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**Democratic Consolidation in Pakistan:  
Comparative Study of PTI and PMLN Era (2013-2022)**

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**Abstract:**

The article examines the significance of democratic consolidation, outlining its historical challenges and political context. It outlines the research objectives and questions, emphasizing the need to understand the contributions and challenges faced by political parties. The study employs a qualitative research design, relying mostly on secondary data such as books, articles, research papers and reports. Data analysis involves thematic analysis to identify key themes related to democratic consolidation, along with comparative analysis to measure the progress in democratic norms during the PML-N and PTI eras. The research is guided by Democratic Consolidation Theory, which suggests that democratic systems develop and stabilize over time through effective governance, adherence to the rule of law and a democratic political culture. This theoretical framework allows an in-depth assessment of democratic institutions in Pakistan, including the independence of the judiciary and the functioning of the election commission. This study provides a critical examination of Pakistan's democratic evolution during a fundamental decade marked by the governance of PML-N and PTI.

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Democratic consolidation, PTI, PML-N, democratic institutions, rule of law, civilian supremacy

**INTRODUCTION**

Democracy is a system of governance where power is vested in the people, either directly or through the leaders they elect. It allows all citizens to have a say in the decisions that impact their lives and the functioning of the country. In a democracy, people usually have the right to vote, express their opinions openly and participate in political and community activities. The term "democratic consolidation" refers to the process by which a newly formed democracy becomes steady, robust and firmly established as the standard form of governance over time.

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It is the phase in democratic system where democracy becomes widely accepted by both political elites and the general population and less vulnerable to regression or instability. It is a complex and long-term process that involves the strengthening of democratic institutions, the development of a democratic political culture and the establishment of norms and practices that support democracy.

A democracy is considered consolidated when a country has a rule of law, freedom of speech, civilian supremacy and parliamentary sovereignty and an independent election commission. This definition of consolidation looks at how political actors work within the system. When democracy is well-established and accepted, breaking democratic rules becomes politically costly and undesirable. These norms help to maintain the integrity of the democratic system and ensure that it functions effectively. Some key democratic norms include the principle that all individuals, including government officials, are subject to the law, thereby safeguarding fairness and equality. Democratic norms prioritize the protection of individual rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech, assembly, religion and the press, as well as the right to a fair trial.

The democratic norms collectively contribute to the functioning of a healthy democratic society, where government remains accountable to its citizens, civil liberties are protected and citizens have the power to influence the policies and direction of their nation. It is important to note that both PML-N and PTI have faced both criticism and admiration for their actions in upholding or undermining democratic norms.

Since Pakistan's inception in 1947, it has experienced numerous challenges in establishing and strengthening democratic norms. Democratic values have been repeatedly damaged by authoritarian regimes, military interventions and prevalent corruption. Nevertheless, the past decade witnessed the emergence of two major political parties promising to strengthen democratic norms, PML-N and PTI. Historically, periods of martial law in Pakistan resulted in the weakening of democratic norms, suppression of political opposition and concentration of power in the military or executive, creating obstacles for democratic governance and institutions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Saeed (2020) explores the remarkable flexibility exhibited by political parties in the face of challenges posed by authoritarian regimes. Through a comprehensive analysis, the book sheds light on the factors that enable these political entities to tolerate, familiarize and often flourish in environments where democratic norms are under threat. Furthermore, the book investigates the strategies employed by political parties to navigate the delicate balance coexisting with authoritarian rule while actively advocating for democratic change. By examining the complicated interaction between political parties and the broader political landscape, Saeed's work provides valuable insights into the broader discourse surrounding the struggle for democracy in complex political environments.

Subhan (2020) examines Pakistan's political landscape, characterized by an animated and diverse multi-party system, where numerous parties represent a wide range of interests, ideologies and electorates. Given this rich political textile, it is essential to evaluate how different parties interpret and implement party democracy within their internal structures. Analyzing party democracy through the framework of party statutes is instrumental in understanding the overall state of democracy in Pakistan.

Ullah et.al., (2020) explore the motivations behind political protests, the key actors involved and the strategic elements shaping protest movement. By analyzing the PTI dharna, the authors contribute valuable insights into political mobilization and activism in Pakistan, providing an understanding of the role of protest in the national political discourse.

Bibi (2018) examines the concept of democracy and its specific challenges in Pakistan. The article explores the multifaceted nature of democracy and the unique hurdles it faces in the Pakistani political landscape. Through an in-depth literature review, the author investigates both theoretical foundations and practical application of democracy in Pakistan, providing a significant contribution to the scholarly discourse on democratic development in the country.

Ali et.al. (2021) present a crucial exploration of the challenges posed by a hybrid political regime to democratic consolidation in Pakistan, particularly between 2008 and 2015. This article serves as a significant contribution to the literature, highlighting the complex interaction between democratic objectives and the continuing influence of non-democratic elements in Pakistan's political landscape. Using empirical data and scholarly analysis, the authors outline the obstacles and dynamics that hindered the country's path toward democratic stability during this critical period, offering valuable insights into the broader discourse on democratic governance in Pakistan.

Mirza, & Fatima (2020) highlight the institutional and normative dimensions resulting from constitutional amendments. By analyzing the changes, the authors shed light on how these changes have influenced the Pakistan's democratic framework. This article not only investigates into the details of institutional development but also explains their role in shaping democratic norms and practices, thereby providing valuable insights into the ongoing discourse on democratic consolidation in Pakistan.

Tahir et.al. (2020) examine the relationship between socioeconomic indicators and democratic consolidation in Pakistan. This article serves as a vital contribution to the literature by investigating the complicated interplay between socioeconomic factors and the establishment of a stable democratic system in Pakistan. Through empirical analysis and a comprehensive review of data, the authors investigate how various socio-economic indicators have hindered the country's democratic consolidation, thereby providing an understanding of democratic development and stability in Pakistan.

Hussain et.al. (2023) analyze the evolution of press freedom under shifting political regimes in Pakistan. Through empirical data and a comprehensive review of historical and contemporary contexts, the authors investigate the levels of censorship, state control and media independence across different eras. The article offers valuable insights into the complex relationship between political governance and the freedom of the press in Pakistan, which is vital for understanding the broader dynamics of democracy and authoritarianism in the country.

Afzal (2019) navigates the complicated landscape of Pakistan's political history, offering readers an understanding of the challenges and opportunities that have shaped the nation's democracy. This book investigates the historical backdrop of Pakistan's democratic evolution, including pivotal moments such as the 1971 East Pakistan crisis and periods of military rule, providing essential context for the current political landscape. The author's keen analysis of the 2018 general elections and their impact on governance and political dynamics underlines the book's central argument that

Pakistan's democracy has reached a critical juncture. The author sheds light on the role of civil society in democratic process, while also identifying areas where further research and exploration are needed to fully understand the complexities and distinctions of Pakistan's evolving democracy.

Khan et al. (2022) explore the dynamics of democracy in Pakistan through a comprehensive analysis of the 2018 general elections. They investigate the electoral process, voter turnout, political party dynamics and institutional roles. Through a combination of empirical data and qualitative analysis, the article provides valuable insights for scholars and policymakers. However, it lacks a critical examination of potential electoral controversies that may have occurred during the election process.

Shamshad (2022) provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolving role of the judiciary in Pakistan over an eleven-year period. The study explores the transition of the judiciary from restoration to increasing activism focusing on key judicial movements, including the pivotal 2007 lawyers' movement. The article explores how the judicial independence and activism have influenced political and legal dynamics in Pakistan. Through a detailed review of legal reforms, court decisions and political interactions, the study contributes valuable insights into the judiciary's impact on Pakistan's governance and the broader socio-political landscape.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework of a study is a set of theories, concepts and models that provide a foundation for the research. It offers a roadmap for the study by clarifying the relationships between the variables being studied and the underlying theoretical assumptions that guide the research.

The Democratic Consolidation Theory is not attributed to a single writer or scholar but has evolved through the contributions of various political scientists and academics. Some of the important thinkers who have contributed to the development of ideas related to democratic consolidation include Juan J. Linz (1926), a Spanish-American political scientist who made significant contributions to the study of authoritarianism and democracy.

His work often explored the challenges of democratic transition and consolidation. "Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation" by Juan J. Linz is an influential work that separates the complicated challenges of transitioning from authoritarian rule to democratic governance, as well as the subsequent efforts involved in consolidating democratic systems. Linz highlights the delicate nature of transitions, recognizing the competing interests and uncertainties that confront both former authoritarian elites and democratic reformers, which can lead to democratic breakdown.

Linz investigates the distinctions of institutional design, measuring the advantages and disadvantages of different governance systems and stressing the necessity of sound constitutional frameworks. Furthermore, the book delves into the crucial topic of civil-military relations, emphasizing the importance of civilian control over the military. Additionally, Linz addresses the potential crises that can threaten democratic consolidation, such as economic downturns, political polarization and regional conflicts, offering insights into strategies for crisis management and the prevention of democratic breakdown.

The theoretical framework applied to analyze this topic is the 'Democratic Consolidation' theory. This theory explains how a democratic system can emerge and gradually become stable over time. It suggests that the strengthening of democratic institutions is a complex and progressive process that involves the rule of law, freedom of speech, independence of the judiciary, sovereignty of parliament, an independent election commission, media freedom, etc. (Schneider, B. 1995).

In the case of Pakistan, the Democratic Consolidation theory can be applied to understand how the PML-N and PTI have contributed to the strengthening of democratic norms and where the political system currently stands in terms of consolidating democracy. This framework also helps to identify the factors that have hindered the consolidation of democracy, such as the corrupt political culture. Therefore, by applying the Democratic Consolidation theory, one can better understand how the ongoing democratic process in Pakistan can be further strengthened through the efforts of PML-N and PTI. This theory also allows for an institutional analysis, evaluating the strength and effectiveness of democratic institutions in Pakistan- particularly the independence of the judiciary and the functioning of the election commission.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research is qualitative and involves exploratory and comparative methods. It includes qualitative data from secondary sources. The data is collected from party manifestos, speeches of political leaders, government documents, besides books, articles, research papers, reports, etc.

Thematic Analysis is employed as a qualitative research method to identify, analyze and report patterns within the dataset. It is commonly used to analyze interview data and involves a systematic process of organizing and interpreting data to uncover underlying themes or patterns. The aim is to identify and explore key themes related to the role of the PML-N and PTI in the process of democratic consolidation in Pakistan during the years 2013-2022.

### **EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRACY: AN HISTORIAL PERSPECTIVE**

Democracy functions within a specific set of rules and structures. Within modern societies, there are institutions and processes designed to represent democratic values in how the government cooperates with its people. These include the protection of civil rights, ensuring government accountability, fostering active civil engagement and supporting political organizations. The media plays a vital role in facilitating communication between citizens and the government, thereby upholding democratic principles. In a democracy, citizens typically have the right to participate in decision-making, either directly through voting or indirectly through elected governments. Political transition includes a country shifting from one form of governance to another, often from authoritarian rule to democracy. Since the "Third Wave" of democratization, scholars have highlighted the importance of democratic consolidation in studying democracy and its transitions (Huntington, 1991).

The term "democracy" was first used in the political lexicon of the Greek city-state of Athens in the years 508-507 BC by Cleisthenes. Ever since, Cleisthenes has been referred to as "the father of Athenian democracy." There were two main characteristics of this type of direct democracy: the appointment of common people at random to judicial and administrative positions within the government, and the legislative assembly in the assembly, non-landowners, men under twenty,

slaves, foreigners and women were prohibited from speaking or voting but were still subject to the laws of the city-state. Democracy is seen as the foundation of the political, social and economic development of the state and is the backbone of the governing structure. Without sound governance, it is difficult to run the government. Democracy's guiding values include equality of citizenship and non-discrimination based on race, religion, or place of origin. A democracy requires commitments and Pakistan's democracy has been called into question since its founding, with these commitments often unmet. Due to the gradual and fragile process of demarcation, there was a significant degree of sensitivity to democratization initiatives, which prevented the possibility of civilian forces to govern (Donno, 2013).

Maintaining democracy may be just as challenging as building it, which makes this achievement remarkable. How to support and stabilize these new regimes has become a critical issue in the immediate wake of all these democratic changes. Since the spread of democracy has now slowed, political scientists in newly formed democracies have focused more on what has come to be known as "democratic consolidation." Democratic Consolidation refers to the process by which a newly established democracy becomes stronger and deep-rooted in the political landscape of a country (John Higley, 1995).

A democracy becomes consolidated when a country has a rule of law, freedom of speech, civilian supremacy and parliamentary sovereignty, and when it has an independent election commission. Democratic norms require elections to be conducted in a clear, open and fair manner, allowing citizens to freely choose their representatives without unnecessary interference. The strengthening of democratic institutions is a complex and gradual process and involves the rule of law, freedom of speech, independence of the judiciary, the sovereignty of parliament, an independent election commission, media freedom, etc. (Schedler, 2001).

### **History of Pakistan's Democracy**

In Pakistan's history, democracy has been disrupted three times: in 1958, 1977 and 1999. This is largely due to weak political parties and their incompetent leadership, which has allowed the civil-military bureaucracy to dominate power. Pakistan's progress towards democracy was further hindered by the emergence of a security state, driven by persistent internal and external threats. A major threat to an effective democratic government is corruption in the political and administrative spheres. A democratic nation with a federal framework was what the Pakistan movement envisioned. According to Dr. Ainslie T. Embree, a retired Columbia University professor, the goals of governance are democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as articulated by Islam, allowing Muslims to live their lives according to the teachings of Islam while also granting minorities the full freedom to practice their religions. These goals are reflected in all three of Pakistan's constitutions (Haq, 2010).

However, military rule and interference are still often viewed as necessary for political stability. It has been said that practicing democracy and democratic processes makes them more effective and long-lasting. Democracy and democratic procedures will remain weak and inactive if they are prevented from maintaining themselves by persistent military interferences and shady dealings. The 2013 elections followed two previous ones in 2002 and 2008, where the elected governments finished their tenures in office. In the case of Pakistan, where political parties have



rarely completed one full term in office, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government from 1972 to 1977 remains a notable exception (Siddiqi, 2013). After a decade of democratic governments in 1990s, Pakistan witnessed another military coup in 1999 when Musharraf overthrew an elected government after tensions between civil and military leadership in the wake of Kargil war. Musharraf undermined judiciary, curtailed political rights and denied media freedom in the country (Naazer 2018; 2019).

Throughout history, Pakistan has experienced a wide range of governance styles, ranging from democracy to dictatorship and from parliamentary to presidential systems, alongside shifts between civilian and military rule. The country has encountered several challenges since its inception, including internal divisions between East and West Pakistan, conflicts between central and provincial authorities, immigration of refugees, tense relations with neighboring countries and a lack of cohesive leadership. These problems have hindered the progress of democratization and political stability within the nation. Linguistic and cultural differences further complicated the functioning of parliamentary democracy.

### **Pakistan's Transition to Democracy after a Military Dictatorship**

In 2008, despite their differences, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) teamed up to remove General Musharraf from the presidency. Their alliance succeeded and General Musharraf resigned in August 2008, allowing Asif Ali Zardari to become the 11th president of Pakistan. One significant achievement during this time was the passage of the 18th Amendment, which aimed to increase provincial autonomy and strengthen democratic principles in Pakistan. One of the key aspects of this amendment was the removal of clause 58(2)(B) from the constitution, which aimed to rebalance the powers between the president and the prime minister. This constitutional change restored the authority of parliament, moving away from past tendencies where parliamentary bodies often acted as mere instruments in the hands of authoritarian forces (Altaf Khan, 2021).

Pakistan's political culture and democratic procedures also underwent a significant shift in the 2000s. Since 2008, opposition parties have shown a more accepting stance toward the political climate and have resisted the efforts by military establishment-backed groups to collapse elected administrations. The 2013 general elections offer grounds for optimism and a transformed political landscape, which can be summarized as follows:

- The army's support of candidates and electoral procedures to ensure that the people, not the president (by the now-void Article 58 (2) (b)) or the army through a military takeover, decide on a peaceful transition of government.
- A strong judiciary and Election Commission that have taken extraordinary measures to guarantee that candidates meet the minimal requirements to run for office.
- A robust print and digital media that has reliably advocated for elections as a means of strengthening democracy.
- The emergence of new political parties, such as Imran Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaf, indicating that Pakistan's political party landscape is becoming more diverse and that new forces are entering to challenge established political parties like the PPP and PML (N).

It is not enough to merely hold elections to address the challenge of consolidating democracy. While electoral democracy is necessary for stability, liberal democracy must also be perfected in several key areas. This ensures that individuals are not only able to choose their leaders but also serve as defenders of the rights and freedoms granted to them by the state (Hoffman, 2011).

### **ROLE OF PML-N IN DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION**

Political parties serve as the foundational supports upon which the structure of nations stands. Each party exemplifies a different political identity within a broader system, comprising hierarchical structures, power distribution mechanisms, electoral processes and decision-making contexts. Societies are inherently diverse, including individuals with varying perspectives and ideologies. This diversity is the spirit of political parties, as they emerge from the clash of differing opinions. Democracy flourishes on this diversity, embracing the discordance of voices, ideas, ambitions and political aspirations that characterize a vibrant political landscape (Afzal, 1986).

People often observe themselves as the true driving force behind political parties, believing they hold significant impact and serve as the primary source of strength. Unlike in other democratic nations such as the UK, USA and even India, political parties in Pakistan lack clear manifestos and ideologies to appeal to the general population. This absence makes them vulnerable to manipulation by dictators seeking to extend their rule and expand their authority. The root of political instability in Pakistan can be traced to a lack of experienced leadership and the absence of well-structured political organizations, as noted by Aziz (2001). Rather than being grounded in coherent ideas, parties in Pakistan often revolve around individual personalities. For instance, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is perceived as a political unit dominated by the Bhutto family, with leadership constantly emerging from within the same lineage. Similarly, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) PML-N, has been led by a select group of individuals since its inception (Malik, 2001).

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) signifies the long journey of Muslims in South Asia. During the colonial period, Muslims faced many hardships, leading their leaders to unite and form a political group in the early 1900s to protect their interests. On December 30, 1906, Muslim leaders met in Dacca and established the "All India Muslim League." In 1930, at the league's annual conference, Allama Iqbal suggested creating a separate homeland for Muslims in South Asia to solve their political and economic problems.

During the 1988 general elections in Pakistan, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz party experienced a split into two groups. One faction was led by Nawaz Sharif, then Chief Minister of Punjab, while the other party was led by Mr. Junejo. The group led by Nawaz Sharif experienced further divisions in 2001, leading to the formation of the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam by rebellious members (Gul, K. n.d).

The year 2013 marked substantial milestones in Pakistan's democratic journey, signifying a more stable path toward consolidation. One prominent achievement was the completion of the first full five-year term by an elected civilian government. Instead of the usual executive notice, power transitioned smoothly to an elected successor, reflecting the development of the democratic process among competing civilian political factions. Moreover, after an interruption of 14 years, Nawaz Sharif reclaimed the position of Prime Minister for the third time. Another unique event was the detention of former military ruler Pervez Musharraf on various charges. Despite these positive



developments, challenges persisted. The military retained significant political influence, particularly in matters of security. The elections also emphasized the regional rather than national bases of political parties. Furthermore, the country continued to face issues such as political violence, power shortages and economic differences. To assist with Pakistan's balance of payments problems, a new plan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was approved in 2013 (Malik, 2014).

### **PTI's Role in Democratic Consolidation**

Back in ancient times, especially in places like the Greek city-states, they ran things through direct democracy. But as nations grew bigger and more complex, that system was replaced by representative democracy. This newer setup puts political parties front and center, acting as the go-between for those in power and the public. In today's democratic landscape, these parties are like the main mechanisms turning to ensure people's political goals and interests are met. They are the key players in shaping and voicing public opinion. In Pakistan, the "first-past-the-post" voting system inspires political parties to act purposefully. They often adopt moderate stances to appeal to a wide range of voters, seeking to secure a majority of votes in each public constituency. As a result, power tends to consolidate among a handful of powerful parties. For instance, the PML-N and PTI have emerged as the major political parties in the country, securing significant backing from various regions.

PTI upholds the doctrines of Islamic welfarism and imagines a day when a developed Islamic state will guarantee the welfare of its citizens by employing intercommunal collaboration and support. The party works to promote social consistency, political stability and economic prosperity among all racial, ethnic and religious groups. By doing this, PTI aims to reunite Pakistan's rich cultural and ethnic variety with traditional social and religious values, in line with Allama Iqbal and Jinnah's vision of a democratic society that defends the rule of law and social security. Its ultimate objective is to restore Pakistan's political and economic independence by providing reliable leadership, establishing a strong, corruption-free system and reclaiming control of Pakistan's political and economic affairs through effective governance (Javid, 2022).

A political party's organization, including its leaders, members and activists, is essential to the process. It oversees selecting officials and making sure they fulfill their constitutionally authorized responsibilities. Three components usually make up a party: the organization itself, the ruling party and the party as seen by the constituency. Over the years, PTI's organizational structure has progressed and its constitution invites everyone to come and join, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, beliefs, or place of residence. A party is a network of local organizations joined by organizing bodies.

### **Comparative Analysis of PML-N and PTI Governments (2013-2022)**

The following are the key points to compare the governments of PTI and PML-N in strengthening the democratic norms in Pakistan:

#### **Free and Fair Elections**

The 2013 elections, won by PML-N, were generally seen as free and fair; however, some allegations of pre-election unfairness were raised. PTI's 2018 victory was criticized for military influence and

manipulation. Both elections faced questions about fairness and transparency, reflecting persistent challenges in ensuring truly democratic electoral processes.

### **Rule of Law**

PML-N introduced certain reforms, but was often accused of using state institutions for political purposes. PTI promoted police reforms and introduced digital governance initiatives. However, its aggressive use of accountability mechanisms against political opponents raised concerns about the erosion of institutional neutrality.

### **Independence of Judiciary**

During PML-N's term, the judiciary disqualified Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, raising concerns about selective justice. Under PTI, the judiciary remained assertive but was frequently viewed as aligned with the establishment.

### **Role of Parliament**

PML-N passed several bills, but criticized for often avoiding parliamentary debate. PTI's legislative performance was limited due to frequent opposition protests and weak parliamentary engagement.

### **Freedom of Media**

Media faced censorship under both governments. PML-N restricted dissenting media voices and channels, while PTI was accused of silencing critical journalists and promoting pro-government narratives.<sup>6</sup>

According to some scholars, PML-N's tenure had tense relations with the military, especially after the Dawn Leaks incident. PTI enjoyed close cooperation with military, but critics argue that this compromised democratic checks and balances and reinforced military influence over civilian affairs (Shah, 2014).

### **Dimensions in Pakistan's Democratic Evolution**

It is also significant to discuss the roles of other military rulers, such as General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervez Musharraf, who had long-term impacts on Pakistan's democratic system. General Zia's era (1977-1988) was marked by strict martial law, suppression of political parties and the introduction of laws based on his interpretation of Islam, which limited democratic freedoms. Similarly, General Musharraf (1999-2008) took power through a military coup and ruled with strong executive control, weakening parliament and excluding democratic processes. Both regimes significantly delayed the democratic development of Pakistan. Another important development in Pakistan's democratic journey was the passage of the 13th and 14th Amendments in 1997. These amendments aimed to reduce presidential powers and prevent political defections, respectively. The 13th Amendment removed the President's authority to dissolve the National Assembly, and the 14th Amendment restricted party members from switching loyalty. These changes were key steps toward ensuring parliamentary stability and party discipline, thereby strengthening the democratic process.

The Charter of Democracy (CoD), signed in 2006 between PML-N and PPP, was a historic agreement aimed at ending military influence and promoting a true democratic culture in Pakistan. This document reflected a mutual commitment by political leaders to work together for democratic consolidation, judicial independence and transparent governance (Rizvi, 2011). From 2013 to 2023, both the PML-N and PTI governments introduced several measures in line with the Democratic Consolidation Theory. The PML-N government focused on strengthening parliamentary authority, improving infrastructure and introducing social reforms, such as laws protecting women and transgender individuals. PTI, on the other hand, introduced governance reforms such as the Ehsaas program for social welfare, initiated police reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and made efforts toward digital governance. Both governments contributed, in their ways, to developing a political culture where elections, freedom of speech and the rule of law were debated and promoted, although challenges remained (Amin et al., 2020; Javid, 2022).

Including these aspects gives a more complete picture of Pakistan's democratic journey and highlights both hindrances and progress made by these political parties.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the historical background of Pakistan's democracy reveals a complex tapestry of challenges, achievements and constant dynamics. From its inception as a nation-state to the present day, Pakistan has contended with the intricacies of democratic governance amidst shifting political landscapes, socio-economic disparities and institutional complexities. While significant progress has been made in promoting democratic principles such as electoral participation, constitutional evolution and civil liberties, insistent challenges such as civil-military tensions, institutional fragility and governance deficits continue to shape Pakistan's democratic path. Moving forward, fostering democratic consolidation will require sustained efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, improve political accountability and promote comprehensive civic engagement. By embracing the diverse perspectives, historical shades and international comparisons characteristic of Pakistan's democratic journey, stakeholders can chart a path toward more strong, inclusive and participatory democracy, one that reflects the aspirations of its citizens and upholds the values of pluralism, justice and democratic governance.

In examining the role of PML-N in democratic consolidation, it becomes apparent that the party's historical path and electoral strategies have played a significant role in shaping Pakistan's political landscape. Rooted in the legacy of the All-India Muslim League and the struggle for independence, PML-N represents a continuity of political thought and governance, though not without its challenges and controversies. The party's emergence from a period of political disturbance to becoming a dominant force in Pakistani politics highlights its flexibility and adaptability. However, criticisms regarding its leadership structure, lack of coherent ideology and reliance on charismatic personalities raise concerns about the depth of democratic consolidation within the party. The 2013 elections marked a revolution in Pakistan's democratic journey, yet also revealed persistent challenges such as political violence, decentralization and institutional biases. While PML-N's electoral policies have been instrumental in mobilizing support and achieving electoral success, the party's approach to civil-military relations and parliamentary oversight remains unclear. As Pakistan charts its democratic future, the role of parties like PML-N will continue to be crucial in shaping the country's political evolution and consolidating democratic norms.

The examination of PML-N's role in several aspects of governance, including the rule of law, legislative initiatives and media freedom, presents a complex picture of its influence on Pakistan's political landscape from 2013 to 2018. The party's efforts to pass significant legislation and address key issues such as terrorism, violence against women and transgender rights demonstrate a commitment to governance and social reform. However, challenges such as dynastic politics, limitations on freedom of expression and concerns about media censorship highlight areas where democratic ideals may not have been fully realized. Despite its electoral successes and efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, PML-N's tenure was marked by controversies and criticisms, raising questions about the depth of democratic consolidation achieved during its rule. As Pakistan continues its democratic journey, the legacy of PML-N's governance will certainly shape the country's political future, influencing ongoing debates about the rule of law, legislative priorities and civil liberties.

PTI's role in Pakistan's democratic consolidation reflects the difficulties and contradictions inherent in the country's political landscape. While the party has made significant steps in promoting electoral transparency, governance reform and citizen participation, it continues to face challenges related to governance effectiveness, party organization and ideological reliability. As Pakistan's democratic journey evolves, PTI's legacy will be shaped by its ability to navigate these challenges and uphold the principles of democracy and accountability. The 2018 general elections in Pakistan reflect the complexities of country's democratic journey. While the successful transfer of power demonstrated the resilience of democratic institutions, challenges related to electoral integrity, economic stability and freedom of expression highlight the ongoing struggle to consolidate democratic norms. Moving forward, addressing these challenges, promoting transparency and safeguarding democratic principles will be essential for building a more comprehensive and strong democracy in Pakistan.

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