

CAUSES AND COMPLEXITIES OF UNDERDEVELOPED POLITICAL CULTURE: THE CASE OF PAKISTAN

Abdul Razaque Larik*

Shah Nawaz Mangit†

Abstract

The study of political culture still appears pertinent and attracts all stakeholders living within a polity. From its inception to the contemporary era, Pakistan's political landscape displays a sad picture of the underperformance of political entities. This calls for immediate attention to finding the root causes of these problems. The current paper aims to find answers to whether Pakistani political culture is suited to serve the interests of the powerful or needs to be better for the growth of Pakistani polity. Drawing on the mainstream theoretical underpinnings, significant approaches, and foundational studies, this article presents the leading causes of Pakistan's current underdeveloped state of political culture. It argues that the intermittent nature of democracy and the role of the military, dynastic politics, cult of personality, feudalism, and underperformance of political parties, among others, are the leading causes of the underdevelopment of political culture. It discusses that the political culture in Pakistan may be suited well to oblige the interests of the elites. Still, it needs to be better to support a healthy, useful, and productive polity.

Keywords: *Political culture, Pakistan democracy, Dynastic politics, Political parties.*

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is one of the states that are surrounded by challenging internal environments and external pressures vis-à-vis their security (Oberst et al., 2018). Pakistan is a South Asian nuclear power country bordering India, China, Afghanistan, and Iran. Various globally recognized indicators portray Pakistan with negative markings. The government has been allotted 30th rank globally in terms of fragility by the Fragile States Index 2022 (Index, 2022), appraised as partially free by Freedom House 2022 rating (House, 2022), ranked 98th in “political empowerment, positioned at 153rd in

*Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Government College University Hyderabad, Sindh, Email: razaq.larik@gcu.edu.pk

†Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Government College University Hyderabad, Sindh

“gender gap” out of the 156 nations globally by the World Economic Forum (Forum, 2021) and placed at 154th out of 189 countries of the world by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020). Pakistan is now the fifth most populous country in the world. As the fifth biggest young state, Pakistan has a vibrant youth population (Idris, 2023) that wants to participate politically and have a hearty say in the state’s political affairs.

Domestically, decades of socio-political maneuvering have left Pakistani polity with chronic diseases, creating structural incapacities and activating its mode instead of delivering fundamental socio-economic and political essentials to the nation (Behera, 2018). Since its inception, all elections held in Pakistan have been stained with allegations of rigging (Azhar & Khan, 2020). Based on the prevalent political culture, the de facto form of governance in Pakistan has been dubbed (Behera 2018, p. 238) calls it “guided democracy,” containing apparent reference to democratic ideals but in practice yielding to the whims of the elite, while Waseem (2020, p. 272) labels it as an “establishmentarian” democracy. Some scholars call Pakistani polity “a hybrid democracy (Kureshi, 2020, p. 235) or hybrid martial law” (Siddiqa, 2020, p. 215). The locus between civil and military bureaucracies carries an upper hand and a final say on what political entities have to offer and how they behave (Waseem, 2020), leaving the country hanging between the de facto and de jure governance.

Democratic political culture is the source of survival of democratic institutions and generates stability, too. The blend of both creates stability for the foundations of the democratic system (Newton & Van Deth, 2021). Likewise, a country’s decadence and political breakdown may be attributed to its prevalent political culture. The same applies to the case of Pakistan, where political culture has been left dwarfed and evolved to serve the most powerful, leaving a nominal space and influence for the less powerful. Most scholars investigating the causes of these issues and discovering the fundamental contours. Some cite the weak roots of democracy (Behera, 2018; Kureshi, 2020; Rizvi, 2011; Waheed & Abbasi, 2013; Waseem, 2020), while few find the overpowering role of military and civilian bureaucracy (Aziz, 2007; Rais, 1995; Shafqat, 1999; Siddiqa, 2017; Waheed & Abbasi, 2013), others claim the weakness of civilian governments (Hussain & Hussain, 1993; Siddiqui et al., 2020), while some discuss about the weak political parties (Haider, 2021; Shafqat, 2020; Siddiqa, 2020; Siddiqui, 2023; Waseem, 2020), and dynastic politics and role of the elite (Haider, 2021; Jones, 2020; Mangi et al., 2021).

The current study is unique in presenting a composite version that is attentive to Pakistan's overall political culture, including recent and past instances.

Moreover, this study employs various recognized theoretical underpinnings, significant approaches, and key fundamental critical studies. It submits insights into Pakistan's deteriorating political culture and aims to determine the basic causes of its underdevelopment. The primary research question pertains to 'whether the Pakistani political culture is built around serving the most privileged or it is good for nothing.'

Approaches to the Study of Political Culture

Political culture is "a set of values that are widely endorsed by politicians, educators, and other opinion leaders and that animate the principal political institutions of a society" (Feldman & Zaller, 1992, p. 271). These values and beliefs of the general public exert a significant effect on the political facet of a country and democratic practices in particular. "Political culture consists of assumptions about the political world... (and thus is) a 'mindset' which has the effect of limiting attention to less than the full range of alternative behaviors, problems, and solutions which are logically possible" (Elkins & Simeon, 1979, p. 128).

Two approaches appear to be dominant in the study of political culture, i.e., the behavioral approach and the anthropological approach. The behavioral approach considers individuals' attitudes and behaviors forming a culture. Its crucial feature remains individuals. The early use of this approach produced *The Authoritarian Personality* by Adorno et al. (1950), measuring the fascist personality traits in Germany. Later, Almond and Verba (1963) made their pioneering work, *The Civic Culture*, and introduced the concept of three kinds of political culture: parochial, subject, and participant, where the *parochial culture* has no cognitive orientations towards the polity, and thus, it suits traditional political systems; the *subject culture* has a cognitive direction towards the perceived impact of the system, and thus it suits the authoritarian system of governance; the *participant culture* has both participant and output orientations towards the political system resultantly it is indeed parallel to the democratic system.

The anthropological approach focuses on culture as a whole society or the subgroups, overlooking the importance of individuals and holding culture as stationary (Elkins & Simeon, 1979). They maintain that if the primary variable of interest is "public policy, the emphasis will be on which groups, occupying what part of the cultural range, are most influential" (Elkins & Simeon, 1979, p. 140). This approach justifies its emphasis on society rather than individuals, signifying that people have, but they may be deviant from their culture and feel pressed for conformity.

Following various approaches, influential, foundational, and key vital fundamental critical studies have been conducted. For instance, Elazar (1966) produced his understanding of the subcultures present in the USA: moral, individual, and traditional, where ethical and political culture is based on collectivism; individual political culture founded on the ideals of individualism and utilitarian concept of government; and the conventional political culture circles around social and family bindings and supports hierarchal politics. The work of Inglehart (1977) emphasized the continuity of political culture and its relevance to democratic stability. It spotlighted cultural and political change, pioneering Post-materialism theory that spoke of citizens' transformation from necessities of life to higher levels of demands like liberty and freedom, individualism, climate, and so on. The work by Norris (1999) set forth that the trust in governments, triggered by the extent of political rights and liberty, a system of election, centralization of the state, and economic growth, is on the decline, and the functioning of democratic governments in developed countries caused dissatisfaction among the people. The social capital theory forwarded by Putnam (2000) is the lump sum of contacts, links, shared values, and like-mindedness in a social milieu that empowers individuals and groups to trust each other to attain common goals. It can act as a significant element in ensuring the quality of democracy and economic performance, and social capital is not always healthy and fruitful can have more social capital so they can manipulate it (Putnam, 2000). recent work in the Pakistani context divides these core principles of political culture into two types of dynamics: one, foundational dynamics, based on the religious, historical, and traditional premises, address the foundation of a country's ethnicity and culture, while the contextual dynamics deal with "the contextual and contingent policy dynamics that shape citizens' evaluative judgments of the political system" (Siddiqi, 2020, p. 551).

The Case of Pakistan

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, after 75 years of political life, Pakistan's political culture still shows signs of underdevelopment. The rulers were known for their lust for power and hardly took into consideration the interests of the masses. The middle class is practically too small or too weak. The upper class is under the intoxication of power and privilege. The majority of the general public votes not based on past performance but on the client-patron principle. The ordinary citizens no longer care about politics and only want the government to carry on with the nominal performance. These unhealthy and undemocratic characteristics have brought about underdevelopment in Pakistan's political culture, earning it the attributes of

good for nothing or serving for the few. This article aims to find answers to the questions ‘Is Pakistani political culture suited to serve the elites?’ and ‘Is Pakistani culture not good enough for the growth of Pakistani polity?’ It argues that the political culture in Pakistan may be suited well to oblige the interests of the elites. Still, it is not good enough to support a healthy, sound, functional, practical, beneficial, and productive polity. This study discusses that a number of the following fundamental factors cause the gloomy state of affairs vis-à-vis political culture.

Intermittent Nature of Democracy and the Role of the Military

Pakistanis have not been allowed to develop their love for democracy partly due to the intermittence of democracy and the authoritarian role of the military elite in it. The country’s political life has encountered four military takeovers so far, i.e., 1958-1969, 1969-1971, 1977-1988, and 1999-2008, which has allowed the entrenched role of the military elite. The Pakistani polity has swung between military-dominated or civilian governments since 1947, allowing the military to entrench deeply into the socio-political spheres of the country (Shafqat, 2020). It is demonstrative of a tug-of-war between the two forces, i.e., military and civilian political leadership (Haider, 2021). “Pakistan’s political system (is...) as much military as it is civilian...it has acquired a design that is open to intervention by the army” (Siddiq, 2020, p. 232). This signifies a permanent role of the military with a framework suggesting a “guided” type of democracy (Behera, 2018, p. 238). Pakistani military establishment has acquired the capacity to either act as “a ruler-type (or) a permanent arbiter-guardian of both the state and the government... (where it) must intervene at critical times” with a recent example of 2018 elections (Siddiq, 2020, p. 232). The weakness of Pakistan’s polity lies in the mentality of its army that looks upon itself as a savior, guardian, and ultimate policy-maker savior, guardian, and ultimate policy-maker, and each socio-politico-economic indicator supports that (Cohen, 2011).

Top military brass maintains its deep entrenchment in the socio-political fabric of Pakistan by three means: firstly, the military brings up specific political leadership based on their need assessment; secondly, they support their chosen candidates; and lastly, it influences political parties to own the blue-eyed candidates at all echelons of political representation (Siddiq, 2020). Apart from toppling elected governments, the military establishment has been involved in behaviors that may only be dubbed undemocratic, such as launching soft coups, offering support to novice political entities, and undermining the voter strength of mainstream parties (Siddiqui et al., 2020). Owing to this, there is growing consensus among scholars about the unlikelihood of the development of constructive political culture in Pakistan

where they cite the overpowering and inevitable role of the military arising out of the geostrategic dynamics of the country (Behera, 2018; Haider, 2021; Waheed & Abbasi, 2013).

The long-term disastrous impact of the military interventions is that the successive governments have been deafened by their echo, not been able to address the political desires of the nation, and have felt crippled to work for the creation of a milieu that the country has long aspired for (Rizvi, 2011). This stands akin to the notion forwarded by Norris (1999) that trust in governments is on the decline, implying the continuity of underdevelopment of political culture in Pakistan. Therefore, the intermittence of democracy and the authoritarian role of the military elite suggest a combination of what Almond and Verba (1963) call parochial and subject culture, where people possess no or very narrow understanding of the polity. Accordingly, the country, as in the case of Pakistan, is grabbed by the vested interests of the few with minimal chances of developing a worthwhile polity.

Dynastic Politics

Another major cause of the underdevelopment of the political culture in Pakistan is dynastic politics. Within the dynastic political setup political party is often erected to pass its leadership to the founder's immediate family with ample space for extended family members. It has been a common phenomenon in Asia, especially in Southeast Asia. Best instances in the past and contemporary times include Gandhis in India, Bhuttos, Sharifs, Chaudhris in Pakistan, Sheikhs in Bangladesh, and the Rajapaksa dynasty in Sri Lanka. Studies have found that the closer the family heir is to the dynastic political setup, the worse they perform owing to the ease of seeking party nomination (George & Ponattu, 2018), and this also applies to Pakistan (Ali, 2016).

Pakistani polity is fundamentally decayed because it stands on dynastic politics and the non-representation of the less powerful segments of society (Haider, 2021). Pakistan's major political parties, the main drivers of democracy in a polity, have been dynasty-ridden, refusing to permit fresh induction from heterogeneous backgrounds and only allowing their youth to fill the gap for fresh blood (Cohen, 2011). A recent study has streamlined the depth of dynastic politics, where more than half of the elected representatives belong to the stratum of dynastic politicians, bypassing party, provincial, and ideological barriers (Rahman et al., 2022). Additionally, the presence of representatives from middle or low-economic backgrounds has been insignificant, which has transformed the fundamental structure of the Pakistani federal lower house, the National Assembly, into a 'rich men's

club” (Mangi et al., 2021, p. 1).

In the recent decade, the Bhutto-Zardari family leading Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) and Sharif leading Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) PML-N has enjoyed the hierarchal fruit of the political tree followed by Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q). Dynastic politics is also prevalent in the so-called middle-class political parties. The religio-political party Jamiat Ulemae Islam is headed by Fazl-ur-Rehman (JUI-F), the son of the renowned religious figure Mufti Mehmud. Fazl-ur-Rehman’s son is also a Member of Parliament and an incumbent minister. Another political party called Jamaat Islami’s (JI) prominent leader, Qazi Hussain Ahmed has helped his daughter become a member of parliament. Jamiat Ulema Pakistan (JUI), another middle-class religio-political party’s present leader, Shah Owais Noorani, is the son of the former chief of the party, Shah Ahmed Noorani. Apart from the top hierarchy in a political party, the second-tier and third-tier leaders and representatives belonging to different constituencies in Pakistan also follow the faulted footsteps of their top leadership. In this line of argument, the Abbasis of Rawalpindi, Makhdooms of Faisalabad-Jhang, Gilanis, and Qureshis of Multan, Mahars of Ghotki and Shikarpur, Chandios of Kamber-Shahdakot, Khuhro family of Larkana, Syeds of Khairpur, Arbabs of Thar, Shirazis of Thatta, Rinds of Kacchi, Bughtis of Dera Bugti, Mengals of Khuzdar, Raisani family of Bolan, Bizanjios of Awaran, Khattacks of Nowshera, and Kakars of Pishni are some of the instances. Each elected member becomes keen to get their kith or kin elected from the same or adjacent constituency to retain or improve the political power of their family (Rais, 1995). These political dynasties are so engrained in Pakistani polity that, as a group, they make up a clear majority at different representative houses and exhibit underperformance in comparison to non-dynastic counterparts in terms of local economic growth and the common good (Rahman et al., 2022). Consequently, the pedestal of political parties is unvaryingly exploited for acquiring power, preserving individual prestige, and offering patronage (Shafqat, 2020).

This portrays a sad phenomenon of deep-seated dynastic politics in Pakistan where political parties fail to perform the respective roles they have been chosen for (Azhar & Khan, 2020) and serve as “loose confederations of kinship groups” (Oberst et al., 2018, p. 323). This parallels what Almond and Verba (1963) identify as the subject culture based on the underrepresentation and its failure to transform from parochial and subject cultures to participant one. Dynastic politics as the root cause of the underdevelopment of Pakistani political culture is justifiably reflective of traditional culture, as theorized by Elazar (1966) and foundational dynamics by Siddiqi (2020).

Cult of Personality

Another cause of the undergrowth of a healthy and dynamic political culture in Pakistan, apart from dynastic politics, is the cult of personality. A cult of personality is a collection of principles, ideals, legends, signs, and practices focused on worshipping a leader. The most remarkable and seemingly illogical characteristic of cults of personality is the utilization of extreme praise and admiration, which includes extravagant assertions about the leader's infallibility, all-knowingness, omnipresence, omnipotence, and sometimes even divine status (Crabtree et al., 2020). This use of exaggerated language appears to be a shared feature among all cults of personality. Cults played a significant role in symbolic politics by providing a focal point for emotions and loyalties through a personalized symbol. They became part of a more extensive symbolic-politic system that helped communicate party policies and social hierarchies (Postoutenko, 2020). At the same time, failure to conduct regular intra-party elections and the absence of proper democratic ideals have transformed the mainstream political parties, regardless of their political orientations and ideology, into cult-based parties and caused political parties to fail in their fundamental mission of providing meritorious and dynamic leadership (Azhar & Khan, 2020).

In the case of Pakistan, the polity revolves around the cult of personality. These cult leaders have been adored and idolized as emancipators who address the widespread anxieties of the public, claim to get rid of the rampant socio-economic problems, and take the country to new heights. General Ayub Khan, Z.A. Bhutto, General Zia, Altaf Hussain, Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, General Musharaf, and Imran Khan may be quoted as instances. Jones (2020) links the downfall and underperformance of PPP to the cult of personality with the Bhutto family. Hasan (2022) also blames Imran Khan for indulging in and inducing the messiah complex. MQM has also fallen victim to a personality cult in the form of allotting undue reverence to Altaf Hussain. The often-chanted slogan of MQM, we do not want to meet our objective; we want a leader [Urdu: Hamko manzil nahi, Rehnuma chahiye], refers to the messiah complex (Hasan, 2022). This trend is not restricted to the mainstream political parties and dictators but has found its way into the smaller parties, for example, Asfandiyar Wali Khan (Awami National Party), Attaullah Mengal (Balochistan National Party), Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman (JUI-F), and Ayaz Latif Palijo (Awami Tehreek). This cult of personality leaves the main decision within the party at the whim of the personality rather than logic and unanimity. It indicates the foundational rather than contextual dynamics (Siddiqi, 2020). It keeps the masses drenched in subject culture and takes away from the participant culture

(Almond & Verba, 1963).

Feudalistic Shadow

Feudalism appears to be one of the colossal threats to the growth of political culture throughout the world, and Pakistan is no exception. Feudalism, particularly in South Asia, refers to the ownership of large amounts of agricultural land by people who exercise power, authority, and influence on their peasants and soundings. De Tocqueville (1838), in his *Democracy in America*, pointed out that the weak feudal structure was responsible for the success of democracy in the USA. This negative correlation is applicable even today that the weaker the entrenchment of the feudal system, the stronger, more substantial, more robust, and more effective the political participation and, consequently, a healthy and positive political culture. Pakistan is an agricultural country, with nearly half of its population living in rural areas. The feudal-rural structure is centuries old and has yet to be transformed, keeping in view the challenges of the modern age on account of the vested interests of the feudal lords.

The major feudal family clans in Pakistan are Abbasi, Jatt, Rajput, Arain, Gujjar, Sayyad, Baloch, Chaudhry, and Gilani in Punjab; Bhutto, Zardari, Sayyed, Khuhro, Makhdoom, Magsi, Arbab, Mahar, Jatoti in Sindh; Bugti, Raesani, Magsi, Zehri, Lehri, Mazari, Marri and Mengal in Balochistan; Yousufzai, Hoti, Khattak, Sherpao, Mandokhel, Jadun, Orakzai, Afridi, and Bangash in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province are the main political and economic forces.

One of the causes of Pakistan's partial success or partial failure in democracy lay in its political culture, which is structured around the indispensable role of the feudalistic elite (Waheed & Abbasi, 2013). The strength of this feudal setup lies in the vicious circle that allows the feudal lords to exploit the economic resources and get entry into politics, then formulate or lobby for policies, rules, and regulations that support their existence so that they could get more affluent, more prosperous, and more powerful. This feudal class obstructs the entry of the middle and middle class into politics. To Cohen (2011), the economic foundation for the rise of the dominant middle class is yet to be laid, and the mobilization of the socio-economic sphere is barred by rampant Feudalism. The development of the middle class must be coupled with economic prosperity, which is a far-flung dream for Pakistan.

The failure to develop a value-based political culture may derive its roots from the patron-client political linkage between the electable and the voters, where the latter view their vote choice through economic lenses rather than political optics (Waheed & Abbasi, 2013). Most people living in rural areas

of Pakistan still obey the dominant patron-client setup that only allows them to meet their primary material needs and follow the wishes and orders of their patrons, the feudal lords. The strength of the feudal system lies in this inherent scheme. The feudal lords have also enforced the idea of a tribe/clan socio-political fidelity system called biradri (kinship). This pattern favors the dynastic politics in Pakistan as most people, especially in rural areas, are knit through family and clan lines. The head of the clan or tribe usually decides about voting preferences before elections. Putnam (2000) acknowledges that social capital is only sometimes healthy and fruitful as the power elite can possess more social capital so they can manipulate it. The outnumbered presence of feudal elites in the National Assembly is a precise, apparent reference to the feudalistic shadows in Pakistani polity (Mangi et al., 2021). All the mainstream political parties, more or less except a few, display their overdependence on local landlords instead of party workers (Siddiqui et al., 2020). Thus, the transformation from parochial and subject cultures to the participant one (Almond & Verba, 1963) or from foundational to contextual dynamics (Siddiqui, 2020) has been restricted, and the possible journey from materialism to Post-materialism (Inglehart, 1977) by the Pakistani masses have been thwarted due to the feudalistic shadow.

The Underperformance of Political Parties

Political parties are the main engines of participatory politics (Rizvi, 2011). Through Political parties, “political culture is transmitted to the public domain” (Siddiqui, 2020, p. 535). In Pakistan, political parties have disappointed the masses by failing to perform their entitled role (Azhar & Khan, 2020). They may also be held responsible for their failure to play a vital role in bringing about a positive and vibrant democratic political culture that gives birth to political stability and socio-economic prosperity. This journey of low performance of political parties started at the inception of Pakistan. The founding Muslim League could not succeed in converting its role from a political movement to a national party (Rizvi, 2011). The political parties faced the same fate in the subsequent years. Their failure or low performance was due to many factors: the dominant one is their inclination toward the dynastic setup, undemocratic setup, undemocratic party culture, and their disrespect for people’s problems (Siddiqui, 2020).

The political parties in Pakistan are dynastic-ridden, with the entry of heterogeneous elements in silent mode, and they revolve around personalities. The mainstream political parties PML-N, PPP, PML-Q, and JUI-F, belonging to left-leaning, right-leaning, or centrist parties, portray dynastic patterns with little or no room for outside entrance at the top echelon. There are, however, a few notable examples of parties that have

essentially shunned dynastic fashion: JI, MQM, and PTI. The mainstream political parties, i.e., PML-N, PPP, and PTI, have demonstrated multiple instances of their inherent weaknesses in their structural organization with their reliance on the local elite while ignoring party-workers party workers (Siddiqui et al., 2020). This ultimately results in low public interest and mass non-participation and suggests a deviation from democratic values and ideals.

Scholars have also held military dictatorships responsible for the underdevelopment of political parties. The four military intercessions introduced the policy of befriending those political forces that corresponded with the wishes of the former (Rizvi, 2011). Political parties have been blamed for seeking guidelines from the locus of civil-military bureaucracies (Waseem, 2020). They often acquire the role of a ‘B-Team’ of the establishment. This has rendered the Pakistani political parties—obstructed through decades of manipulation by the military—incompetent in aiding the creation of a healthy and durable political culture (Shafqat, 2020). Military dictators have also been blamed for encouraging defections in political parties and creating schisms and splinter groups, thereby denting the overall strength of political parties (Azhar & Khan, 2020).

Traditionally, opposition parties, due to their lack of training and underdeveloped political culture throughout the country, have devalued the true ideals of democracy and displayed below-standard performance in or outside the assemblies, mainly to remove the incumbent government, serving as the tool of the military establishment, and ignoring reliable electoral process (Siddiqui et al., 2020). The political parties’ poor performance is also caused by their maximum focus on rhetoric rather than providing a clear policy guideline that attends to the widespread anxieties and concerns. This rhetoric and sloganeering may be useful, and helpful for mobilization. However, they are never a replacement for the true reflection of the masses’ main concerns, and the substandard parliamentary discussions and failure to attend parliamentary sessions, even by parliamentary secretaries and ministers, connote the non-serious attitude of the political parties (Rizvi, 2011). The progress from material level to the post-materialistic ideals (Inglehart, 1977), from parochial and subject standards to participant principles (Almond & Verba, 1963), and from foundational to contextual dynamics (Siddiqui, 2020) has hardly been triggered due to the sub-optimal performance of political parties resulting in the stagnancy of the Pakistani political culture.

CONCLUSION

Political culture is like a spirit to the body of a country's politics. It invigorates and creates a sense of a socio-political existence among citizens. Political culture can be nurtured only if it is allowed enough socio-politico-economic space. There is an alarming downfall in political efficacy and trust in the government because many people in Pakistan consider themselves useless to the government. On the other hand, the politicians turn a deaf ear to the growing concerns of the people (Rizvi, 2011). The failure to produce a ground on which the edifice of a positive political culture may be erected has weakened Pakistan as a nation. As a result, Pakistan is called a “distraught and feeble state” (Cohen, 2011, p. 7).

Among the multiple root causes is the Military's cherished desire to stay in or behind power, which has weakened the politico-cultural development, thereby creating the feeling of alienation and dearth of trust among the general masses pushback to the process of the growth of political culture (Rizvi, 2011). The political parties in Pakistan are dynastic-ridden, with the entry of heterogeneous elements being the uncommon, uncommon entry of heterogeneous elements. The political parties are also infected with the cult of personality syndrome, where the national interests are dwarfed before a political figure. Moreover, the overpowering and undue role of the feudal class has helped the undergrowth of political culture. The overpowering role of the military elite, dynastic politics, cult of personality, feudalistic shadow, and underperformance of political parties have ensured the level of political culture in Pakistan to parochialism (Almond & Verba, 1963), materialism (Elazar, 1966) firmly embedded in foundational dynamics (Siddiqi, 2020). For all the ills relating to the inadequacy of political culture, two factors stand outright responsible, i.e., the political role of the military elite and the underperformance of political parties.

It may be suggested that the democratic practice must continue in Pakistan, and the role of the military, overt or covert, in the country's political affairs must be minimized. The dynastic politics should be discouraged, and middle and upper-middle classes should be given access to parliamentary representation. Feudalism should be disbanded to set avenues for the growth of true, authentic, and representative political culture in the country. The political parties should be allowed to nurture naturally without any outside interference. Democratic practices within parties should be encouraged. Political parties should be allowed to retain or gain political power through their performance and by addressing critical national issues.

Some rays of hope appear out of the smoggy political clouds in Pakistan. Increasing urbanization (Cohen, 2011), the growth of independent media along with the indispensable role of social media (Shafqat, 2020), the rise of the populist movement in recent years (Siddiqi, 2020), and the growing young population (Idris, 2023) have paved the way for the mobilization of the most reluctant and obstinate elements in Pakistani society, i.e., the middle and upper-middle classes. This change can transform the rotten, unhealthy, primitive, selfish, and parochial political culture in the country into a vibrant, healthy, positive, and delivery-oriented participant culture and steer the country out of the politico-economic quagmire. If the country's government is allowed to carry on, even with a crumpling mode of democracy, with the power of feudalism minimized. With the minimal role of dynastic politics, the new political culture is likely to usher new vistas where political parties could commit themselves to the service of the masses with their center of attention on integration, unity, and improvement of education, health, and sanitation

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