**The Legitimacy Paradox**

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Power is not a simple thing—quite the contrary, in fact. The notion frequently tossed around, suggesting that the one wielding the biggest stick reigns supreme, is often misleading, if not outright wrong. This understanding becomes especially profound when we peer into the intricate tapestry of history and current affairs in Pakistan. The stories of figures like Julius Caesar and Crassus, and even closer to home, the narratives of military and political leaders, reveal a deeper truth: the most potent force in the realm of power isn’t always the strength of arms, but the elusive quest for legitimacy.
Consider the tale of Julius Caesar, a man of almost legendary notoriety yet yearning for the Senate’s sanction. His demise on the Ides of March wasn’t just the climax of personal ambition, but a testament to a truth often overlooked: even at the zenith of power, legitimacy is the ultimate prize. Closer to our era, Saddam Hussein’s iron grip over Iraq, or the repeated trysts with martial law in our own backyard, tell a similar story. Leaders, military or otherwise, have consistently sought the veneer of legality, a stamp of approval, to coat their might in the gloss of right.
In Pakistan, a narrative has fermented over the years suggesting that real power doesn’t sit in the Parliament but lurks somewhere within the shadows of the military barracks and bureaucratic halls. It remains important to note however that this view misses a crucial piece of the puzzle. It’s not just about who holds the reins but the legitimacy of their grip. From dictators donning the sash of presidency to generals seeking parliamentary blessings, the quest for legitimacy has always been relentless.
This pursuit, often seen as a mere facade, is more than a cosmetic exercise. It speaks to a fundamental human need for validation, for a sense of rightful place in the social order. The leaders in khaki uniforms, much like their civilian counterparts, grapple with this reality. Their efforts to mold their authority into a constitutionally recognized shape isn’t just a strategic move; it’s a recognition of the inherent power of legal legitimacy.
What then, does this say about the state of affairs in Pakistan? For one, it dismantles the oversimplified notion that power in Pakistan is exclusively about brute force or clandestine maneuvering. Yes, these elements exist, but they coexist with a deeper, more nuanced struggle for constitutional and moral legitimacy. The international lens often captures Pakistan in monochrome, portraying a landscape where democracy is but a facade and realpolitik reigns supreme. This perspective, while not entirely baseless, is reductive. It ignores the layers of complexity that define Pakistani politics, where even the most powerful figures seek validation from the very democratic institutions they’re accused of undermining. This is not to absolve past transgressions or to whitewash the undemocratic episodes of our history. Far from it. It’s an invitation to look beyond the black-and-white and understand the grayscale nuances of power in Pakistan. The narrative needs a shift from simplistic cynicism to a more balanced understanding of the interplay between power and legitimacy.
There’s a profound lesson here, one that reverberates through our history. It’s not just about the might of the military or the charisma of a leader; it’s about the strength and integrity of our institutions. The haunting tale of Z.A Bhutto’s judicial murder is a stark reminder of what happens when these institutions falter, when power eclipses legality and morality.
This is where our collective focus needs to pivot – not towards overthrowing systems with the sheer force of might or popular uprising, but in nurturing and reforming the very structures that define our democracy. Seeking change outside the sanctity of these institutions is like running in circles, expecting to find a different path. It’s time we realize that the road to a resilient, equitable Pakistan doesn’t bypass our courts, our parliaments, our systems of checks and balances; it goes right through them.