latest threat is emanating from extremism and terrorism, especially in the North West Frontier Province and Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). This is the spill over effect of the conflict in Afghanistan and is spreading in Pakistan. It is likely to continue as long as there is no peace and stability in that country. However, the military enjoying the support of the nation is successfully combating against the extremists and terrorists under the supremacy of the civilian democratic government. It is hoped that the process would continue to its logical conclusion.

Human Rights

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the nation, after his election as the first president of the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947, outlined his concept and policies for Pakistan, which in essence are secular and democratic. For instance, he emphasized that in Pakistan:

every person no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges and obligations. ... you are free to go to your temples; you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State. ... in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because

³⁸ Among the main challenges for Asia Pacific region, poverty, disengagement of the military from political economy, the professionalism of political parties, human rights, human resource development and press freedom have been highlighted. Heraldo Munoz, ed. *Democracy Rising: Assessing the Global Changes* (New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, 2006).

that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State.³⁹

As Governor-General, he affirmed that he shall always be guided by the “principles of justice and fair play” without any “prejudice or ill-will” or “partiality or favouritism”.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, he died a year after the birth of the country. Consequently –

... Pakistan has encountered frequent, unresolved political crises. They are woven into its concepts of political community, and have withstood uneasy relationships between state institutions and civil society. Pakistan’s politics has also been characterized by incomplete constitution-making, a process that has placed the burden of constitutional interpretation and political change on state instruments varying from the bureaucracy to the military to the judiciary.⁴¹

Fundamental human rights are guaranteed in Chapter One of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan but injustices against women and members of minorities continue. However, apart from reservation of seats for women in local, provincial and federal assemblies, the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Bill 2009 sets tough penalties “to protect women from harassment and make them feel more secure.”⁴² Similarly, apart from reservation of seats in assemblies, the members of minority communities have been given the right of double voting – one vote for general seats and another for choosing their representative for reserved seats. But sustained and firm efforts are necessary for the protection of the rights of minorities and women. It is a challenge for the democratic government to ensure implementation of rules and regulations concerning the fundamental human rights in true letter and spirit.

³⁹ *Quaid-i-Azam Mahomed Ali Jinnah Speeches as Governor-General of Pakistan 1947-48* (Karachi: Government of Pakistan, n.d.), 6-10. Jinnah’s address has been interpreted differently. Ch. Muhammad Ali in his *Emergence of Pakistan* has viewed it as an assurance for security to minorities, whereas Muhammad Munir states that Jinnah believed in secularism. See Muhammad Munir, *From Jinnah to Zia* (Lahore: Vanguard), 29.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Paula R. Newberg, *Judging the State: Courts and Constitutional Politics in Pakistan* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1995), i.

⁴² *Dawn* (Islamabad), January 30, 2010.

Strength of Democratic Governance in Pakistan

Pakistan Movement and Traditions

The Pakistan movement envisaged a democratic country with a federal structure. In all Constitutions of Pakistan (of 1956, 1962 and 1973) the objectives of governance, in the words of Dr. Ainslie T. Embree, Professor Emeritus of Columbia University, are:

democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as enunciated by Islam, giving Muslims freedom to live their lives in accordance with the teachings of Islam, but with minorities having full freedom to profess their own religions.⁴³

Islamic and Cultural Traditions

Islam lays emphasis on the concept of *Shura*, i.e., consultation among people, which is the essence of democratic culture. Quaid-i-Azam, the founder of Pakistan had stated:

we learned democracy 1300 years ago. ... democracy is in our blood. It is in our marrows. Only centuries of adverse circumstances have made the circulation of that blood cold. It has got frozen, and our arteries are not functioning. But thank God, the blood is circulating again, thanks to the Muslim League efforts. It will be a People's government.⁴⁴

Culturally, in the region of Pakistan, there is a concept of *Jirga* or *Panchayat*, i.e., an assembly of elders, to settle issues and disputes involving two or more than two persons. This system has been prevalent for ages, much before the advent of Islam. Thus, both religion and age-old tradition advocate the concept of consultation in decision-making through an assembly of people, which is the essence of democracy. During the period of British supremacy in the subcontinent, the practice of elections to assemblies (local, provincial and central) was introduced through various enactments. Finally, it was the Government of India Act

⁴³ Ainslie T. Embree, Foreword, Hamid Yusuf, *Pakistan: A Study of Political Developments 1947-9* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications 1999), viii.

⁴⁴ Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Evolution of Pakistan*, vol. II (Lahore: All Pakistan Legal Decisions, 1963), 415 and 424. The address was in response to the demand of a section of the Muslim Leaguers who, before the opening of the session, had proposed that the Muslim League should declare that the future Constitution of Pakistan would be based on Al-Quran.

1935 under which the dominions of India and Pakistan functioned after independence till they framed their own constitutions. These enactments provided the groundwork for democratic governance.

It may be of interest to note that even when democratic rule was suspended by the armed forces, the military rulers always came with the promise to restore democratic governance. For instance, in 1970, General Yahya Khan is credited with organising the first ever general elections in the country, which led to the establishment of democratic governments both in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Besides holding of general elections in 2002 and 2007, General Musharraf's introduction of local government system introduced in 2001 is considered a "laudable model of governance" because of its principle that whatever can be done at the local level should not be done at a higher tier of governance.⁴⁵

Growth of Education, Civil Society and Media

The country is on the path to achieve full literacy and progress towards higher standard of education in important disciplines.⁴⁶ This is strengthening the civil society in ensuring the prevalence of democratic culture at the lower and higher level of governance. Secondly, the print and electronic media in Pakistan is vibrant and independent. A responsible media educates the masses, raises political consciousness and thus promotes democratic values, norms and culture. In addition, a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are playing an active role in the field of education and contributing to the growth of a vibrant civil society and good governance.

Growth of Economy and Middle Class

Since 2003, Pakistan's economy has been growing by more than 6.5 per cent per year except for 2007-08 and 2008-09 when the growth declined to 4.1 per cent and about 2.00 per cent respectively. The decline is partly due to global economic recession and partly owing to disturbed

⁴⁵ Editorial, *Dawn* (Islamabad), January 2, 2010.

⁴⁶ There was only one university/degree awarding institution in 1947. Presently there are 120 universities/degree awarding institutions – 64 in public sector and 56 in private sector. Of these, there are six women universities/degree awarding institutions – five in public sector and one in private sector. See Noor ul Haq, "Education in Pakistan: Historical Perspective," Pervez Iqbal Cheema and other, (eds.), *Pakistan and Changing Scenario: Regional and Global* (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2008), 18.

conditions internally in the wake of the “war against terror”. The per capita income in 2008-09 was US\$ 1046.00, which has nearly doubled during the last decade.⁴⁷ Hopefully, the current phase of slow growth will soon be over, due to the inherent resilience of the economy and external support from aid giving agencies and remittances of Pakistanis. The Enhanced Partnership Act 2009 (commonly known as Kerry-Lugar Bill) provides assurance for a long-term US assistance and focuses on “democracy, pluralism, stability and fight against terrorism”.⁴⁸ Pakistan is a developing country and needs foreign assistance. Its GDP and per capita income have increased and a growing middle class is visible in the country, which is one of the stake holders and a factor in strengthening democracy.

Security and Democracy

During the entire history of Pakistan, the country has faced military threats from the east. Now the country is facing threats in the west also. It is a heaven-sent opportunity for Indians to be active on Pakistan’s western borders so as to pressurize it from the east as well as the west. The realization is growing that under democratic dispensation the country can fight as well, if not better, as under an authoritarian rule. It is said that “democracies are more capable than other systems of mobilizing their resources” to fight and win a war.⁴⁹ However, the factor of nuclear deterrence has kept hostilities at bay on the country’s eastern borders. Hopefully, the changed policies of the US administration under President Obama will be able to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan with its salutary impact on Pakistan. When Afghanistan’s government has stabilized after withdrawal of foreign forces, it is expected it will revert to its traditional role of a neutral country. This would ensure peace on Pakistan’s western borders also.

⁴⁷ “Growth in Pakistan”, <http://go.worldbank.org/QTEHWNS5Q70>; *Economic Survey of Pakistan 2008-09*; *IPRI Factfile: The State of the Economy of Pakistan*, vol. XI, no. 7, July 2009.

⁴⁸ Senator Dick Lugar’s Floor Statement, May 4, 2009.

⁴⁹ Mathew Evangelista and others, (eds.), *Democracy and Security* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 4.

Conclusion: Guarded Optimism

It was tragic that the country faced numerous problems and was “hijacked soon after independence by the ruling classes belonging to feudalists, senior bureaucrats, incompetent politicians and ambitious military generals who transformed it into an elitist system.”⁵⁰ It was visualized that the people of Pakistan may “either remain under the feudal stranglehold for ever or gain direct access to political and economic rights by freeing our political culture from the exploitative elitist and feudal political structures.”⁵¹ The latter alternative may now be succeeding. Unlike the past assemblies, at present almost half of the new members of legislative assemblies are young and educated. All stake holders seem desirous to establish the supremacy of the parliament. Certain clauses of the 17th amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan which impinge on the supremacy and sovereignty of the parliament or any other anti-democratic constitutional provisions may be scrapped under the pressure of civil society and public opinion.

Second, the politicians may have learnt lessons from their past mistakes and are more mature politically. A consensus politics seem to be emerging in the country. In the past, the constant infighting amongst political parties had often led to interference and take-over by the armed forces. Now a culture of reconciliation, accommodation and dialogue is emerging. The ideological polarization is diminishing. After general elections of February 2008, four major political parties, i.e., Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), PML – Nawaz (PML-N), Awami National Party (ANP), Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam – Fazalur Rahman (JUI-F) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) have joined hands to govern the country and re-establish the supremacy of the Parliament in accordance with the Constitution of 1973.

Third, a vibrant and responsible media can also educate the masses and keep them well informed. Currently, dozens of newspapers and journals, and as many as fifty television channels are operating. They are raising political consciousness and thus promoting democratic values, norms and culture. With the help of the media, the unprecedented country-wide lawyer’s movement throughout the country during 2007-

⁵⁰ Javid Husain, “Public welfare and democracy”, *Dawn* (Islamabad), June 18, 2007.

⁵¹ Shamshad Ahmad Khan, “Primacy of Democracy in Pakistan”, *Dawn* (Islamabad), August 5, 2006.

2008 has demonstrated the strength of political activism and the people's urge for the rule of law and independence of judiciary. The one hundred thousand strong lawyers' community has experienced its power as a pressure group and may again rise in alliance with civil society if independence of judiciary is threatened.

Fourth, the supremacy of parliament was fully demonstrated when President Musharraf resigned on August 18, 2008 after being threatened with impeachment by the Parliament. In the past, exploiting the confrontation between main political parties (especially PPP and PML), the civilian elected President Ishaq (1988-93) had dissolved the National and Provincial Assemblies twice⁵². Similarly, President Leghari (1993-1997) had dismissed the elected Assemblies⁵³. However, in 1998, President Musharraf, a military ruler, could not do the same because of the changed political consciousness and environment.

Fifth, the Constitution of Pakistan of 1973 provides the politico-legal framework for parliamentary democracy and federal form of government, guaranteeing freedom of expression and religion and free and fair elections, etc. It has withstood the military governments of General Zia and General Musharraf. This constitution, it appears, has sustained democracy, in spite of intervening periods of suspension, and guarantees the continuation of democratic governance in the country.

Sixth, whereas general elections were not held for a quarter century after the birth of Pakistan, these are now being held regularly.⁵⁴

Seventh, the main factors which inhibited and retarded the growth of democracy in the country are slowly dying. Now "the external as well as internal forces that [had] hitherto sustained authoritarianism in Pakistan have either retreated or become dormant."⁵⁵ It is hoped that the

⁵² He dismissed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (1988-1990) and Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif (1990-1993).

⁵³ He dismissed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (1993-1996) in November 1996.

⁵⁴ Whereas indirect elections were held in February 1960 and January 1965 by General Ayub, and General Zia held non-party elections in February 1985, direct elections to national and provincial assemblies based on adult franchise were held in December 1970 under General Yahya, in March 1977 under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in November 1988 and again in August 1990 and October 1993 under President Ishaq, in February 1997 under President Leghari, and in October 2002 and February 2008 under General Musharraf.

⁵⁵ Rashid Ahmad Khan, "President vs. Parliament", *The Nation* (online), August 19, 2008, <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Opinions/Columns/19-Aug-2008/President-vs-parliament>.

congenial atmosphere thus created would strengthen political parties and political institutions, which, in turn, would further promote and strengthen the cause of democratic governance and democratic values, culture and norms.

To sum up, it is the political leadership which can ensure permanence to democratic governance. The prospects are, however, not as dismal as sometimes portrayed. Already, the literacy rate in Pakistan has increased to more than fifty five per cent.⁵⁶ Efforts are afoot to improve the standard of higher education. The economic growth and industrialization has given birth to a vocal urban society and middle class, which is growing, and gradually lessening the influence of the feudal class. The vibrant electronic and print media is playing an effective role in constructive criticism of the government and in educating the masses. Elections are being held regularly, representative political leadership and political parties are getting stronger and a peaceful mode of transfer of power is becoming the norm. The bureaucracy (both civil and military), though still powerful, may retreat gradually and submit to the peoples' power and will and concede to democratic governance. The democratic process is progressing and, hopefully, will not be obstructed and derailed, as in the past. ■

⁵⁶ Ministry of Education, Academy of Education Planning and Management, 2005 census revealed that the literacy rate by age group 10+ was 54.5 percent during 2005-06. The literacy rate should have increased by 2009-10.