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Democracy v/s Dictatorship in Pakistan: Evaluating the Impact of Political Regimes on Pakistan-India Relations



Abstract: *Pakistan is a South-Asian state having a history of instability since independence. The instability is majorly a contribution by continuous political changes which had been an important aspect in shaping Pakistan-India relations. This study examines the impact of political regimes on Pakistan- India relations through a comparative analysis of dictatorships and democratic governments in Pakistan. The research aims to evaluate whether the nature of the political regime in Pakistan influences its relations with India. The study uses a mixed-methods approach to analyze the historical and contemporary bilateral relations between Pakistan and India under different political regimes in Pakistan. The findings of this research contribute to the understanding of the factors that shape Pakistan-India relations and highlight the importance of political regimes in shaping foreign policy. The results suggest that democratic governments in Pakistan have had a relatively more positive impact on bilateral relations with India compared to dictatorships.*

Key Words: Democracy, Dictatorship, Pakistan, Pak-India Relations, Political Regime

Introduction

Pakistan is a country that has been characterized by a tumultuous political history, which has oscillated between periods of democratic governance and military rule. This has been a major factor in shaping the country's relationship with India, its neighboring country, and a critical geopolitical player in the region. The political dynamics in Pakistan have had a direct impact on its foreign policy and have affected its relationship with India in both positive and negative ways. Understanding the interplay between these factors is critical to comprehend the complex nature of Pak-India relations.

Over the last decade, Pakistan has witnessed a significant shift in its political landscape, with the emergence of a new government that was elected through democratic means. This marked a departure from the previous decade, which was characterized by a period of military rule. As a result of this change, the country's foreign policy towards India has been altered, leading to a reconfiguration of Pak-India relations. The shift in

Pakistan's political dynamics has brought forth a unique opportunity to analyze the impact of political systems on foreign policy and international relations.

This research paper aims to evaluate the effect of political changes in Pakistan on Pak-India relations, with a specific focus on the comparison between democracy and dictatorship. It seeks to examine the historical context and current political situation in Pakistan and its implications for foreign policy, particularly about India. Through this analysis, this paper seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the complex interplay between political systems, foreign policy, and international relations, with a focus on Pakistan and its neighbor, India. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between political systems and foreign policy in Pakistan, this study will offer valuable insights into the dynamics of Pak-India relations and the broader implications for regional stability and security.

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Research Questions

1. How the change in the political system, democracy, and dictatorship has affected Pakistan?
2. Analyzing, with suitable type of political system which has played a positive role in shaping Pakistan-India relations? Discussing their strengths and weaknesses for Pakistan as well.
3. What regime has proved to be a champion for Pakistan to maintain good economic ties with India?

Dictatorship

“Dictatorship is a form of government where a single person or a small group of people have complete control and power over the country. The ruler(s) hold all authority and make decisions without input or participation from the citizens. In a dictatorship, individual rights and freedoms are often limited or completely disregarded, and the government uses force and fear to maintain its control. There is no free and fair election, and the ruler(s) often gain power through force or manipulation” (Britannica)

Brief Overview of Dictatorial Regimes in Pakistan

Pakistan has a history of several military dictatorships, during which the military assumed direct or indirect control of the government. Here is a brief overview of the major military regimes in Pakistan:

Ayub Khan Regime (1958-1969)

General Ayub Khan assumed power in a bloodless coup in 1958 and ruled as a military dictator for 11 years. During his regime, Pakistan experienced rapid economic growth and modernization, but there was little political freedom and opposition parties were banned. (Choudhury, march 1961)

Yahya Khan Regime (1969-1971)

General Yahya Khan took power after Ayub Khan and his rule was marked by political turmoil and

violence. The military crackdown on East Pakistan led to the Bangladesh Liberation War and the eventual independence of Bangladesh. (Rizvi, 2000)

Zia-ul-Haq Regime (1977-1988)

General Zia-ul-Haq seized power in a coup in 1977 and ruled for 11 years. His regime was marked by the implementation of Islamic laws, the suppression of political opposition, and human rights abuses. Zia-ul-Haq died in a plane crash in 1988. (Ali, 2021)

Musharraf Regime (1999-2008)

General Pervez Musharraf took power in a bloodless coup in 1999 and ruled as a military dictator for nine years. During his regime, there was some economic growth and modernization, but there were also human rights abuses and restrictions on political freedom. Musharraf resigned in 2008 under pressure from mass protests and the threat of impeachment. (Alam,2020)

The military dictatorships in Pakistan have been marked by varying degrees of economic growth and modernization, but also by political repression, human rights abuses, and suppression of opposition.

Advantages of Dictatorship in Pakistan

Strong and centralized leadership

In a dictatorship, there is often a single individual or a small group of people who hold absolute power and make all the decisions. This can lead to quick and decisive action, without the need for time-consuming consultations or debates.

Stable government

Dictatorships tend to be more stable than democracies because they do not have to contend with opposition parties, interest groups, or frequent elections. This can be particularly important in a country like Pakistan, which has a history of political instability.

Economic development

Dictatorships can be effective in implementing

economic policies that promote growth and development. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, Pakistan's military rulers implemented a series of economic reforms that led to rapid industrialization and growth.

Disadvantages of Dictatorship in Pakistan

Lack of political freedom and human rights

In a dictatorship, the government has the power to suppress political opposition and limit individual freedoms. This can lead to human rights abuses and a lack of political pluralism.

Corruption

Without checks and balances, dictatorships can be prone to corruption and nepotism. This can lead to a concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a small elite, while the rest of the population suffers.

Lack of accountability

Dictatorships do not have the same level of accountability as democracies, as there is no mechanism for holding leaders accountable for their actions. This can lead to abuses of power, including censorship, torture, and extrajudicial killings.

While dictatorship in Pakistan may have some potential advantages such as strong leadership, stability, and economic development, these must be weighed against the significant disadvantages of political repression, corruption, and a lack of accountability. Ultimately, democracy remains the best system for promoting the long-term well-being of the people and protecting their basic rights and freedoms.

Democracy

“Democracy is a form of government where the people have the power to choose their leaders and participate in decision-making processes. It means that citizens can vote for their leaders and have a say in how they are governed. It is a system that values individual rights and freedoms, equality,

accountability, and transparency” (Democracy, 2020)

Brief Overview of Democratic Periods in Pakistan

Pakistan has experienced several periods of democratic rule, interspersed with periods of military rule, since its independence in 1947. Here is a brief overview of the democratic periods in Pakistan:

First Constituent Assembly (1947-1951)

Pakistan's first Constituent Assembly was elected in 1947, and it adopted the country's first constitution in 1951. However, this period was marred by political instability, with frequent changes in government and disputes between the central government and the provinces. (Ahmad)

First democratic government (1971-1977)

After a period of military rule, Pakistan held its first democratic elections in 1971. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the Prime Minister and his government implemented several social and economic reforms, but also faced allegations of corruption and repression of political opponents. (The Bhutto Years, 1971–1977, 2004)

Second democratic government (1988-1999)

After another period of military rule, Pakistan held elections in 1988 and Benazir Bhutto became the country's first female Prime Minister. Her government was also marked by allegations of corruption and political instability and was dismissed twice by the President on charges of corruption and mismanagement. (Khan, 2015)

Third democratic government (2008-2013)

After a decade of military rule, Pakistan held elections in 2008 and Asif Ali Zardari became the President, while Yousaf Raza Gilani became the Prime Minister. This period was marked by significant challenges, including terrorism, economic instability, and political polarization. (Zikria, 2019)

Fourth democratic government (2013-2018)

In the 2013 elections, Nawaz Sharif became the Prime Minister, and his government focused on economic development and improving relations with neighboring countries. However, his government was also accused of corruption and political repression. (The third administration of Nawaz Sharif)

Fifth democratic government (2018-present)

In the 2018 elections, Imran Khan became the Prime Minister, and his government has focused on economic reforms, anti-corruption efforts, and improving governance. However, his government has also faced criticism for restricting freedom of the press and human rights abuses. (Fraser, 2022)

Advantages of Democracy in Pakistan

Political pluralism

In a democracy, there is a greater degree of political pluralism, allowing for the representation of diverse voices and interests. This can lead to more inclusive and representative governance.

Protection of human rights

Democratic systems tend to offer greater protection of human rights, including freedom of speech, assembly, and religion. This is important in a country like Pakistan, which has a history of human rights abuses.

Accountability

Democracies have mechanisms for holding leaders accountable to the people, including through free and fair elections, independent media, and civil society. This can help to prevent corruption and abuse of power.

Disadvantages of Democracy in Pakistan

Political instability

Democracy in Pakistan has been marked by political instability, with frequent changes in government and an inability to form stable

coalitions. This can hinder the country's development and stability.

Corruption

While democracy can provide mechanisms for accountability and transparency, it does not guarantee that leaders will not engage in corrupt practices. Corruption remains a major issue in Pakistan's democratic system.

Sectarian and ethnic tensions

Democratic systems in Pakistan have often been characterized by sectarian and ethnic tensions, with parties often aligning along these lines. This can lead to polarization and conflict within society. (Miller, 2015)

Strength of Democracy for Pakistan

Inclusivity

Democracy encourages the participation of all citizens in the political process, regardless of their social or economic status. This can lead to greater inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives in the decision-making process.

Accountability

In a democracy, leaders are held accountable by the people through free and fair elections. This can help to ensure that leaders are responsive to the needs and desires of the people they represent

Protection of individual rights

Democratic governments typically guarantee the protection of individual rights, such as freedom of speech, religion, and association. This can help to create a society that is more tolerant and respectful of differences.

Weaknesses of Democracy for Pakistan

Instability

Democratic governments can be prone to instability, particularly when there is significant political polarization or when multiple parties are competing for power. This can lead to frequent changes in leadership and policy, which can be disruptive for the country.

Corruption

Democracies can also be susceptible to corruption, particularly if there is weak enforcement of campaign finance laws or if politicians are more concerned with serving their interests than those of the public.

Gridlock

Democracies often require consensus-building and compromise to pass legislation or make policy decisions. In some cases, this can lead to gridlock and paralysis in the government. (Contributors, 2017)

Strength of Dictatorship for Pakistan

Stability

Dictatorships often provide a sense of stability and predictability, since decisions are made by a small group of people rather than a large and diverse population. This can be particularly appealing in a country that has experienced frequent political turmoil.

Efficiency

Dictatorships can also be more efficient in terms of decision-making since there is no need to build consensus or engage in lengthy debates. This can allow for more rapid implementation of policies and programs.

Economic growth

Some argue that dictatorships can be more effective at promoting economic growth since they are not beholden to the demands of special interest groups or the public at large.

Weaknesses of Dictatorship for Pakistan

Lack of accountability

In a dictatorship, leaders are not accountable to the people through free and fair elections. This can make it easier for leaders to act in their self-interest, rather than in the best interests of the country as a whole.

Suppression of individual rights

Dictatorships often suppress individual rights,

such as freedom of speech, religion, and association. This can create a society that is less tolerant and less respectful of differences

Lack of legitimacy

Dictatorships often lack the legitimacy that comes from being elected by the people. This can lead to resentment and mistrust among the population, which can undermine the stability of the government in the long run.

In conclusion, both democracy and dictatorship have their strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, the choice between the two will depend on the specific circumstances of the country and the values of its people. For Pakistan, which has a complex history and faces many challenges, it is important to carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of each form of government before making a decision. (Rashid, 2010)

Relationship of Pakistan with India under Dictatorships

The relationship between Pakistan and India has been tumultuous since both countries gained independence from the British in 1947. Since then, the two have fought several wars, including the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 which led to the creation of Bangladesh. During periods of dictatorship in Pakistan, the relationship between the two countries has been particularly strained. This is due, in part, to the authoritarian nature of the regimes and their tendency to prioritize national security, often at the expense of peace talks and diplomatic efforts.

For example, during General Zia-ul-Haq's regime (1977-1988), Pakistan actively supported Sikh separatists in Punjab, India, which strained relations with India. Additionally, Zia's support for the Mujahideen in Afghanistan further destabilized the region, including relations with India. (Singh, 1986) General Pervez Musharraf's regime (1999-2008) was marked by several crises with India, including the 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament and the 2008 Mumbai attacks. The Indian government blamed Pakistan for both incidents, and tensions between the two countries reached a new high. (Rana, 2021) Similarly, during General Zia's years in power, Pakistan's nuclear program became a point of contention between

the two countries. India conducted its first nuclear test in 1974, and Pakistan followed suit with its tests in 1998. The international community condemned both countries' nuclear testing, and the relationship between India and Pakistan further deteriorated. (Namboodiri,2009)

Overall, it can be said that during periods of dictatorship in Pakistan, the relationship between the two countries has been characterized by hostility and mistrust. This can be attributed to the authoritarian nature of the regimes, their focus on national security, and the tendency to prioritize military solutions over diplomatic efforts.

Relationship of Pakistan with India under the Dictatorship Regime

The relationship between Pakistan and India has been marked by periods of cooperation and conflict since the two countries gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947. Under democratic rule in Pakistan, there have been both periods of tension and opportunities for cooperation with India. Here are some key developments in the relationship between Pakistan and India under democracy in Pakistan:

The Simla Agreement

In 1972, the democratic government of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed the Simla Agreement with India, which aimed to resolve outstanding issues between the two countries through peaceful means. The agreement laid the foundation for future talks between the two countries, including on the issue of Kashmir. (Bhutto, 1972)

The Lahore Declaration

In 1999, the democratic government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif signed the Lahore Declaration with India, which aimed to improve bilateral relations and promote trade and cultural ties between the two countries. However, the declaration was short-lived as tensions soon flared up over the issue of Kashmir and the Kargil conflict. (Martain, 2011)

The Agra Summit

In 2001, the democratic government of President Pervez Musharraf held talks with Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Agra Summit, aimed at resolving the issue of Kashmir. However, the talks were unsuccessful, and tensions between the two countries soon flared up again. (Dixit, 2001)

The Composite Dialogue

In 2004, the democratic government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh initiated the Composite Dialogue with Pakistan, aimed at resolving all outstanding issues between the two countries, including the dispute over Kashmir. The dialogue covered a range of issues, including trade, people-to-people contacts, and security cooperation. (Gul, 2008)

The Mumbai Attacks

In 2008, the democratic government of President Asif Ali Zardari condemned the terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India, and cooperated with Indian authorities in investigating the attacks. However, tensions between the two countries remained high, with India accusing Pakistan of not doing enough to crack down on militant groups operating on its soil. (D'Souza, 2023)

The Kartarpur Corridor

In 2019, the democratic government of Prime Minister Imran Khan opened the Kartarpur Corridor, a border crossing between Pakistan and India for Sikh pilgrims to visit a holy site in Pakistan. The move was seen as a positive development in bilateral relations. However, tensions remain high, particularly in light of developments in Kashmir and Pakistan's alleged support of cross-border terrorism. (Kartarpur Corridor, 2019)

Overall, the relationship between Pakistan and India under democracy has been marked by periods of tension and cooperation, with democratic governments generally seeking to engage in dialogue with India to resolve outstanding issues and promote peace and stability in the region. However, the Kashmir dispute and other issues have remained major stumbling blocks to closer ties between the two countries.

Analyzing the Political System for Pakistan-India Relations

It is a complex issue that depends on multiple factors, including historical, cultural, economic, and strategic factors, as well as the policies and actions of leaders on both sides. However, in general, it can be argued that a democratic political system that prioritizes openness, transparency, and accountability can help foster positive relations between India and Pakistan. A democratic system allows for the participation of multiple stakeholders, including civil society groups, the media, and opposition parties, and encourages dialogue and negotiation. On the other hand, a dictatorship, which is characterized by a lack of transparency and accountability, can make it difficult for both India and Pakistan to build trust and cooperation. A dictatorship is often associated with authoritarianism, repression, and instability, which can undermine efforts to build positive relations. Ultimately, the best political system for Pakistan to maintain positive relations with India and get mutual benefits will depend on a variety of factors, including the specific context and the policies and actions of leaders on both sides. (Noor, 2020)

Democracy VS Dictatorship

It is important to note that both forms of government, democracy, and dictatorship, have their advantages and disadvantages. Ultimately, the choice of the form of government that is best for Pakistan should be made by the people of Pakistan themselves. They must be given the opportunity to participate in a free and fair election to choose their leaders and the form of government they prefer. The government should also be accountable, and transparent, and work towards the betterment and development of the country and its people. People may have different opinions on this matter, but when we compare the outcomes of dictatorship versus the benefits of democracy, which allows

people to express themselves freely, we can see that democracy is generally a better choice. (Abbas, 2022)

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper has evaluated the impact of political changes in Pakistan on Pak-India relations. The shift from military rule to democracy in Pakistan has had a positive impact on Pak-India relations, as evidenced by the recent efforts to improve diplomatic ties, trade, and people-to-people contact between the two countries. However, there are still several areas of concern that need to be addressed, such as cross-border terrorism, territorial disputes, and geopolitical rivalries, which continue to impede progress toward lasting peace and stability in the region. This study highlights the critical importance of political systems in shaping foreign policy and international relations, particularly in countries like Pakistan that have experienced periods of military rule and democratic governance. It underscores the need for greater transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in the political processes of such countries to ensure that the voices of the people are heard and their aspirations are fulfilled. Moving forward, Pakistan and India must engage in meaningful dialogue and cooperation to address the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. They must work towards building trust, confidence, and mutual respect, and find common ground on issues of mutual interest. Only then can they realize their full potential as neighbors and partners in the region. Overall, this research paper has contributed to a better understanding of the complex interplay between political systems, foreign policy, and international relations, and has shed light on the unique challenges and opportunities facing Pakistan and India in their quest for peace, stability, and prosperity.

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