

Ascertaining the Impacts of Modernization on Political Institution: A Case Study

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Abstract

Modernization is a process of change which alters the social structure in one way or the other. In this paper, the notion of modernization concerning the vicissitudes taking place in the political institution of Pakhtun social structure has probed out. The researchers inquired from the residents of district Swat. Further, In-depth Interviews (n = 35) and Focus Group Discussions (n = 07) were taken place in the study area. Furthermore, the study participants expressed that due to the fundamental pillars of modernization, i.e., education, media, technological advancement, urbanization, and many others, the political dimensions are continuously changing. It has concluded that the phenomena of modernization have definite influences on the various aspects like voting behavior, turnout in elections, legislation concerning electoral reforms, and gender-based nexus of political participation, mode of election campaigns. Although the pace of change is slow, however, its influences are multifaceted and unceasing.

Keywords: campaigns, elections, impacts, modernization, participation, political, turnout, voting behavior.

Introduction

The concept of political modernization has different meanings in modern times. It may be generally applicable as a synonym for political development and used as a transformation in the non-modern political system. It also explains political modernization's consistency, like developing unique structures to envisage political orders' functions in a semi-democratic and non-democratic political system like Europe's case. Different routes lead to political modernity. The European paths and the colonial zones and post-communist economies have experienced classical modernization theories. Modern complex theories substituted simple modernization theories and gave different routes that lead to the modern nation's polity. It determines the socio-economic factors like sustained economic growth and political development (Schmidt, 2001).

Masood (2018) pointed out that male members of society are more active in the political sphere. Pakistan is a country where male members

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have more influence on the political process as compared to women. There is an uneven picture of women's rights and inequality at par with men; there is a dire need to implement laws that already exist in the country. Political participation includes the ways that, and the extent to which voters get involved in the political process, which is influenced by several factors, including political ideology, efficacy, structural barriers, and demographics.

The voters' behavior to elect members of the local, provincial, and federal levels termed as voter behavior. This behavior shows their support to a political candidate of their choice. Their response is an advantage or disadvantage to the people's standard of life and showed a consequence in the future. In electoral decisions, voters' behavior has a strong statistical relationship with their past performance irrespective of their positions (Rule, 2014). In the existing literature, no explicit classification exists about voting behavior.

Moreover, the Cypriot referendum of 2004 reflected four specific voting behaviors depending on the types of election. The criterion of casting a vote varying among the voters depends upon the nature of the election, i.e., legislative, presidential, local elections, or in a referendum. The political beliefs of the voters are considered necessary in national elections. The voter behavior seems different in local and regional elections as they vote such a person who can add something positive and developmental to the constituency. While certain logic is involved in voter behavior, a voter can vote in favor or against the clearly stated policy/manifesto (Andreadis, Ioannis; & Chadjipadelis, 2006). Political scientists believe that region, ethnic group, rural-urban differences, and social class differences often influence voter behavior. Some political parties have a close connection with their masses, particularly with their voters, creating better working relations during the electoral process. Voters can vary in terms of their types such as supporters, dead supporters, general voters, ideological voters, neutral voters, dependent voters, and ignored voters (Ahmed, 2004).

The turnout of voters out of the total voters is known as election turnover. Eligibility of voters is a standard principle, and every country has a cut off age for casting a vote (Wikipedia, 2019). Political scientists agreed that voting is a system in democratic societies to govern effectively. The United States stands among those regions where the voter turnout is the lowest, e.g., only 33% of people voted during the 2014 elections (Bonica and McFaul, 2018). One study found that "improving children's social skills increase their turnout as adults" (Hui & Hui, 2017; and Holbin 2017).

Researchers argued that advertisements and political campaigns play a significant role in turnover and political understanding (Masood, 2018). In recent years the planning, organization, and conduct of electoral campaigns have drastically changed (de Vreese 2009; Farrell and Webb 2000; & Plasser and Plasser 2003). The fundamental change in political, media and socio-cultural environments has shown transformation in voters' democratic system (Lilleker, 2005; Plasser et al. 1999). A change has been noticed for particular campaign tasks by resorting to hired professionals (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999; Farrell and Webb 2000; Negrine 2007; Plasser and Plasser, 2003). Variations occurred while selling and marketing the political product (Lilleker, 2005; and Norris 2000), including the application of opposition research, market intelligence, opinion polls, and feedback tools. (Gibson and Römmele 2001; Holtz-Bacha 2007; and Nord, 2007). The focus has moved to broad-spectrum television formats, including talk shows and entertainment from free media channels (Norris 2000; Plasser and Plasser, 2003).

Methods and Procedures

The findings of this research article based on a qualitative framework of research. With the interview guide's help, the data from 35 key informants and seven focus group discussions obtain relevant information on the topic under research. Different sampled groups, i.e., intellectuals, lawyers, literary persons, politicians, and community leaders, as study participants selected for this research study. The collected data was analyzed from qualitative parameters of coding and extracting themes of the study. The study's locale (District Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan) comprised seven tehsils, wherein each tehsil was specified for conduct

ing five key informant interviews and one focus group discussion. In both phases of data collection, the researchers tried to incorporate participants from all five strata. Further, ethical considerations were kept into consideration while collecting the required information from the study participants. Besides, the thematic aspects of the study mainly comprised looking into the impacts of modernization on political institutions.

Results and Discussion

The researchers probed different aspects of modernization about change in the political institution in Pakhtun social structure based on thematic analysis. Besides, the following results were drawn, followed by a general discussion on each aspect of the phenomena under study, i.e.,

voting behavior, turnout in elections, legislation for electoral reforms, gender-based nexus of political participation, and mode of election campaigns respectively.

Voters are getting the influence of different factors like income, occupation, education, gender, age, religion, ethnic background, geography, and family. Besides, it includes psychological factors such as political party identification, specific candidates, and critical issues. Party identification is one of the central explanatory concepts used in the analysis of voting behavior. The assumption that voters have a propensity to vote for someone of their own caste / *Biradri* / *Hasab Nasab* is also prevailing, mostly in rural areas. Some voters cast their votes, keeping in view whether the party or candidate in power should be re-elected based on the recent past. Also, some voting based on how a citizen thinks a candidate will act and perform if elected to the office means how a party or candidate will perform. Voters are more individualistic and materialistic. Candidates bribe them during elections to get their votes illegally. Some of the participants believed that voters also rely on a particular party's manifestoes, which results in mending voters' behavior. They further added that the media plays a vital role in molding the behavior of the voters.

Voter behavior was not that much complex in nature as the common masses were illiterate and ignorant. People were mostly run and guided as directed by their *Khans* / *Maliks* (the terms connote local elders) or voter's decisions based on their attachment to the *Biradri* / *Hasab Nasab* / *Dala Para*. The religious card was also visible in determining the voter's behavior primarily regarding gender-based participation in elections. However, due to the wide range of information and awareness regarding human rights, the level of understanding of the common masses has considerably changed. They do not give that much protocol to the *Khan's* or *Maliks*, which was once mandatory to determine voting behavior.

"In the recent past, people were unaware of the lack of orientation with the vote and its importance. The voter's choice was associated with the family elders or Biradri or local level political scenario. Now, the situation has changed rapidly as a major chunk of the voters are educated youth, who are and aware of the value and importance of vote" (Rafiul Mulk Khan, the study participant).

According to the study participants, the percentage of turnout in elections has increased over time compared to the past. Different

economic, demographic, cultural, technological, and institutional factors are responsible for this scenario.

“The overall scenario is still miserable and pathetic where the voters are not free to decide freely about casting their votes for electing a candidate which is best suited for the uplift of their community/area” (Inam Ur Rahman, the study participant).

Media has affected the common masses positively concerning an increase in turnout ratio during elections. Nowadays, media is a very influential tool for brainwashing people's perceptions of any political agenda. Sometimes, the fear factor makes people reluctant to cast their votes at polling stations. Access to polling stations/places is another critical aspect of turnout. Like other nations of the world, gender-based access to polling stations and freedom of casting votes exists in our patriarchal society. Imran et al. (2010) probed out similar aspects of gender disparity like the existence of the multifaceted and diverse discordant customs and traditions that obstruct women's channels to go upward on the ladder of social mobility. Lack of knowledge was another reason for low turnout in elections. Weather conditions also have a significant impact on making choices or avoiding casting their votes. Other factors like family socialization, mistrust in government, degree of partisanship among the population, interest in politics, and belief in voting efficacy are essential in increasing or decreasing turnout during elections.

“Despite the percentage increase of turnout, many people still avoid polling their votes, which may be due to the lack of awareness of their votes' importance. In far-flung areas, women are still facing difficulties in access to register themselves as voters. In some cases, in urban areas, it has been observed that women live without their national identity cards” (Barkat Ali Shah, the study participant).

The study participants highlighted that no government took effective measures and legislation concerning bringing electoral reforms from the past until now. Still, we are running with the old fashioned and outdated mechanisms of casting votes during the elections. Although the postal ballot paper procedure exists in writing, however, in reality, it is like a dream. The employees working in the public sector usually remained without casting their votes as they remain engaged in the election duties. Nowadays, a voter can check his/her voter registration, constituency via mobiles SMS service. The government is issuing national identity cards to all Pakistan citizens to ensure maximum turnout.

"The government passed a new election law in early October 2017. Improved accountability results in transparency, women's participation, and simplified voter registration, complaints, and tribunals are defining roles and limitations of caretaker setup and local government elections" (Usman Ali Khan, the study participant).

The patriarchal structure dominates Pakistani society and mainly Pakhtuns' culture. Almost two decades ago, the participation of women in the political circle was meager and negligible. They were sidelined and kept ignorant of their political rights and obligations. It was merely a dream for women to contest elections as candidates in local bodies or general elections. Even they were banned under the umbrella of the socio-cultural constraints to cast their votes. There was no liberty concept for a female to become local political leaders and get any party position. Women cannot move outside for any political campaign, nor were they allowed to attend any party meetings and rallies. Deprivation in decision making and lack of involvement in political affairs also prevail in Pakhtun society—the different demographics like education, income, class, and caste. Also, play a vital role in this regard. Also, many voters remained unregistered, which also put them back in the political race.

"The government is failed to implement and exercise the legislation in letter and spirit. It might take much time and still a long way to achieving the desirables as stated in the law regarding electoral reforms" (Qaimos Khan, the study participant).

Over time especially after the Musharraf regime, where education and media were focused, women were brought into the political sphere by giving some representation in the local governments, provincial and national assemblies. Due to the modernizing impacts, women can cast their votes and contest elections as candidates in local bodies and general elections. In urban areas, women can move outside for their political campaigns, attend party meetings, rallies, and get a party position. However, they are still confronting various kinds of challenges like the glass ceiling effect, gender-based violence, lack of voter education, and unregistered voters.

"Today's women are getting avenues of empowerment in different spheres of life. However, they still face gender-based violence, inheritance issues, deprivation from the basic needs of life. That day is not far behind when women will play their role at par with men and contribute to society in a better way" (Tabassum Adnan, the study participant).

In the past, the only mechanism of election campaigns on which they rely was door to door visits and corner meetings. *THujra* (a typical guest house that rarely exists in Swat) of *Khan* (local elder) was the best place for such meetings. Although economic miseries were higher, there was still a practice of arranging political rallies as a tool for the election campaign.

"The election campaign was simple and limited to door to door campaigns, corner meetings, and rallies. However, modernization altered it all together, whereas campaigns run with technological gadgets, electronic and print media, and banners/flexes. Resultantly, it speeds up the contact and communication with the voters in the constituency" (Izhar Khan, the study participant).

Today, the mode of election campaigns different from the influx of media (especially social media) and other technological advancements like mobile phones where one can easily share information with the community.

"Although modernization, where the ratio of education has increased, and people started using digital technology has impacted the ways of election campaigns to a greater extent. However, the campaigns can still not be successful until they are not social and present in almost every moment of happiness and grief. The card of Biradri / Khail / Hasab Nasab still plays a pivotal role in election campaigns. Some party candidates also use the religious card for molding the mindset of their voters" (Johar Ali Khan, the study participant).

The majority of the youth much depends upon the usage of technological gadgets and social media (SMS and phone calls, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social networking sites) for projecting their political parties' manifestoes effectively. Mobiles and other gadgets brought facilitation in covering / recording photo sessions, interviews, debates, and rallies in a very economical way. Opinion polls/surveys on social networks also consider the pivotal agent of election campaigns, which may divert the voters' attention. Moreover, flexes/banners, wall chalking, local TV cable networks/channels, paid billboards, loudspeakers, newspapers, pamphlets, political parties' flags & badges,

and paid media coverage boosts the campaigns. Door to door campaigns, corner meetings, rallies are also the most critical aspects of election campaigns. Participation in the moments of rejoices and grief (*Gham Khaddi Ki Sharikaidal*) is also considered a useful tool for getting benefits at elections.

Conclusion

Although, to a greater extent, the societal fabric is still run and controlled by the patriarchal setup. However, the impacts of modernization on the political institution in different political affairs like a rational change in people's behavior toward casting their votes while choosing their political representatives have occurred. Similarly, the turnout ratio in elections has improved. Besides, political parties are now using media and technology and other fast communication and transportation for their political campaigns. Likewise, the gender-wise political scenario has also been transforming. In contrast, females are now taking part in the political sphere in terms of vote casting and contesting elections as candidates at different levels. In a nutshell, the overall political scenario is under the influence of modernization.

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