Homework 5: The Party System in Pakistan and Its Impact on Society

Introduction

The party system is the foundation of every democracy, and in Pakistan, political parties are of paramount importance in determining our life in terms of society, economy, and politics. On the other hand, the association of political parties with the society is intricate and, at times, very troublesome. In this paper, the author will discuss the influence of the party system on social life, the contribution of political parties to society, and the areas where political parties need to improve with the help of genuine examples from our political scene.

Question 1: Tell us about the party system in your country or region - how it affects the social life of society

Pakistan has a multi-party democratic system where several political parties compete for power at both national and provincial levels. The major parties include Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) - PML-N, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and various regional parties like Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), and Awami National Party (ANP).

The Party System and Its Effect on Social Life:

Pakistan has a multi-party system in which several political parties compete for power. The major parties include the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), the Pakistan Peoples Party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, and a number of regional parties. This political arrangement affects our social life significantly and in many ways.

One of the negative aspects of Party Politics: Political parties usually split the society into sections based on provincial, ethnic, and ideological factors. The PML-N is still the strongest party in Punjab, while in Sindh the PPP party is the most dominant one in rural areas; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the province where PTI has acquired considerable support. It leads to the creation of provinces that have their own identities based on political parties, and sometimes the tensions between the provinces may worsen.

Another way politics affects society is by Daily Life: Society at large is going to be very polarized when elections are in the air. Political affiliations become the reason for disagreements between family members and friends. The war of words on politics takes place on social media and there are even street protests and strikes called by political parties that turn normal life upside down i.e., businesses stop, traffic is halted and sometimes violence breaks out. It is still fresh in my memory that during the political crisis of 2022, in major cities public protests went on for weeks and the day-to-day life was very much affected; roads were blocked with containers and businesses were operating under the shadow of uncertainty.

Patronage System: The political parties engage in practices that favor their supporters. If your constituency backs the incumbent, then you can expect newer projects, better roads, and more health facilities. However, if your area is not a stronghold of the ruling party, you may be left out completely. This leads to creation of disparity and people are left with no option but to join the powerful parties for the sake of survival even though they do not share the same ideology.

Youth Engagement: There are good aspects to this, such as the fact that political organizations have managed to get the young people involved. For instance, the PTI party attracted a lot of youngsters to politics, etc. who otherwise were not interested in the whole thing. Political rallies and campaigns, though sometimes very shallow in nature, are still a means of making people aware of certain issues on a national level.

Question 2: Tell us about the work done by the leading party or coalition of parties for the good of society

Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) - PML-N (2013-2018):

Infrastructure Development: The PML-N party (2013-2018) lifted the infrastructure game to a whole new level. They finished the Lahore-Islamabad motorway, the Orange Line Metro project in Lahore was launched, and CPEC was given much focus. The output of these projects included not only the creation of jobs but also the enhancement of inter-city and inter-province connectivity. Punjab was the focus of all these projects, and Lahore was given special attention, while in other provinces this was seen as a neglecting policy.

Social Programs: The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) turned the poverty-stricken population into its supporters with the introduction of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), which is intended to aid financially the poorest families with a particular focus on women. Multitudes of families have been helped by this program during economic hardships. Besides, the signing of the 18th Amendment was a plus marking the working relationship between the provinces and the federal government. Health: The PTI/MPTP administration applied the Sehat Card plan in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, and later on, it reached the center, giving very poor families the chance of getting free health insurance. This was a big move to universal healthcare albeit it was quite a challenge for the activists to pull through the implementation.

Education: Governments in different forms have been laced through the years with education support. The Punjab Education Foundation was able to attract children who were not going to school through the introduction of the educational system. However, the situation of public education is not a good one; it is still characterized by low standards, and the divide between upper-class private institutions and state schools keeps on widening.

Question 3: What do you dislike about the activities of these parties?

Corruption and Nepotism: The biggest issue is corruption. A real example is the situation when the PML-N was ruling; the Panama Papers exposed the Sharif family's offshore firms. The PTI, who came to power on the promise of providing an alternative, had to deal with corruption accusations against many ministers and officials just like their predecessors. Political parties prefer to place their loyal people in the key positions rather than selecting the best qualified through merit. I have personally witnessed in my locality that party supporters get the government contracts without going through the due bidding process.

Dynastic Politics: The major political parties have the fingerprints of family holdings on them. The PML-N is under the authority of the Sharifs, the Bhuttos rule the PPP, and family influences are moreover seen in the case of newer parties. It indicates that the persons with the best skills but without political family backgrounds will not be able to reach the apex position. An actual case in point is: Bilawal Bhutto rose to be the chairperson of the PPP due to his family name and not because he had been working underneath. It denies the skilled and qualified people from common families the opportunities.

Politics of Blame : In place of resolving issues, political parties waste time accusing one another. They charge that their rivals have made life difficult for them; when they lose, every policy or decision is subjected to harsh criticism; when they take over, the very same previous governments create the discontent they have to fight. PTI, e.g., pointed a finger at PML-N for the economic mess, and now others are pointing fingers at PTI. The accusation among the political parties has been going on for centuries, while the genuine issues keep on stuck without a solution.

Violent Politics: Political rallies occasionally become a riotous affair. I saw during local elections how rival party activists fought, vandalized, and scared voters. The intense language of the party chiefs gives a green light to their followers to be non-accepting of the other side's opinions.

Ignoring Real Issues: Rhetoric is the main concern, not the real issues, for the political parties. They debate over philosophical terms such as "democracy" and "sovereignty" while letting the practical matters of water crisis, education, unemployment, and health care unattended. For instance, Pakistan is encountering a

serious water problem that might turn out to be life threatening in the future but still no one is talking about it as a key issue.

Exploitation of Religion and Ethnicity: Parties manipulate religious sentiments and ethnic identities to gain votes. They make emotional appeals rather than presenting concrete plans. This keeps society divided and prevents rational political discourse.

Question 4: What would you do in their place?

Merit-Based System: I would make sure that the party's positions and government appointments were determined by skill and ability rather than by family ties or loyalty. Allow internal elections in the party whereby any competent member may run for a post. A real example: Rather than appointing Ministers as a result of political negotiations, conduct interviews and choose people who have the necessary experience and clean records.

Focus on Local Issues: Instead of big rallies and expensive campaigns, I would direct party resources toward solving community problems. For example, if sewage is overflowing in a neighborhood, party workers should organize to fix it rather than just making promises. In my area, roads have been broken for years - party representatives visit only during elections. I would make parties accountable for their constituencies year-round.

Transparent Finances: All party funding should be completely transparent. Every donation, every expenditure should be publicly available online. This would reduce illegal money in politics. I would also limit campaign spending so that elections are not just competitions of wealth.

Issue-Based Politics: I would shift focus from personality cults to policy debates. Before elections, parties should publish detailed plans on education, health, economy, and environment with specific targets and timelines. Then their performance should be evaluated against these commitments.

Youth and Women Inclusion: Instead of giving tickets to the same old faces, I would ensure at least 50% of party tickets go to new, educated, and honest candidates, with significant representation for women and youth. Real example: Instead of giving tickets to sons and daughters of previous politicians, conduct proper interviews to select candidates based on their education, vision, and connection with people.

Peaceful Politics: I would establish strict codes of conduct prohibiting violent rhetoric, personal attacks, and aggressive behavior. Party workers who engage in violence or intimidation would be expelled. Political disagreement should be civilized and respectful.

Accountability Mechanisms: I would create independent committees within parties to investigate corruption allegations against party members. Anyone found guilty should be immediately removed, regardless of their position or connections.

Environmental and Social Responsibility: Every party should have dedicated teams working on environmental protection, tree plantation, clean water projects, and community welfare programs. These should not be just election stunts but continuous efforts.

Conclusion

The party system in Pakistan has potential to serve society but is currently plagued by corruption, dynasticism, and focus on power rather than service. Political parties have done some development work, but their overall impact on society is mixed at best. The gap between what parties promise and what they deliver creates disillusionment among citizens, especially youth.

For real change, we need parties that prioritize merit over loyalty, policies over personalities, and service over power. We need leaders who lead by example, who are accountable, and who genuinely care about the welfare of common people. Until these changes happen, the party system will continue to disappoint the aspirations of Pakistani society. As citizens, we must also demand better and hold parties accountable through our votes and our voices.

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