



RESEARCH PAPER

**Socio-Economic Indicators and Democratic Consolidation in
Pakistan: An Analysis**

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the relationship between socioeconomic indicators and democratic consolidation in contemporary Pakistan. Most of the indicators are extracted from the modernization theory. These indicators refer to interaction of state and society in a country. This paper argues that a healthy interaction between state and society leads to democratic consolidation while anything less would result in erosion. A qualitative investigation of indicators including per capita income, population, size of middle class, educational attainment, industrialization, urbanization, income distribution-Gini Coefficient, and human development index is done for the purpose. Based on the results and analysis of these indicators it is observed that interaction between state and society lacks equilibrium, resultantly Pakistan faces a danger of erosion of democracy especially in terms of liberal values. Unless Pakistani state deliver on the desires of the people, this drift of democracy would continue

Introduction

The journey of democracy in Pakistan has been a bumpy one, as it has been found wanting for the lack of development of democracy. What is interesting in Pakistan's case is that even though military stepped in thrice directly taking control of the country, but each time democracy made a comeback. Is it because Pakistan does not have the stomach to ensure presence of democracy, which led to military takeovers? This question leads us to a more primary question as to what are the conditions that harmonize the growth and ensure smooth functioning of democracy. The seminal work of Seymour Lipset was the first step towards an

effort to identify those variables (Lipset, 1959; Lipset, 1958). The crux of his argument if reduced to one sentence would be "The more well to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy." Scholars have failed to provide any substance about what they are actually looking for "when they propagate that only presence of certain socio-economic indicators would help democracy endure in a country that has failed to consolidate even after trying for it (Daimond, 1992;Preworski,1996). Another inert step taken by most of the political/social scientists is that they have made a ritual of identifying few pitfalls among the existing theories and then trashing them altogether. They fail to accept the importance of such theories in approving/disapproving relationship of various standpoints. This paper is concerned with socio-economic indicators that help in determining how healthy or unhealthy the interaction between state and society is. Nothing is more important for a state than preserving loyalty of its subjects and if this is the case then how can people entrust their loyalties for democracy, if a democratic government fails to fulfill their desires. Nothing is more important for a state than preserving the loyalty of its subjects and therefore it's somehow bound to fulfill the desires of its people in order to ensure the persistence of their loyalty with the state. This in case of a democratic government/state becomes obligatory as the very essence of democracy would be lost if it doesn't live up to the desires of its supporters.

Delivering on the desires of the people brings political legitimacy and acceptability as a system of governance. In the next step with a democratic regime feeling itself in safe zone where chances of breaking down are reduced significantly, state would ensure that people enjoy liberal values as well. In a totally reverse scenario where state is unable to fulfill material desires of its people, in such an eventuality state (regime in power) is left with no choice but to take measures which would ensure that it stays in power and it would take away liberal values from its people. These values include freedom of expression, access to alternate platforms of information, freedom to assembly. Why would state act in such a way? For every human-being ever since they were born, they have been in-search of ensuring their survival. This survival is based on the provision of food and housing and added other sub-variables with the passage of time. However, the industrialization of Britain in 18th century fulfilled these requirements in the modern era by providing basic necessities to the people which gave them an opportunity to think beyond survival instincts. With materialistic comfort under their sleeve people started to question governance, state affairs and even go to the extent of asking a share in the power. Such endeavors resulted in liberal values be crafted and made part of democracy. Otherwise, democracy would only be an electoral choice and nothing more.

Hunting for the recipe of success is still to be discovered and it is difficult to develop a set of economic and social indicators which perfect the relationship between modernization theory and democratic consolidation. Modernization theory was under the micro-scope for a variety of different reasons. Previously, scholars

investigated the relation between democratization and modernization theory. Banking on modernization as an expression for “well-being of a nation” is like ending up in a fallacious mode. Modernization reflects the capacity of the state to deliver on one hand and desire of the people to demand on the other. Therefore, it is capacity and desire which determines the level of healthy interaction between state and its people. Modernization theory for the current study is decomposed into two sub-concepts. These concepts are State Capacity and Desires of people.

Modernization Theory and Democratization

Most of the previous studies believed that modernization theory played a positive and an important role in democratization of a country (F. Arat, 1988; Deutsch & Wucherpfennig, 2009; Przeworski & Limongi, 1997). However, the current study goes even further by stating that it is one of the single most important items when it comes to endurance of democracy and liberal values attached with democracy in a country. What most of the scholars miss out on the modernization is its linkage with maintenance of democracy in a state? This factor is the relationship between capacity of the state and the desires of the people. Modernization results in increased capacity of the state to deliver on the desires of the people. Lack of capacity would see that people are left with their desires being not fulfilled and this would leave people with no option but to dislike and question the utility of democracy. Un-desirability for democracy on the part of the people obstructs the consolidation of democracy in a state, resultantly reducing its prospective age and health. State Capacity is gauged through per capita income while people’s desires are mirrored through levels of urbanization and industrialization, access to alternate platforms of information, education, size of middle class. Now to measure ‘did people get what they wanted’ income distribution and human development index would be employed. In the last freedom house rating, which help in making an observation on what kind of interaction is state and people having.

Per capita Income: Why income levels are essential in ensuring democracy? The answer to this question can be found in the explanation put forward by different scholars and Lipset was among the first one to do so. Lipset emphasized that as the wealth increases; it reduces the overall inequality and results in an increased size of middle-class. Diamond comes a lot closer to what this chapter tries to understand, the outcome of healthy interaction between the state and the people. According to Diamond, those states which enjoyed high levels of incomes were more liberal than those states which fell in the category of low-income group. Although Diamond summed this study by concluding a positive relation between economic development and democracy. However, this study understands that in terms of democratic consolidation it is utmost important that a healthy interaction between state and its people would bring more characteristics of liberal democracy. Further Diamond saw favoritism, nepotism would hinder the smooth functioning of bureaucracy, due to low-income (Diamond, 99). For Barro, any state whose democracy predates an economic development would result in break-down of democracy (Barro, 1999).

Population Rate: The constant increase in the population growth rate puts a state in steady-state equilibrium with no growth in living standards and a higher growth rate pulls a state in the opposite direction. High growth rates hurt states irrespective of their credentials, but it leaves a damning effect on the capacity of developing states and under-developed states. Any progress on the economic front does not bring laurels for the masses.

People's Desire

It is such tricky situation when faced with the choice to choose either needs or desires. Needs refer to basic provision of material to survive but desire goes beyond the basic requirements. Desires refer to more idealistic situation to what people dream of. The primacy of people through which they gauge performance of their rulers, is the ability of government on key needs and expectations in the sectors such as health, education, job creation, stimulation of growth and economic management. People desire for a far fairer distribution of goods and services and any unfair distribution in the eyes of the public is due to corruption. It leaves a big impact in shaping people's satisfaction with their rulers and their performance.

Alina & others use the results of Barometer surveys to sum up public opinion vis-a-vis governments performance in relation to economic development, jobs and other essential services as health, education, water and sanitation (Menocal, Bergh, & Rodríguez-Takeuchi, 2014). The results provide an insight to people's preferences where they are more concerned for redressal of essential services and voiced less concern for any lacking related to democracy or rights. While shaping this argument it is pertinent to mention that people did have a preference for democracy over any other form of government. This preference was recorded as the part of the survey conducted by Barometer. But this preference for democracy is very much linked to performance of democratic dispensation. Disillusionment and loyalty with democracy, stemming from lack of delivery on essential goods and services, is not limited to developing and non-established democracies but spreads to western democracies in Europe and United states as well. A growing discourse had gripped people that democracies are biased in-favor of the rich. People are frustrated with the failure of democratic dispensation to provide goods coupled with social and economic inequality and corruption. There is an increasing number of people are disillusioned by essence of democracy that has characterized the workings of the current democracies around the world. This essence runs counter to the essence of tradition understanding of democracy. As 'common good' no more enjoys acceptability in the current world-system. This result in the belief that people voice can no longer make an impact on how governments work.

Education

How come education is regarded as the promoter of and also as the savior of democracy? The answer is found in various studies like (Sanchez & Jesuit, 1996, p. 16). For them educated population demands for establishment of a system for more popular participation. Though the rulers have the option of repression but since authoritarianism is rejected in an educated system, it leaves the rulers with no choice but to open the system. A society with higher levels of education is well aware of its rights calls for a more inclusionary political system. However, all these studies focus on the non-material incentives based on the understanding of a more educated society. However, since this paper focuses on the healthy inter-action of the state and the society, the first focus of the educated society is the material distribution of resources and in the second step the focus would shift non-material distribution. In some cases, the demands for material and non-material distribution of resources can be parallel as well.

Almond and Verba argued that education at the least changed effected political attitudes of people(Almond & Verba, 1963). On the other hand, Lipset concluded that education made people more restraint and rationale with respect to politics and political opposition. For him educated people valued democracy and democratic values more than illiterate people(Lipset, 1959). The knowledge acquired through education, opens up human mind. It provides ability to people to question their existing condition and lay comparison with people, in a better state. Any state which does not intend to educate its people, are putting the future of a large number of people at a risk. So, what kind of education brings the transformation required to start questioning their standing in the society? While dealing with the education indicator and how it increases the desire of common masses. Students while attending the universities interact not only with peers from their class but also with students from the financially more stable classes. This interaction serves as a point of separation from their past and think about the future on the levels as lived by other classes.

Urbanization

Urbanization plays a dual role when reviewing this level of interaction, i.e state capacity and people desire. On one hand as urbanization leaves a negative impact on the capacity of state, since more resources at required for an up-keep of an urban area but people living areas are more conscious about their rights and their close proximity provides them with an opportunity to protest and demand rights from the government. Keeping urban population at bay becomes a difficult task, as dissatisfaction can result in larger population participating in protests. The best argument built in favor of urbanization and democracy is laid by Lerner, as he sees an evolutionary process, whose end result is political participation(Lerner, 1958, p. 60). The initial step of this process is urbanization, and which is followed by literacy and media participation.

Democracy is, in other words, only achievable in a country where the electorate is largely content with the performance of its government. People want democratic government only if it is a good government as well. As Walker argues that government is acknowledged by the people as the one which delivers on economic wellbeing, brings political stability and a social order through an efficient and honest administration (Walker & John, 2011).

Industrialization: It was influential work of Barrington Moore which provided for a positive relationship between industrialization and democracy (Moore, 1993). It was industrialization which shook tradition power centers by providing people with more disposable income. Labor's hard worked is acknowledged and rewarded more in an industrialized society. With achievement of high level of productivity, income of workers increases, and this results in raised levels of living of ordinary people. A state cannot accept itself to achieve high levels of growth by mere production and export of raw material alone. Not only this industrialization provides economic stability as well, while limited and shifting demand for agricultural produce and raw material coupled with uncertainties of nature hinder economic progress, resulting in an unstable economy. Industrialization changes the pattern of foreign trade. While it brings more foreign exchange back home by increasing export of manufactured goods and on the other end it saves foreign exchange by curtailing import bill through provision supply of locally manufactured goods. Export oriented and import substitution effects of industrialization assist in improving balance of payments. On the societal level industrialization encourages specialized labor and increases the marginal value of labor. Thus, earning of industrial worker would be higher than compared to those associated with agricultural.

Alternate Platforms of Information

Regimes and Governments felt uneasy on the information reaching the masses. In order to ease such threats governments would curtail or filter the information. Such actions only constraints the consciousness of the subjects of the state. Ultimately ability to question and demand from the state is reduced. Liberal theorists propagated that in order to become more accountability of governments. It keeps a check on the government, on any conclusion of upper class and the government. Alternate platforms of information act as watchdogs against any concentration of power in one quarter. Modernization entailing from presence of alternate sources of information and level of urbanization increases the level of consciousness of people. People become more active and involved when they gain access to media. Diamond goes beyond this understanding by declaring alternative sources of information as a prerequisite for existence of liberal democracy (Diamond, 1999). People are active and participatory citizens when they have access to media. The critical role played by the media in a democracy has been widely acknowledged and documented in the literature. Diamond, for example, noted that one of the prerequisites of a liberal democracy is the existence of alternative sources of information, such as independent media, to which citizens are

permitted politically unrestricted access. This is underscored by others, who concur when stating that democracy thrives on a free flow of information. However, the reality in some countries is that the flow of information by means of unbiased media is restricted, and other sources of information barely exist. Unfortunately, among those countries are some considered to be democratic, and the restrictions regarding the media work against the consolidation of their democracies (Diamond, 1999, p. 11).

Size of Middle Class

The size of middle class is of utmost importance as this class considers a radical distribution of resources at the top of their agenda. However, this redistribution of resources depends on their size and size of the lower class along with capacity of the state. If the size of the middle class is small and that of the lower class is high but the capacity of the state is not high, then middle class would not radical distribution of resources. The reason for such behavior is that if any radical redistribution takes place then the state would be left with resources to tend to the interests of the middle class. Civic space is a crucial part of any democratic society. It is the political, legal, and social environment that allows people to come together to share experiences and ideas, put forward their views publicly, and to influence politics and society. It hinges on three fundamental freedoms: people's ability to form associations, protest peacefully, and express views and opinions. To protect civic space, governments need to enshrine those rights in law and to make sure that citizens and organizations can exercise them – without fear of persecution, violence, or harassment. Elections allow people to express their political preferences and hold leaders accountable. But they are an inherently limited mechanism. Civic space lets citizens influence policymaking beyond elections, for example by forming advocacy groups or organizing protests. When civic space is restricted, it becomes harder for citizens to keep tabs on those in power, call out abuses, and draw attention to governance failures (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2019). Restrictions also make it harder for civil society organizations to provide important services, particularly to marginalized groups. The size and growth of the middle class is of interest to gauge market potential for many products and – since the middle class typically makes many demands on public services – as a barometer of political awareness. A sizable middle class is often seen as a source of stability and cohesion, as assurance of adequate market potential, and as a sign that the most divisive features of high inequality of outcomes and of opportunity are avoided.

Income Distribution: Though limited studies have focused on the relationship of income distribution and survival of democracy, but the few which are available are methodologically sound. These studies note a positive relationship between income distribution and continuity of democracy in a state. As Przeworski notes that states which have witnessed a declining trend in income inequality increase their chances of survival (Przeworski, 1991). However, it is necessary to explain what sort of role income distribution plays in endurance of democracy. This explanation comes from Bueno de Mesquita and Downs as they see people with

economic comfort/ease change their behavior (Mesquita & Downs, 2005). This change, due to poverty reduction, give people luxuries such as time, money and education to get involved in politics. The greater number of people enjoying such luxuries, the more pressure on the upper class and the segmented elites to treat these people beyond the strata of lower class and inferiority. However, Chong cautions on the concluding in a causality mode but such critique can be catered by assuming that monolithic answer to endurance of democracy is nothing short of fallacy. Economic distribution draws a raw sketch of fulfillments of people's desire and hence these people have a favorable attitude towards democracy (Chong, 2001, p. 25).

Human Development Index

This index does not consist of economic development but social and cultural as well. A three tier criteria is used for creating HDI consisting of income, education attainment and life expectancy. Since its creation during 1990 it has been employed by social scientists to evaluate socio-economic development of all the countries. It has a maximum rating scale of 100, a score between 80-100 represents "high human development," 50-79 represents "middle human development," and the score below 50 categorizes a country in the category of "low human development" (UNDP: HDI Report, 2019). A country's HDI score is highly related to freedom and democracy in that country. A higher level of human development may form some basis for higher social capital and generally more civilized conditions, which might be more conducive for democracy.

Freedom House Rating

Freedom House is a US-based non-governmental organization that publishes reports every year on the condition of freedom and democracy in various countries around the world and rates the countries on a composite score from 1 to 7. The composite score is constructed by two factors, civil liberties and political liberties. Political and civil liberties are assessed through an index from 1 to 7 (1 denotes most free, and 7 denotes most authoritarian), and combining these two indices, a single composite index is created by the arithmetic average of the two indices. This index is used to evaluate whether a country would be considered either "free," "partly free," or "non-free." A composite index from 1.00-2.50 is defined by Freedom House as free, 2.50-5.00 as partly free, and 5.50-7.00 as non-free. Irrespective of dispute attached to its ratings, it does offer a general idea of state of freedom and democracy in a country.

The case of Pakistan

Per Capita Income

At the time when power was transferred to the newly elected civilian set-up in 2008, the per capita income stood at \$935 and with a constant increase this

number reached to \$1480 (World Bank, 2018). Pakistan got embroiled in an energy crisis just before the 2008 elections and it haunted the country for almost decade. The shortfall between demand of electricity and supply was plugged by early harvest projects under the CPEC umbrella. Doctors have repeatedly protested inequalities between them and other well-off departments. The Pakistani state has proved itself to be helpless to prevent incursions into its sovereignty by foreign powers and, more recently, has found itself bound by the activism of its own judiciary. External debt a detailed explanation of external debt and consolidation of democracy is reserved for the next chapter. Pakistan's GDP slowed during the first fiscal year of PTI government, as it set into motion, stabilization measures. These measures were depreciation of exchange rate (25%), sizeable cut in the development budget, increase in energy prices and revision of policy rates by 575bps. These measures pulled back private consumption by the previous year of 6.8 to 4.1 in Fiscal year 2019. Similarly, a visible reduction in investment as it contracted by 8.9% and the industrial growth lowered to 1.4 percent. The growth sluggishness saw not even agriculture sector being spared as the growth level fell to 0.8 percent. Inflation rate increased significantly as it rose to 7.3 percent compared to 3.9 during the previous year. The only success story came from the deficit account as the gap decreased to 13.5 billion dollars. However, this gap was partly resulting of reduction of transport and services machinery. In one of the articles published by Dawn in 2016, it reflected it upon the rising of levels of inequality in Pakistan. The article mentions that the 20 percent rich of the country consumes seven times more than 20 percent of the poor. Though it's a global phenomenon that even though levels of poverty have fallen but the levels of inequality have gone up (Dawn, 2016).

Industrialization and Urbanization: Pakistan has the highest rate of urbanization and according to 2017 census, the number stood at 36.4 per cent. A more modified definition of urban settlements, the data suggests the number could be around 40.6 percent. Urbanization in number of countries has not been accompanied by growth, jobs and productivity. Urbanization, which entails without sound public policies, lead to urban slums, increasing environmental degradation, poverty and inequality. However, of the few positives of this urbanization, is the breaking power of quasi-feudal elites. Pakistan's urban population rise is relative to its overall population. On the other hand, Industrialization in Pakistan was negligible at the time of independence. Pakistan is a long way from becoming an industrialized society as the economy is moving from agriculture to low-end services, mainly retail and wholesale trade, which essentially do not require significant investment of capital or a skilled workforce. Such growth runs into problem (restrictions) if the purchasing power is limited. Purchasing power does not increase if the workforce is not trained to work in higher-value commodity producing sectors. Pakistan's ability to produce processed goods can be linked to shrinking industrial output and a reduction in gross capital. In such an eventuality, it is now dependent on imported processed goods. Another reason for this dependency is due to Pakistan's entrenchment in a vicious cycle that imports from big manufacturing sectors and produces low-valued goods domestically.

Manufacturing sector has shrunk from 2007 onwards, with mostly the domestic issues to blame.

Education: A widely used index for measuring educational attainment is the UN's education index, which is one of the three components of human development index. The education index is formed as a composite of two factors: literacy rate and gross enrollment rate. The index has a maximum of 100. In terms of the first component of the education index (i.e. the literacy rate), Pakistan's literacy rate for the year 2014 stood at 57 (UNDP: HDR, 2014). Though Pakistan has made a great deal of improvement in recent decades, it still remains far from the realization of large part of literate population. Pakistan's gross enrollment for the year 2017 stood at 10 per cent. On the other hand, Pakistan education index in 2018 stood at 152.

Access to alternate platform of Information: As Pakistan entered the 21st century its media was limited state run PTV (Pakistan Television). It was during President Musharraf's rule in the year 2002 that media was liberalized and soon after a large number of channels were granted licenses to operate. By the end of 2018, the strength of licensed TV channels (including news and entertainment channels) stood at 88 and the number of radio stations were 209 (PEMRA Report, 2018). Although presence of different channels of information provides people with alternate platforms to seek information but how free these channels are is also an important pillar for the cause of democracy. RSF maintains documents Press Freedom Index and Pakistan stood at 139 numbers for the year 2018, which is a disappointing number which Pakistan is going through a democratic period. Electronic mass media was at its peak around a decade ago, at time when it helped in ousting a military ruler, lectured governments on governance and championed the cause of New Pakistan and was major instrument for Imran Khan's ride into power. However, it now faces credibility issues a stiff competition from social media, as most of the young population have switched this platform for news and information (Dawn, 2019).

Size of Middle Class: According to well-known political economist of Pakistan S. Akbar Zaidi, middle class in the country has grown rapidly in the last 15-20 years due to increase in remittances sent home by Pakistani's living abroad and a surge in foreign investment. According to Zaidi, middle class in Pakistan is packed with people on the basis of different consumer goods it purchases (washing machines to motorcycles). Further, incomes levels are also used to configure a person's class. Based on these indicators, Pakistan's middle class by 2017 hovered around 38 per cent of the total population. This increase is largely attributed to foreign investment after 2002, had a trickledown effect on lives of thousands. Increased levels of education and representation among political parties also reflect the growth of the middle class. (The Express Tribune, 2017).

Human Development: Pakistan's human development index during the year 2018 stood at 0.562, which falls among medium human development countries.

For a comparison of other regional countries HDI of India was 0.640, Nepal was 0.574, Bangladesh was 0.608, Sri Lanka 0.770, Bhutan 0.612 and that of Maldives was 0.717. Even though during the previous decades Pakistan has been consistently improving on the human development index, it still has the lowest among the south Asian countries and 150th among the world (UNDP: HDR, 2018).

Income Distribution

The GINI Coefficient, instead of going down in Pakistan has gone up when compared with the figures of 1990s and the current run of democracy since 2008 (World Bank, 2015,2017). This is bound to happen as Pakistan's current account deficit ran up reached up to \$ 18 billion by the end of fiscal year 2018 (Econobserevr, 2018).

Freedom House Rating: Pakistan was categorized as 'partly free' according to 2018 annual report released by the freedom house. Pakistan 4.5 out of 7 (where 1: most free and 7: least free) in its freedom ratings. The country ranked 4 and 5 out of 7 in freedom of political rights and civil liberties respectively. This ranking was based on Pakistan's electoral process, political pluralism and participation, the functioning of the government, freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights. Further, the report viewed Pakistan as a country, which holds regular elections and multiple parties participate in the process. However, some strong words are used for the military for the influence enjoyed or exerted by the institution. On political rights and civil liberties, the report expressed concerned on the procedures adopted for removal of Nawaz Sharif as prime minister. On the question of free and fair media, the report finds that media enjoyed a large degree of freedom but employs caution due to power state agencies enjoy to, hold media within its` ranks through different laws and regulations. On 'rule of law' though Supreme Court exercises its independence, the lower courts are marked by endemic problems such as corruption, low conviction rate and a large backlog of cases. While, Pakistan did reasonably well on quite a few indicators of freedom house, but the concern of this study is non-material rights of its population. As discussed before in this chapter, when the state finds a gap between needs plus desires of the people, then the first reaction of the state is cut on the non-material rights of the population. These include freedom of expression, right to information, right to assembly and association. This is exactly what happened in Pakistan; let's analyze the regime of PML-N's rule of 2013-2018 (Freedom House Report, 2018).

Conclusion

A measure of state capacity, people's desire and distribution of resources puts democratic future in Pakistan in an uncertain situation. Due to increased middle class, a concerted effort is maintained to extract maximum benefits from the state. In this new scenario, in which state is faced with a large middle class, coupled with increased levels of awareness due to alternate platforms of information, more

university graduates, more urbanized population on one hand and on the other hand, state is facing a constant pressure on its availability resources. The state of Pakistan finds itself in a difficult position where the state is unable to cope with an over-developed society. These conditions have led to an unhealthy interaction between the Pakistani state and its people. The state has reacted by squeezing the space for dissent by limiting the degree of freedom enjoyed by alternate platforms of information and even content on social media is also being observed closely. Measures of the socio-economic indicators affirm a positive relationship between health of interaction between state and society has on consolidation of democracy.

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