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**In defence of democracy**

The end of the 20th century marked the end of the pursuit of any novel structures of governance. It witnessed many proposed systems of government fail. States with monarchy, fascism, imperialism, colonialism and socialism could not suffice human nature thus collapsed.

This was the time when people started to think highly of democracy. Who to form a better government for the people than the people themselves? Democracy has empowered individual men with the right to self-rule. Currently, 123 out of 193 recognized states have embraced democracy, making it the most popular system of government in the world.

The structure of global institutions welcomes democracy. Citizens of numerous MENA countries have shown an exponentially increasing desire to adapt to a democratic structure. Their quest for republicanism has been boosting since the Arab Spring of 2011. The world’s happiest countries have one thing in common – democracy. And only ceremonial monarchy is to be seen in the First World.

In Pakistan, the democratic process has been subjected to continuous interruption. Military coups and alleged election rigging have been a norm. It was not until 2018 that two elected governments completed two consecutive terms of five years each for the first time, without direct interruption. Be that as it may, not a single head of government has been able to endure a complete term.

This process should continue multiple times; only then can an environment of a stable democracy be sustained in Pakistan. Former PM and now Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) leader Nawaz Sharif is probably the strongest critic of the current ‘same-page’ government. In a recent speech, however, he maintained that a government should be able to complete its five-year tenure, regardless of how miserable its governance is.

Ghulam Mustafa Khar, former chief minister of Punjab, proposed that repeating the process of elections for a continuous 35 years can create a custom of public autonomy. This can create a regulation of democracy in our social order.

As far as the system is concerned, democracy has proved to be the best for all forms of human developed indices. The prevailing political issues of Pakistan like corruption, demagogy, military intervention, bloodline polity, etc are products of a disturbed process of democratization. Due to their brief ‘stints’, governments were unable to address major concerns. Politicians had been termed ‘negative elements’ so as to justify the toppling of legitimate governments and the countless atrocities that followed.

The judiciary in Pakistan has played a vital role in legitimizing undemocratic regimes. The inability of the judiciary can be estimated from the fact that no binding ruling has been passed against the usurpers. Had politicians and state institutions been more active in upholding the constitution, a significant number of Pakistanis would not have been fed up with such a remarkable governing concept.

Pakistan is not the only country where public autonomy is paralyzed by force. Argentina was among the world’s thriving countries at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1929, Argentina was the 11th richest country in the world. By the 1980s, it had been encountered with six successful military coups, changing its status from a developed country to a developing one.

A political chaos ensues where a coercive regime is imposed. The resultant political instability makes it difficult for foreign investors to trust in the state enough to invest.

A state with a democratic government seldom goes to war with other democratic countries. In a democracy, people choose their leaders for the highest offices. Consequently, those elected feel a sense of responsibility for their actions, but more importantly fear the loss of their electoral support if the state of affairs tumbles. Analyzing Pakistan’s megalomaniac political history, it is interesting to find that the country’s major wars with its arch-rival India were fought under undemocratic regimes. Other major tragedies also trace their origins to a dictatorship or a fragile, pseudo democracy.

Liberal trade is an essential tenet of modern democracy. It creates a material incentive for people on differentiated borders. Trade as a mutual gain is actualized in the event of a conflict, making stakeholders on either side seek prevention of escalation. Besides, unarmed statespersons are more likely to reach an agreement in case of a dispute than those armed. Therefore, if a tenant-based liberal democracy is achieved in Pakistan, relations with immediate neighbours are bound to be less hostile, if not friendly.

Socrates is a famous critic of democracy. He lambasted the viability of democracy. He questioned the qualification of ‘demo’ in democracy, pointing out the importance of education of voters. He considered voting a skill; a skill that, like other skills, needed to be taught. According to Socrates, the majority lacked the art of voting, often resulting in the formation of a demagogue’s government.

The problem with Socrates’ view on democracy is the vacuity of its evolutionary process. It takes time and consistency for a particular thesis to become synthesis. Cultural lag has always been a pre-existing phenomenon on the launchpad of a novel idea. Uninterrupted democratization has realized social equilibrium in the First World. However, it does not imply that there are no disruptions in society. It simply means that people themselves have the prerogative to oust what the majority of them consider hindrance.

Saving democracy is saving Pakistan. An independent and reformed judiciary can provide a safeguard to the evolving democratic process. A free media can ensure the right to access information. The electoral process needs meticulous revision. Accountability is a requisite. Nonconformist entities should be made an example so that ambitious usurpers remain dutiful to the constitution.

Democracy is in no case the solution for the issues affecting our society. Rather, it is a platform that provides opportunities to common people to participate in the problem-solving process. One does not knock down the theatre if thespians fail their spectators.

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