



The Role of Civil Society in Democratic Consolidation in Pakistan and Turkey

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Abstract

In the modern era, the role of civil society cannot be ignored in the development of a country. In the democratic arena, it compels the undemocratic elements to follow democratic norms in a given society and keeps a vigilant watch on the activities of the government. This article, apart from the conceptual clarification of civil society and democracy, throws light on how civil society played its role in the promotion of democratisation in Pakistan and Turkey. In Pakistan, civil society is considered as an umbrella phrase for a range of non-state and non-market citizen organisations and initiatives, network, and unions operating in an expansive gamut. The civil society in Pakistan has been flawed by the structural dynamics of state consolidation from the beginning. In current years, nevertheless, civil society organisations have proven to be stronger and dedicated but is still at a developing stage. Looking at the Turkish politics after the World War II, it has been under the influence of rapid democratisation as well as social mobilisation. It also precipitated the delivery of services to the neglected periphery of society.

Keywords: Civil Society, CSOs, Human Rights, NGOs, Democracy, Pakistan, Turkey

1. Introduction

The idea of civil society has ancient roots in human civilization, in the basic necessity of man to survive and share. From the initial days, human communities required cooperative behaviour for survival and development. Civil society often, therefore, was organised where a need for improvement occurred and as a result, people with various backgrounds and interests combined as a particular organisation to achieve their universal goal. The phrase civil society has also been defined in numerous ways: the most common understanding is of civil society as an intermediate sphere between individual, family and state, though the exact ingredients of this sphere vary (Peterson & Til, 2004; Anheier, 2004). One of the simplest (and perhaps most often-quoted) contemporary definitions of civil society is civil society, in the relevant sense, is the part of society which is not the state; it is a residue (Ernest, 1995). Civil society today is acknowledged as a varied and ever-wider ecosystem of individuals, communities, and organisations. The civil society organisations are hence, functioning in diverse areas ranging from biodiversity and sustainable development to infant inoculation and gender justice, etc. at both global and local stages (Sievers, 2010). This research aims to explore structural dynamics

of civil society in Pakistan and Turkey. The research is based on themes to compare the process of democratisation in Pakistan with Turkey which has been discussed in later sections.

2. Literature Review

This study has used the Liberal Democratic Model as a theoretical framework which is most appropriate since it is applicable for both the countries. Liberal democracy is practiced in most of the countries of the world which are exercising democracy as a form of government, at least in principle. Its' important elements are a) Representative or indirect democracy in which the office bearer wins political office by success in regular elections. b) Electoral choice and competition are the base for it. c) A clear division between the civil society and the state (Seckinelgin, 2002; Ware, 1992). Not all the liberal democracies need to be democratic. To decide which form of liberal democracy might be more democratic, one must define the essence of liberal democracy. As wrote by Beetham (1992), a liberal vote-based system depends on two standards: Firstly, well-known control of open choices or decisions and secondly, equity between natives in connection to those choices and decisions. In Pakistan and Turkey, regular elections take place except when there have been interruptions in the political process because of military interventions. There is a multi-party system in Turkey as well as in Pakistan. Thus, in both countries, the electoral choices are provided to the voters and there exists a process of competition among the voters. Above all, in both countries the state and civil society are distinct and separate.

This study explains the scholarly and semi-scholarly works for addressing civil society and democracy in Pakistan and Turkey. Moreover, it points out the gaps which are to be filled by this study. Ganesan & Durkop, (2015) have discussed the concept of state-society relations and in particular the role of civil society organisations within the framework of democracy in South East Asia and Turkey. Doyle (2016) also analyses the societal roles of the civil society organisations with clear evidences from Turkey. Tol (2016), in his work political trends in Turkey describes that the year 2015 was a difficult year for the civil society in Turkey. Whereas Hassan (2008) writes that the actions of General Pervez Musharraf, like support of the media, the leadership of the legal community, support of the international community, a heritage of the rule of law, the national and international supremacy of the human rights organisations were the different facilitating factors in backing catalytic part of civil society in Pakistan for about a decade.

Zaidi (2011) expresses the views that even after the democratic transition in Pakistan, democracy, real or formal, is still a long way from being established. The writer has pointed out how civil society was suppressed by the military regimes in Pakistan. Zia had alienated Bhutto's supporters and could draw strength from other political segments and fabricated his political constituency. Musharraf as well could work with majority political groups and parties who felt that supporting the military would pave the way for them to get power. Chou (2014) produced an important literary work on politics and democracy. What makes it both interesting and brilliant reading is not Chou's rejection of democracy but his glowing analysis of how democracy is misrepresented; the corruption and cheating made in its name against its real promise. Gonzales (2011) expresses his views that Turkey likewise had a divided and frail civil society. Two procedures, however, added to a more dynamic civil society: a move from ideologically focused action towards issue-focused action and help from external actors. The last expanded the number of associations and enlarged their institutional limit and the previous changed their character.

3. Research Methodology

In this research, a historical and traditional approach is used in making a comparison of the civil society organisations in Pakistan and Turkey. The study is comparative using primary as well as secondary sources. The primary sources used are interviews of public officials, public statements, press releases of both governments and civil society organizations, government archives, etc. The secondary sources used in this study includes review articles, textbooks, research articles, biographies, historical films/pictures. The study has mostly used a historical approach based on an objective and systematic location, analysis, and evaluation of evidence to establish facts for concluding past events. Data collection is comprised of documents (bulletins, policy, newsletters policy statements, etc.) and responses in interviews.

4. Discussion and Findings

4.1. Civil Society and Democratisation in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the scholastic discussions tend to use civil society as an umbrella, idiom for a range of non-state and non-market citizen's organisations and initiatives, groups and alliances working on a wide scale of social, economic and cultural fields. It includes a vast display of organisations and associations. Since independence in 1947, the evolution of the civil society in Pakistan has been flawed by the structural dynamics of state formation, legitimisation, and consolidation. With national security concerns dictating political decision making from the start, the state has conventionally adopted a centralised, authoritarian system. When Pakistan came into being, it was a nation occupied in becoming unified. Although, the fervour of the freedom movement did produce a feeling of unity, the nation-building the process was sacrificed at the altar of state-building under the pretext of pressing problems and defence of the state. Hence, right from its beginning, the state was strengthened with the support of bureaucratic authority at the cost of civil society (Eberley, 2000; Shafqat, 1998).

In recent years, civil society organisations have verified to be stronger and more dedicated than ever. The last few years witnessed a change in the civil society movement in Pakistan. From a focus on poverty alleviation and rural development, the civil society is occupied with issues of good governance, accountability, and political and human rights. This shift has come about partially because of the social and political crises and partly as an outcome of the rapid development of the electronic media (Rizvi, 2007; Sultanat, 2003). Pakistan being part of the Third World has several socio-economic setbacks, requiring adequate government attention. The poor performance of the Pakistani state in delivering vital public goods and services in spheres of education, health care, and security is moderately compensated by the flourishing tradition of civil society to a certain extent. Considering that Pakistan's civil society work in the fields of advocating human rights, including professional groups; trade unions; social welfare organisations and faith-based organisations. No doubt with so many restraints still civil society organisations have played a positive role in strengthening democratisation and creating awareness in Pakistan (Taj *et al.*, 2014; Shah, 2014).

4.1.1. Civil Society and Women Empowerment

The aspect of patriarchy caused a total disrespect for women in Pakistani society. Moreover, the insight that daughter is neither the 'provider' nor the 'protector' of the family further widens the gender gap in society. Apart from family, the feudal system also causes aversion

towards women. Women do experience social evils under the garb of religion and intermittently as part of local custom. The trend of male supremacy at all levels of society thus becomes a factor causing deprivation and alienation to the other gender. The history of women's activism in Pakistan can be traced during and after the independence movement, when many women related voluntary organisations not only vigorously participated in the freedom struggle but they were also on the forefront in the nation building process (Sheikh, 2009). Women also played a strong role in the anti-Zia movements during the 1980s. Zia's Islamisation took away the few constitutional and civil rights that women had gained in the near past, but these policies turned out to be a blessing in disguise as women's groups, fearful of being disempowered were catapulted into tangible organisational activities, especially in urban areas. Women fought against the Hudood ordinance. The ordinance, arguing that many aspects of the laws were intrinsically misogynistic. In 1981, a group of activists formed the Women's Action Forum (WAF) in reaction to the harsh penalties under the Ordinance and the sentencing of a Pakistani woman to stoning (Zunes, 2009; Sattar, 2011).

Pakistani women are also playing instrumental roles as civil society leaders, promoting common values based on peace, tolerance, and women's rights. Many women-led organisations work inside communities throughout Pakistan, where they are gradually promoting economic and political empowerment, providing social services for those affected by displacement, and facilitating rehabilitation for both victims and former militants. Pakistan in recent past has witnessed an upsurge in consciousness among the women folk for their rightful position in family and society. Therefore, in rural areas, the women have been working on a community level development program for self-reliance and in urban slum areas; there has been a steady growth in women's activism. For instance, the Sughar Empowerment Society working in rural and tribal areas of Pakistan provides training, resources, and opportunities for women to grow as leaders within their communities. Likewise, Colour My World is working for women living in slums of Islamabad by developing the capacity building for women. (Zahid, 2011).

4.1.2. Civil Society and Human Rights

Human Rights abuse is one of the the most complex and challenging issues in contemporary Pakistan, as the vast the social landscape of the country is blotched with incidents of murders based on blasphemy charges, child abuse, target killing, physical abuses meted out by the landowners, disappearances and abduction etc. Moreover, the deprivation caused due to gender discrimination, religious sect, economic status, etc. do not allow the common people to defend them and fight for their legitimate rights. The idea of human dignity has not yet percolated into the mind-set of the people, for instance, the age-old practice of inter-generational slavery is still very much prevalent in Pakistan. The role of civil society is increasing day-by-day around the world to protect the Human Rights concern and the same is also felt in Pakistan's context. Despite many constraints, the human rights movement is going on in Pakistan. The human rights activists are working very sincerely, amidst oppression and atrocities meted out on them (Ahmed, 2002).

In Pakistan, the human rights organisations are constantly challenged and sometimes threatened by the dominant conservative, religious, and fundamentalist segments of society which continue to influence the state. The disturbing factor is the fact that such violations have not declined, despite the active functioning of various civil society organisations. Although, the civil society organisations have obtained some success in protecting and upholding the

human rights in Pakistan but have had little influence on major political and economic issues (Hasnat, 2012).

4.2. Civil Society and Democracy in Turkey

The civil society seems to have been the most essential actor to produce good result in the democratisation procedure. The development of industry, private business, and trade in the sprouting industrialist economy of the 1950s also incited rapid social mobilisation, which gained pace by the late 1950s and further intensified through to the 1980s. Although it has slowed down from the late 1990s, social mobilisation vigorously continues. In any event, the relationship between the periphery and the centre of the Turkish society has changed once and for all: the country has increasingly become an urban, industrial, and democratic system (Kuzmanovic, 2012). In the meantime, the one-party rule of the Republican People's Party, established before the announcement of the Turkish Republic in 1923, ended in 1945. New political parties were established to enter the electoral contest, among them was the Democrat Party that won the general elections in 1950. The electoral races since the 1950s among the political parties are representing various ideological positions across the left-right range and the border versus the centre. However, it eventually produced an overwhelming prevalence of the periphery, and simultaneously of the right and even far-right ideologies in the Turkish politics (Tocco, 2014).

4.2.1. Social State and Civil Society in Turkey

The ideology of the governing parties in Turkey that emphasised the application of liberal economic policies in a capitalist economy contributed to the emergence of economic space for private entrepreneurial initiatives. Democratisation additionally made ready for the foundation of a massive measure of social and political affiliations and an assortment of political groups. Hence, it became possible, since the 1950s, for individuals to take the civic and political initiative in establishing associations with other like-minded individuals. A growing civil society emerged with the drive to democratise the political system. But this process was neither easy nor smooth. Civil society in Turkey has experienced periods of extreme backslide and fast bounce back (Aras, 2000; Kamali, 2006).

In the aftermath of democratisation and quick social activism of the 50 years or so, the division persists in Turkish society. However, the cultural divide in question has become less pronounced in that period. Thanks to democratisation, many members of the periphery gained political power and social recognition by serving in such capacities as deputies of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM), cabinet ministers, public prosecutors, judges, undersecretaries of the cabinet ministries, and general managers of the State Economic Enterprises (SEE). Rapid social mobilisation also provided more opportunities for the agents of the periphery. They had better opportunities for attending school and of being employed as professionals in the urban centres of Turkey (Eligur, 2014; Zweerde, 2004).

4.2.2. The State: Traditional Strength or its Delusion

In Turkey there seems to be an observable statist way that anxieties a comprehension of law that benefits aggregate reason group over the individual and uniformity over diversity. Such an orientation towards the state lends itself to an understanding of politics as authority and instruction of the "ignorant" masses through the mediation bureaucratic elites and also the state.

Along with a concentration, its abilities genuinely consolidated the target of quality over every alcove and corner of social life, through its control of the state. Indeed, the centre viewed the periphery as a launchpad of rebellious activity and hence acted to forestall or suppress every dissenting opinion and movement (White, 2002). All things considered, it was to be kept away from at most circumstances; yet it was likewise expected to have interminable means and resources available in its power that could be appropriated to the subjects of the state through sympathetic donations (Nochmani, 2007)

Although the state tradition is depicted as strong, the very might of the state in itself is a matter of debate. Indeed, if a strong state is assumed to be one that possesses the high potential to control the behaviour of those coming in its jurisdiction, to take out and allocate resources effectively and efficiently from the society and territory over which it is presumed to have power, and to create and declare symbols that elicit awe and deference, then the state does not seem to have much strength in Turkey (Mardin, 2006). Moreover, the Turkish political regime has deviated towards democracy since the 1940s. However, imperfect that drives, election campaigns and electoral contests among different political parties have had their impact on state-civil society relations. The periphery has found plenty of opportunities to make its impact on the state through the processes and institutions of the democratic regime, which rolled the state back and provided for greater breathing space for the periphery as well as civil society (Kadioglu, 2005).

Social gathering as the result of World War II, urbanization, industrialisation and the democratisation of society and nation prompted the foundation of a huge number of voluntary associations. Religious associations, local and regional solidarity groups, civic and cultural initiatives were already becoming part of Turkish society by the 1950s. In particular, economic associations, such as TOBB and TÜSIAD, and trade unions and co-operatives grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s. Nonetheless, the lack of mass support or the capacity to mobilise large-scale popular participation often underestimates voluntary associations in their relations with the state. Some of the organisations have such limits, or access to political assets like votes, resources or data. The under-resourced majority in the public is not much significant to affect political elites and parties. Their major chance to influence relies upon the ability to frame persevering coalitions with other voluntary organisations, and in this manner upgrade their entrance to political assets (Stepan, 2012).

Since the mid-1980s, Turkey has experienced a rapid socio-cultural, economic, and political changeover. One of the significant dimensions of this transformation is the progress and an active role of the civil society organisations both in terms of quality and quantity. The 1990s represented a turning point when economic activities, social groups, and cultural identities obtained relative autonomy within the public space. The revolutionary and future-oriented mass level political movements of the 1970s were, by 1990, replaced by the politicised issues of everyday matters. For the first time, animal rights, environmental protection, healthcare problems, family violence, which were private concerns of individuals, related to the good governance as well, were brought into the political agenda. From the 2000s onwards, and especially with the EU accession process, the politicisation of ethnic and religious identities, natural disasters, and economic crises revealed the fact that the state-sponsored modernisation process did not generate effective solutions to social problems. The Turkish State faced a legitimacy crisis in the realms of politics, economy, and culture. Public support for the political parties weakened. All these developments increased the significance of civil society in Turkish life (Mirahmadi, 2015).

5. Conclusion

The findings of the study show that the civil society organisations have played a significant role in the democratic consolidation in Turkey and Pakistan. Since the mid-1980s, Turkey has experienced rapid socio-cultural, economic, and political transformation. One of the significant dimensions of this transformation is the progress of the civil society organisations both in terms of quality and quantity. Whereas, civil society in Pakistan has strengthened but: failed to produce desired results because of concerted politics. The political elites have compromised, collaborated, or combined with the military being the strongest and most organised institution in Pakistan. Hence the role of civil society organisation in society, state building, democratisation and good governance cannot be neglected as it has been expanding its roots and have proven stronger under the democratic processes.

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