

Globalization and its Impact on Democratic Development in Pakistan

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Abstract

Globalization is the inevitable process by which some countries of the world are benefited and some are badly affected by its influences. Globalization offers opportunities and also poses challenges, especially to developing countries. This paper describes the structure of democratic system of the Pakistan and explores the influences of globalization on the democratic development of a developing country Pakistan. The study analyzes the democratic development in Pakistan concerning the factors that have been major impediments to the process of the democratic development of the country and how globalization influences the democratic development of a developing country such as Pakistan. Finally, the paper presents a framework for the factors that are deemed vital for strengthening the democratic system of the country in order to ascertain the challenges of globalization in future.

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Introduction

The term globalization has been defined in many ways, but in the context of democracy it has been defined as follows:

“Globalization is the integration and democratization of the world culture, economy and infrastructure through transitional investment, rapid proliferation of communication and information technologies.” (Mujahid, 2002)

In spite of many concerns and apprehensions, globalization has become a fact of modern life of people and nations. The countries having weak democratic institutions and that are externally dependent on economies become vulnerable under the pressure of globalization. The extent to which a country can cope with globalization depends on the strength of its democratic institutions and its capacity to diversify its economy.

Globalization derives from conscious policy decisions which may serve to enhance or even erode the capacity of a country to become a part of the globalization process. Many countries are left with little choice but to embrace globalization-oriented policies (Sobhan, 2007).

The globalization process includes the concept of a free market or free economy, in which the free market must be allowed to function without interference of respective governments. The idea behind this is that a government must remove all barriers that prevent the full and free operation and movement of goods and services, capital, movement of firms, and financial institutions. In theory, globalization is good for all, but in reality, globalization was designed by developing countries on behalf of their companies and financial institutions. It is too dangerous to allow the free market and global institutions to usurp the role of governments (Mohammad, 2002).

The main objective behind the concept of globalization is to overcome the regulations set up by the developing countries to promote their domestic economy and local firms. Following these policies can bring new opportunities to the country but on the other hand it can also create enormous risk that will severely “hit” the prosperity of a country, as we have seen in the case of East Asia and Argentina. The national governments of developing countries, in order to protect their national prosperity and economy, should design national policies by themselves rather than letting global institutions or other countries carry out such policy designs on their behalf. Since its independence, Pakistan has passed through much political turmoil. It has been in a unique position on the road to democratic development. During its 60-year history, Pakistan had oscillated between autocratic regimes, military governments, and democratic governments (Bertucci, 2001).

This research paper focuses on describing the democratic development of Pakistan in the age of globalization. It has been divided into five parts. The first part consists of the introduction; the second part describes the structure of democracy and its institutions, which are part of the democratic system of the country. In the third part, how globalization can affect any developing country, possessing weak or strong democratic institutions, is discussed. In the fourth part, the trends of democratic and military rule during the years since its independence are described, and how Pakistan as a developing country and due to an unstable democratic process, has experienced negative effects regarding the development of country. Also discussed are the factors that have hindered the democratic development of Pakistan. Finally, a framework is provided, which is consisting of the main factors that are beneficial in strengthening the democratic process of Pakistan.

Structure of Democracy in Pakistan.

The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan provides a federal parliamentary system of government, with the president as the head of state and the popularly elected prime minister as head of government. The federal legislature, Majlis-e-Shoora (parliament) is composed of two legislative bodies, the national assembly and the senate. The constitution also provides for the president to address the two houses assembled together at the commencement of the first session after general elections.

The parliamentary system includes the right of the people to select in free and fair elections; their representatives for the provincial assembly at the provincial level and the national assembly at the national level. These two bodies enact laws under a constitutional arrangement that enables those representatives to act in the interest of the people as they perceive them. These representatives are to be selected for a set term of 5 years, after which they must face the electorate again in a free and fair election that will decide their retention in or their dismissal from office (Mujahid, 2002).

National Assembly

The national assembly is elected for a five-year term on the basis of an adult franchise system. Seats are allocated to each of the four provinces on the basis of population. National assembly members serve for the parliamentary term, which is five years, unless they die or resign sooner, or unless the national assembly is dissolved. The tenure of the national assembly also comes to an end if dissolved on the advice of the prime minister. The vast majority of the members are Muslims and about 5 percent of the seats are reserved for minorities, including Christians, Hindus,

and Sikhs. During the same period, the elections for minority seats are also held separately. The prime minister is elected by holding a secret ballot voting in the national assembly and chief ministers of the respective provinces are also elected by holding a secret ballot voting in the respective provincial assembly. The ministers of the respective ministries at the national level are called federal ministers and the ministers of the respective ministries at the provincial level are called provincial ministers. The federal cabinet assists the prime minister. The members of that cabinet are appointed by the president on the advice of the prime minister. The federal cabinet consists of the federal ministers, the minister of state, and advisors of the prime ministers (Mujahid, 2002).

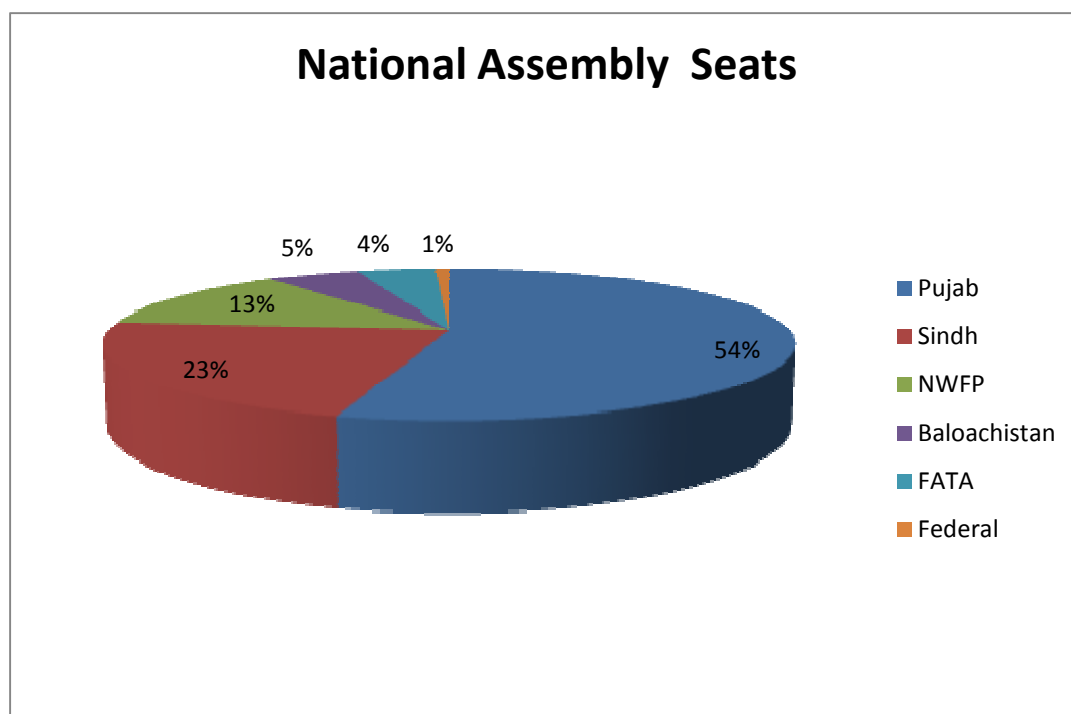
Composition of National Assembly

The national assembly is one of the houses of parliament. It consists of 342 elected members from the country. Amongst these members, 60 seats are reserved for women and 10 seats are reserved for minorities. The breakup of 342 seats is shown in the following table (Mujahid, 2002).

Table 1: Composition of National Assembly

| Type of Seats | Punjab | Sindh | NWFP | Balochistan | FATA | Federal Capital | Total |
|---------------|--------|-------|------|-------------|------|-----------------|-------|
| General | 148 | 61 | 35 | 14 | 12 | 02 | 272 |
| Women | 35 | 14 | 08 | 03 | -- | -- | 60 |
| Minorities | -- | --- | --- | --- | --- | -- | 10 |
| Total | 183 | 75 | 43 | 17 | 12 | 02 | 342 |

Figure 1: National assembly seats by percent amongst provinces



Senate

The senate is a permanent legislative body which symbolizes the process of continuity in national affairs. The term of its members is six years; however, one-half of its members retire after every three years. A casual vacancy in the senate, caused by resignation, death, incapacitation, disqualification or removal of a member, is filled through election by the respective electoral college. A person seeking election to the senate should be a graduate of not less than thirty years of age and should be registered as a voter in an area or province from where he seeks election and should meet other qualifications prescribed under Article 62 and 63 of the constitution. After the senate has been duly constituted, at its first meeting, it elects a chairman and a deputy chairman from amongst its members. Whenever the office of the chairman or the deputy chairman becomes vacant, the senate elects another member as chairman or as the case may be, the deputy chairman. The term of office of the chairman and deputy chairman is three years (Mujahid, 2002).

The senate is in the upper house of parliament and is a permanent legislative body. It has equal representation from each of the four provinces. The members of the senate are elected by the members of their respective provincial assemblies. According to the constitution, if the office of the president becomes vacant, the chairman of the senate is next in line to act as president until such time as the new president can be formally elected. Both houses of parliament can pass any legislation in the national interest of the country, except finance bills, and only the national assembly can approve the federal budget and all finance bills. The president may prevent passage of any other bill unless the legislature in joint sitting overrules the president by a majority of members of both houses by voting (Mujahid, 2002).

Composition of Senate

The senate consists of 100 members, as shown in the following table.

Table 2: Senate seats amongst provinces

| Name of Province | Number of Seats |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Sindh | 22 |
| Punjab | 22 |
| North-west Frontier province | 22 |
| Baluchistan | 22 |
| Federal Capital | 4 |
| Federally Administered Areas | 8 |
| Total | 100 |

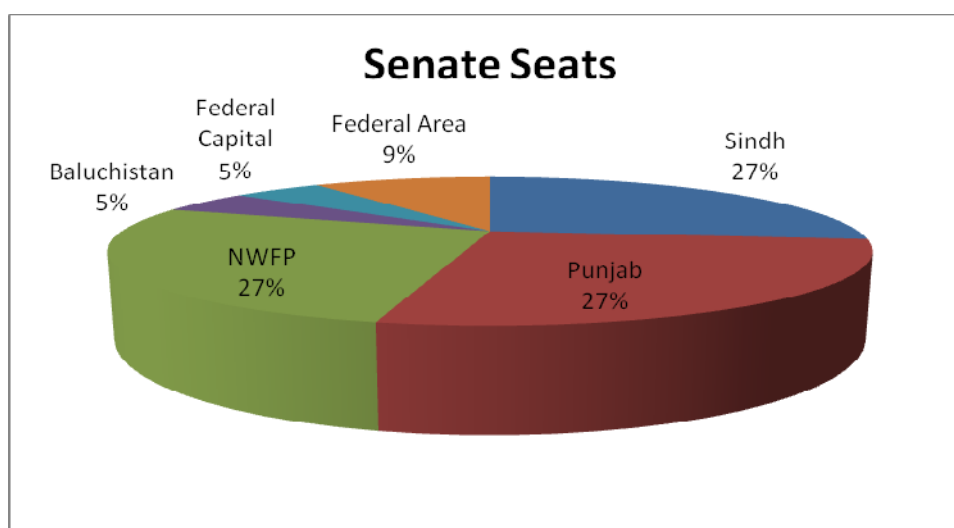


Figure 2: Senate seats by percent amongst provinces

Central Election Commission

The election commission of Pakistan was established on the 23rd of March, 1956. It is headed by the chief election commissioner. According to the constitution of Pakistan, it is an independent and autonomous constitutional body responsible for conducting transparent free, fair and impartial elections to the national and provincial assemblies. The chief election commissioner is also responsible for holding the election of president and senate (Mujahid, 2002).

Democratic Process in Pakistan.

The democratic practices have usually been disrupted by the military takeovers or some other form of civil-cum-military government supported by undemocratic forces. Therefore, democratic norms and values are still in the nascent stage of development.

Many observers have identified several pitfalls in the democratic process, which are deemed by them as major impediments to the establishment of a successful democratic process. Some observers stress constitutional and electoral provisions amongst institutional factors that have undermined a fair democratic process and other observers have pointed out the quality of leadership which has undermined the democratic process in the country. According to their point of view, a political leadership led by unprincipled figures and motivated by raw ambition, material gain, and vested interests are major hurdles in strengthening the democratic process (Ahmed, 2009).

There has been no effort made in educating the people to accept democracy through meaningful participation. The lack of public awareness and effective public opinion provides wider room for ambitious and corrupt political

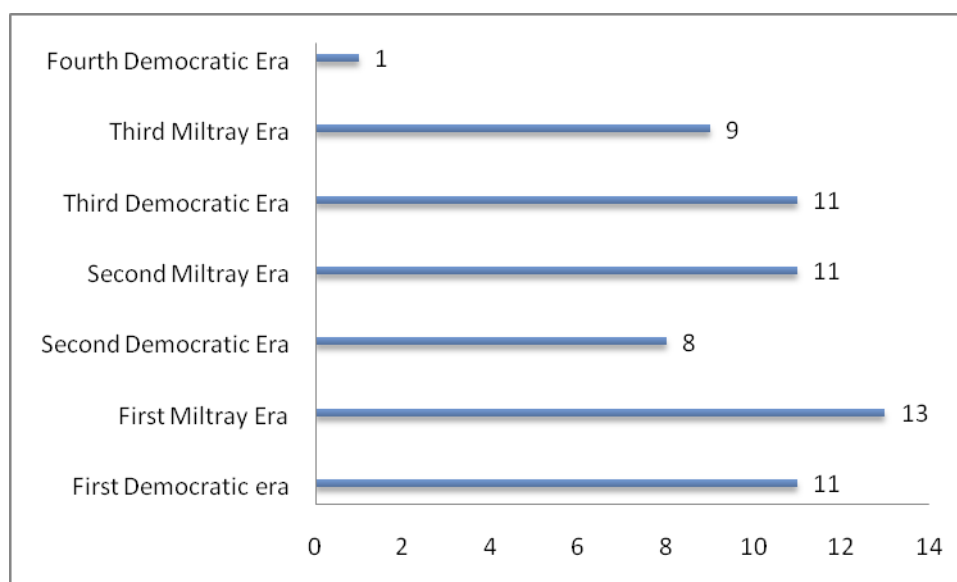
leaders. Some observers believe that an inherited feudal system, elite bureaucracy and military takeovers by ambitious generals have been the major impediments to the development of the democratic process in Pakistan (Ahmed, 2009).

Throughout the 64-year history of Pakistan, four military generals have cooped against the democratic government on one or other pretext and the rest of the democratic governments have been dismissed by their civilian presidents. The military generals toppled the democratic government by propagating the corruption, inefficiency, and inability of the government to run the state of affairs. Despite the revival of the democratic process from time to time, it always has been seen with an eye of suspicion and untrustworthiness in solving the problems of the masses. The following table shows the trend of democratic and military rule throughout the history of Pakistan (Ahmed, 2009).

Table 3: Trends of Democratic and Military Rule in Pakistan

| Trends of Democratic and Military Rule in Pakistan | | |
|--|----|-----------|
| First Democratic era | 11 | |
| First Miltray Era | 13 | |
| Second Demacratc Era | 8 | |
| Second Miltray Era | 11 | |
| Third Democratic Era | 11 | |
| Third Miltray Era | 9 | |
| Fourth Democratic Era | 1 | continued |
| Total | 64 | |

Figure 3: The trends of democratic and military rule in the history of Pakistan.



The above graph presents the picture of military takeover and democratic government rule in the history of Pakistan. Out of the 64-year life of the country, 31 years have been ruled by democratic governments and 33 years have been ruled military generals by toppling the existing democratic government of that time. The upsurge of fundamentalist Islamic parties and militancy has been more detrimental than any other factor to the democratic process. The weak democratic institutions and practices have emboldened these elements to deviate the public from the path of democratic norms.

However, many analysts seriously question the compatibility of Islamic doctrine with the more liberal conception of democracy. The popularity of Islamic parties in many cities and towns is largely of a protest nature and comes from the denial of a trustworthy political process. The major vote bank of Islamic parties lies mostly in the religious madras and religious institutions situated in particular towns and cities of the country, such as Peshawar, Punjab, and tribal areas. (Ahmed, 2009)

The democratic process in Pakistan has always remained fragile and strained and has not been able to create a sense of participation amongst the population. The low turnover of voters in the election process is a clear example of the indifferent attitude of the populous regarding the democratic process. The imbalance of power and inequalities at different levels of social and political life still persist, and those inequalities generate unequal opportunities at large. Though democracy has been adopted as a system of governance, it has yet to find roots in the attitudes of society and as well as the state. Feudal structures and traditions, class stratification, and an environment of discrimination and intolerance still prevail at large in the society. They have become a hindrance to the democratization of the state and its institutions.

The major factors that have hindered the democratic development of the country are displayed in the following framework (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Major factors that have hindered the democratic development of the country

Keeping in view the above factors in the framework, it can be seen that the democratic development process in Pakistan has been dismantled by military takeovers from time to time and that has opened the opportunity for weak and unprincipled leadership, backed by the undemocratic forces in the country. Consequently, the governments formed were headed by unprincipled leadership, which lacked the autonomy necessary for decision making. The weak governments of that era were not able to make timely decisions in response to globalization-oriented policies that could have protected the national interest of the country in terms of social and economic development.

Globalization's impact on Democratic Institutions

In most third world countries, the commitment to globalization does not necessarily originate in a democratic mandate. The distinctive feature of third world

countries lies in their relatively under-developed democratic institutions as well as the weak voice of civil society in projecting its concerns before the state. The extent to which the state responds to the democratic aspirations of its citizens measures the health of the democratic system (Held, 1997).

This weak governance reflects the lower levels of democratization in these countries, and these weaknesses in the democratic process have led to poor governance. The reasons for poor governance are related to political history, economic structure, institutions, and the social set up of a particular country (Sobhan, 2007).

The exposure of developing countries having weak democratic institutions could not respond effectively to the influence of globalization on their social and economic development. The extent to which freedom of actions is compromised depends on the strength of democratic institutions, economic structure, and the capacity for effective governance. The growing influence of globalization and its impact on the autonomy of decision making is very well perceived in the developing countries (Rudra, 2005).

A country with a strong economy and political base can negotiate better terms of engagement with the globalization-oriented policies so that the term of their choices may closely reflect the concerns of their electorate (Sobhan, 2007).

Continuing with the above discussion related to the influence of the globalization process in Pakistan, the key elements have been identified in the following framework. It shows that how globalization process may influence the autonomy of the decision making of the elected democratic government. These key elements provide a comprehensive picture of how governments with weak democratic institutions become vulnerable to the globalization process.



Figure 5: A comprehensive picture of how a weak democratic process become vulnerable to globalization process.

The above framework indicates that a weak democratic process forms weak governments in the respective countries, which may deliver poor governance to the country. The weak government lacks will power of making decisions to cope up with expected affects of the globalization process at the National level. Consequently that government could not be able to set better terms and agreements that may reflect better future prospects on the national level of the country in terms of the economic, social, and technological development of the country.

The democratic process demands that a large number of people should be persuaded at the time of finalizing policy that such a process is advantageous for them as individuals and for the country as a whole.

Democratizing the Benefits of Globalization

If globalization is not a challenge to democracy then it has democratize its benefits at the global and national levels. The reality of globalization process indicates that it exhibits a tendency to deliver very limited benefits at national level of the developing country. If the people are to be benefited from globalization, they have to

be given a direct stake in the process. This stake may extend from enhanced job opportunities for the working poor, better schools, proper health care facilities, better networks of roads, regular power supply, and a stable market and improved security for all (Schwartzman, 1998).

In terms of drawing benefits from the globalization process, the main factors have been mentioned in the following framework that shows that how developing countries with strong democratic institutions can embrace the benefits from the globalization-oriented policies that may be fit their national interest in term of the economic and social development of the respective country.



Figure 6: A comprehensive picture of how a strong democratic process become the Benefits to globalization.

The above framework indicates that a strong democratic process forms strong governments which can deliver good governance to the country. The strong government possesses strong will of decision making to set the terms and agreements necessary to democratize the benefits of the globalization process at the national level. Developing countries like Malaysia, Taiwan, and South Korea are clear examples of countries that possess a strong democratic system. These governments have a independence in decision making and become able to yield the benefits of globalization at the national level.

Evaluation of Globalization Influence.

The most critical issue at the national level is how a developing country like Pakistan should approach the globalization process effectively so that it can materialize opportunities for the future of the country. It can be argued that in order to cope with the influence of globalization, a developing country like Pakistan needs to build a strong democratic system and to strengthen the institutions of its civil society. Pakistan as a state can only build its strength through consolidating its democratic mandate. A weak state is the product of a weak democratic system, which can surrender its decision making as a privilege to external forces. A strong democratic mandate would give the state greater authority to negotiate reform programs which could command sizable popular support.

Pakistan as a developing country has gone through democratic turmoil from time to time after its independence. Consequently weak government formed in the country and become unable to set viable policies in response to globalization.. Thus, as a developing country, without analyzing its weaknesses or strengths, it adopted a free market policy and opened up its economy to the globalization process. The result was that the globalization process became detrimental to the economic prosperity of the country and brought negative effects on the economic and social development of the country. It can be analyzed from the current social and economic development of the country, which now totally relies on foreign aid and assistance from different corners of the world, i.e. the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and assistance from different countries such the U.S.A., China, Japan, and the U.A.E (Yousuf, 2001).

Framework for Strengthening the Democratic System

Pakistan's democratic system requires greater decentralization and a better enabling environment for the strengthening of its civil society. In order to strengthen the democratic system, the parliamentary conduct of political parties must be re-modified in the manner that each political party must obey that conduct. The arbitrary restrictions on constitutional rights and fundamental freedoms may be withdrawn to let people follow the principle of freedom of expression. A culture of tolerance and practicing democratic norms may be adopted by the political parties and allow common people to exercise their freedom of expression by their own will, not by force or threat.

In this study, the improvement and modification of the following factors provided in the framework could be helpful in strengthening the democratic process of the country.



Figure 7: Strengthening Democratic Process.

The above framework-4 states that strengthening civil society, freedom of constitutional rights, and freedom of expression will help to promote the democratic culture and values among the public at the root level, where every common citizens can exercise their freedom by casting votes in a free and fair environment. Similarly, the practice of democratic norms, a culture of tolerance, and parliamentary conduct of political parties will create a viable democratic environment so that political parties contest in a fair and free manner.

Conclusion

After nine years of military government, the democratic process in Pakistan has restarted, but new challenges have cropped up in the meantime, i.e. terrorism, extremism, and economic difficulties. There are also many challenges to the new democratic setup; but at least the process has begun. For the first time, election results have been accepted by a broad segment of society, even by those parties that have lost in the election, which is a rare thing in Pakistan. All institutions, such as the national assembly, the senate, and the president, have been elected following genuine real democratic norms.

The fact is that true democracy can only flourish when democratic practices are allowed to prevail under the supremacy of an unchanged constitution. The inefficient and incapable political leaders may continue to participate and seek power, but the people of Pakistan will also learn about and understand democratic values and responsibilities over a period of time.

Globalization is an inevitable process, and developing countries must carefully choose the combination of policies that best enables them to grasp opportunities from the globalization environment. Countries should wisely decide, what needed to liberalize and what needed to be protected in the national interest.

Globalization is such a complex phenomenon that every democratic or undemocratic country is under its influence. Globalization does not directly affect the democratic development of any country but it is the democratic development of the country which faces the influence of globalization and sketch out befitting strategies to

cope with the influence of the globalization. The countries that have sustained the influence of globalization have become able to bring socio-economic development to their country.

It can be concluded that strong democratic institutions in a country have a far reaching impact on the socio-economic development of the country. The country with weak democratic institutions lack the capability of embracing benefits from globalization, and a country with strong democratic institutions possesses sufficient capability to explore and grasp the opportunities which may be viable for the socio-economic development of the country.

It can also be concluded that democratic development affects the way in which globalization is approached. The benefits of globalization are totally dependent on the way its influence is approached, keeping in view the strengths and weaknesses of the socio-economic and industrial infra-structure of the country.

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