

## **Role of Middle Class in Bringing Democratic Governance in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

The paper examines the theoretical framework of the concept of middle class and the notion behind the Karl Marx's concept of class struggle and how the Marxist traditions are still prevalent in the form of class politics and identity politics of Pakistan. By using secondary sources this paper attempts to assess the role of middle class in the politics of Pakistan by critically reviewing the class structure and the growth of new middle-class in post 2007 era and how this class has attained the political role after lawyers movement and after the PTI's (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) pop-politics. This paper also attempts to study the trend of protest politics in the developing world and conundrum that democracy faces in this developing part of the globe and how middle class has assumed driving role in it. The social, cultural and religious evolution of this class in Pakistan and in the globalized world, is also explored in the wake of cross-culturalism. The role of middle class in shaping last decade of democracy is also studied by analysing the results of the elections of 2013 and 2018. This paper also suggests incorporating consumerism and marketing based reforms to attract this class towards democratic process.

**Keywords:** Class politics, Identity politics, consumerism, cross-culturalism, new-middle class.

### **Introduction**

The idea of 'white collar class' or middle class is the most used terms in the sociology, including financial aspects, and political science. It is actually the class that is in between the lower and upper class. The rise of this class in the Asian politics and economies, particularly India and China has evoked enthusiasm for this class worldwide. Lavish customer spending in Asia has kept the economies above water both nationally and domestically. This noteworthy improvement of this class is been regarded significant for economic and political development of a nation and a resulting robustness from it. This social group and class today hold centre stage at most of the financial and political forums. The terms like "undermined", "thriving", "assembled", "rising", "minimised", are being used in different connotations. This most essential issue is this that who constitutes the white collar class?. An Indian teacher with a yearly salary of \$2,500 is viewed as white collar class yet for an American family the sum may must be around \$200,000 before it sees itself as working class and for Pakistani family it's around 30,000. However the income can differentiate but the aspirations, dreams and problems almost revolve around the "economies" and their participation in politics is solely inspired to solve their economic issue (Aho, 2009).

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## **Class Theory and Class Politics**

The Marxist tradition seems to be transferred to the new generation as his class theory and relational understanding is being revisited to understand inter and intra class dynamics. Karl Marx's "Two Class Model" presents a critical view of middle class as according to which new polarised rising class or social group in the wake of inequalities is bound to respond to claims that their growth had been countered by Marx claims of "social segregation". Today when we see that this professional, working and tax-paying class is all set to overthrow capitalist and elitist order in developing countries and this theory seems to be most implementable on today's scenario of middle class emerging political role. However, the new economic forces and actors and social groups needs to be included in Marxist theory of class struggle; other then, labourers and owners of the production sources if the study of the middle class is to be carried out. The academic discussions and political landscape as whole has taken a 180 degree turn as class politics has taken the form of movements against the capitalist regime. Two approaches are leading in this case: firstly, sometimes strength of the left is derived from cross -class mechanism. Secondly, either the emerging class differences in politics are mainly unprompted or constructed as a result of certain events. The "Identity Politics" and "Class Politics" in social sciences are often related together. The fact cannot be ignored that we all have identities and those identities give us certain treatment in the world. When we began to have role in political process and strive for betterment and these identities may award us privileges and others might explicate us. It must be remembered that it doesn't create rift in the society but rather acknowledges the differences which already exists. Internationally, in the recent past, the rise of Donald Trump has further made this aspect important. In Pakistan, from Ayub, Bhutto and down to Imran khan, the trend of "class politics" and "identity politics" has always been there and making rounds for quite some time now ( Berruti ,2016).

## **The role of middle class in national growth and development**

Politicians traditionally view the middle class in economic prospect. But in fact, the case is totally opposite. The middle class is the source of economic growth not result of it. A strong middle class provides a stable consumer base that drives productive investment. Other than that, a strong middle class is a key factor in encouraging other national and societal conditions that lead to growth. It is essential for vigorous entrepreneurship and innovation, a source of trust that lubricates social interactions and reduces transaction costs, a projection of civic engagement that produces better governance, and a promoter of education and other long- term investments. Two trends can be traced in a society if there is a strong middle-class:

### **Trust**

A strong middle class yields high level of trust. When a society comprises largely of middle class, strangers are more active to work together in business and in life. The

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general optimistic vibes can be observed, as they believe that they have a better control of their circumstances .Moreover, people can also sense the presence of similar fate and build stronger social bonds. As Tocqueville commented about Americans in 1800's that they were mainly from White-collar class and not patricians who could mobilise others, their mutual trust was enough to work with each other to attain common targets.

### **Good Governance**

All the philosophers from Aristotle to James Madison have propagated that a mighty middle class nurtures good governance by ensuring that government is well -run, with increased citizen participation , with least factional fighting and promoting those policies which are for the betterment of all the people in society rather than vested interests . The weakened middle class will eventually take a step back from public life which will not only affect electoral politics and public policy but also undermines the basic working of government. An article in “The Review of Economics and Statistics”, economists.( Chong and Gradstein 2007) developed a model which explained the relationship between inequality and governance and then practically tested it . They concluded that economic imbalances resulted in administrative quality, stability of a government and accountability in democratic system. Moreover, the trend of malfunctioning becomes common without a strong middle class. In short, a weak middle class dish out governing practices and institutions, so that bureaucracy no more delivers for its citizens (Madland, 2011).

### **Literature Review**

Rahman, (2012) in his book “The class Structure of Pakistan” has attempted to explain the transformation of Pakistan from an agrarian economy to small scale capitalist economy .The book is a great addition to the addition to the debate on class transformation structure which Pakistan has undergone since its inception.

Nayab, (2011) in her research paper ‘Estimating Middle Class in Pakistan’. In this research paper author has presented a comprehensive overview of the middle class of Pakistan and their dynamics of functioning in Pakistani society .She has presented concept and notion of middle class and factors which make middle class important and parameters to measure the middle class.

Madland, (2011) in his journal “Growth and Middle class” holds the view that “there is a visible demographic shift in Pakistan. We have been experiencing steady growth in an aspiring middle class and not just in absolute numbers. Despite the lackluster growth during the last decade, the middle class has grown faster than the country's population especially in Punjab so prospects for the development in this class need to be created for the growth of the economy and system.”

Javaid, (2018) in his article “A Decade of Democracy” propagates that since 2007, a growing middle class and its engagement with Pakistan political sphere has been the subject of much discussion in Pakistan. The impetus came firstly from the lawyers movement initiated by middle income professional and then formed the consolidation of PTI’s pop politics stressing civic engagement and reclaiming Pakistan from corrupt political elite.

Berruti, (2016) expresses their opinion in the research paper ‘The challenges of governance and democracy in Pakistan’ regarding the change in global patterns of statescraft, foreign policy, diplomacy, terrorism, geopolitics. Their study aims to question the categories that shaped our modernity and its relation to power and existence. Most importantly, post 9/11 attacks, the world is moving towards the values of liberal democracy but Pakistan seems to be lagging behind. So authors provide a insight into the factors and also suggest modifications in the system.

### **Research Methodology**

The descriptive methodology and content analysis has been adopted for the completion of this paper by using secondary data and sources like research papers, books and newspaper articles.

### **Results and Findings**

#### **A critical insight into the class structure of Pakistan**

On the dawn of statehood, Pakistan inherited an branded and categorized elite that was based on contemporaneous control of land, spirituality and tribal devotion. It also commands social influence owing to this status. The attenuated gentry of trans locating state elite of high ranking civil and military officers followed by budding industrial upper class outlines the class structure of Pakistan lately. So when the extended honeymoon of Ayub Khan ended, Pakistan had state elite of land owners and industrialists which singly controlled vast amount of power, urban and rural capital, in a country flooded with inequalities. A splinted and rent seeking commercial class of traders, small industrialists and capitalists farmers emerged after green revolution and Bhutto’s nationalistic policies. After 1980’s, a new class at the top was seen making waves through the rise of new professional class of corporate executives, lawyers, doctors, bankers and other knowledge based workers. In Pakistan, it was proved to be a break through and highlighted some manoeuvring and gradually enlarged the configuration of the classes which own wealth, status and power. In the metropolitan Pakistan, some contrasting and opposing trends led to the rise of a white-collar upper class which was a apparent escape from a narrow state led elitist class structure. This new class, in order to rub shoulders with the traditional business or land owner gentry within their lifetimes used their educational records to move up from their middle class origins without overt dependence on the state. (Rehman, 2012)

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### **The Role of Middle Class in Politics of Pakistan**

The momentum to retrieve the motherland from stereotypical corrupt and degenerated elite came from two events: firstly, the lawyer's movement which was initiated by middle income professionals (bar association members) and secondly: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI's) pop politics. These two movements solely promoted civic engagement in democratic process to its fullest and all the debates since 2007 have been revolving around the dynamic political participation of middle class in politics. "Protest politics" can be seen in full swing in Brazil, Venezuela, Egypt, Turkey and India during last the last ten years. So it can be deduced that the trend of "middle class activism" in Pakistan is somewhat a part of international political trend. Actually, absolute demeaning inequality was the underlying protesting purpose of this relatively opulent activists spread in the geographically distinct countries. The increased dissatisfaction of this class and its parallel success in changing the ways of politics has been presented by the reshaped political language in the mainstream politics. Quite diverse reasons are attributed towards the ever rising awareness of this vibrant and energetic class. The main reason is their economic prosperity, which came as a result of "pro-market reforms" of 1988-2006 which brought the growth and consumption-based prosperity in Pakistan. Moreover, other factor, which is equally impressive and yet quite different from the first one, are the preferences being made clear indirectly and directly by the electronic and social media. Their focus is on the working patterns of the government officials and institutions as they talk in length against government corruptions and related developmental projects. This has an undeniably huge impact on the behaviour of the consumers from all classes especially those from the middle class as they process the political world around them from the assumptions derived from these sources. Another captivating fact which makes this class very important in the democratic functioning of the polity is that low-income voters are organisationally weak compared to the middle class. Likewise, they merely receive token oddments being handed out to them selectively in the absence of representative political parties as they become part of brutal electoral transition. It is essential to possess social, political and economic influence and resources to project an alternate political voice and technically they neither have these credentials nor they have the reach to reform the existing ways of politics ---but middle class absolutely enjoys this power (Birdsall, 2010).

### **Tracing different roles and possibilities for middle class in Pakistan**

#### **Political Role of Middle Class**

The journalists, political analysts and economists in the publications around the world and locally identified the rise of Pakistan's middle class from the Musharraf's regime till date, noteworthy are the developments taken place during last two democratic governments. The main areas of their focus were the economic gains manifested in the form of increased consumerism in large and small urban centre and retail development. Similarly, the promise of a new kind of politics came on the back of

expanding middle class through the Lawyers movement and the rise of Pakistan Tehreek-e- Insaf (PTI) in late 2011. The orthodox political tactics were to vanish out as the result of this change but inspired by the environment building at that time opposite results came in 2013 elections, both in general and by-polls held for local government. Voters from the culturally and economically diverse middle class approached and responded in different ways. As some preferred the narrative of anti-corruption and anti-status quo expression of PTI and while others went for the promised infrastructure gains by the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N). But most significantly, even this strong wave of change cannot change the destiny of the land of the pure, as familiar crumble of funded and sponsored politics and candidate's influence in rural areas became detrimental force. However, the new trends in the political culture of Pakistan have been cultivated and the results of the recent elections have turned the tables.

### **Economic Role of Middle Class**

The feeble stability being faced by the middle-class in Pakistan is a reality, but yet, it is ready to play an active role in the building of a high-spirited economy. To achieve the target of sustainable and inclusive growth the incumbent government has expressed its desire with conviction. It definitely shows change from the previous government's focus on growth with stability because it has learnt economic lessons that "the sustainability of the higher growth lies in inclusiveness". The "Pakistan Vision 2025" is a great policy document that it needs to be shared for the implementation by all sections of the society as it promises human and social development essential for building a poverty-free and provides a base for an equity-based and booming society. The only guiding principle is to increase the number of middle class individuals in Pakistan to eradicate overarching evils like eliminating poverty and widening household disparities. This class deserves to be in mainstream politics which could only regulate the desired economic affairs. (Javaid, 2018).

### **Social Role of Middle Class**

A social perspective of any topic, issue or debate is very valuable and prized possession of concerned research or argument. As it allows the study of behaviors, attributes, attitudes and most importantly it enables to explore the cultural, ethical, moral and religious area of the specific area of study. Coming to the social side, the middle class in Pakistan is no exception. This class in case of their social standing can be studied from various frames----- from historical to contemporary times

### **Retrospect: Pre-Partition Period**

Before partition, this class was associated with bureaucrats, doctors, lawyers and teachers who were attached to the colonial state. They had the ambition in their mind to become like "modernised English families" by also keeping the balance between "ruler and the ruled". At that time, many of them were from aristocratic and landed backgrounds.

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### **Post-Partition: 1947-1980's**

The members from this class are today named as “old middle class” . After the emergence of Pakistan, this class was the flag-bearer of progressiveness and contemporaneous as they were on the front foot of the projection of modernity in the newly born state. Today their children are seen not in the service of state rather they are they are employed at top and mid-level position in a more remunerative private sector. The old middle class families in Lahore, Pakistan's second-largest city, have alienated themselves from the new working and educated class through their genealogical ties to eminent families of the past, local notables and their display of empathy for the “lost” culture of the 1950s and 1960s. If their opinion is to be taken then they view Pakistan on the way of progress before the implementation of the agenda of Islamisation of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq (1978-88) that brought upheaval in the national social fabric. They show their nostalgia through literary festivals and other such activities that glorifies according to them the earlier neoteric history of the country.

### **Zia- Ul- Haq's Islamisation and the Birth of New Middle Class**

The unspoken portrayals of religiosity by the newly visible groups who are second-generation migrants from small towns and rural areas in Punjab are deemed to follow the legacy of General Zia and they collectively forms the new urban class. The education system of 1980's which was coupled with free rein given to religious clergy and curbed political parties made members of middle class families familiar with the discourse of Islamic groups. Most of the members have sympathies for Islamic parties because of their manifestos calling for social justice as they have had affiliations in the past even today they seem to be supporting such ventures. The support for an Islamist party is quite often issue-based and short-lived, and it is not being translated in to massive votes in most cases. The new middle class strongly believes that becoming better Muslims and inculcating Islamic values can provide solution to the problems of Pakistan. The interests of this class are divergent and vary in nature, it also apparent from the appreciable investment of its members in the latest mobile phones and buying electronics, alongside the frequent trips to shopping malls build on western patterns while megastores and markets in almost all the big cities of Pakistan are buzzing with the customers from the middle class. The Cautious attention needs is now over vehemently being paid to rearing children by using branded diapers instead of local nappies, well-known Pakistani labels are now used to buy clothes, Western-style snacks are used for feeding such as chicken nuggets and instant noodles----- this represents shift from culinary and cultural tastes. The twinned desire of elevating the standard of living is connected with the rising anxiety to match with the phase of development as they lack resources to buy all the products available in the globalised world. This class uses microwaves, food processing machines and other appliances including improved means of transportation. This newly established class is still hesitant to frequently use these gadgets as the owners use them carefully and put

them in their original packaging. The rate of consumption and consumerism is still low and families from the poorer tail of the newly arrived class pay visits to malls and shopping spaces for promiscuous experience. Their shopping in inexpensive shops and wholesale markets shows that this class hardly purchases from such places and prefer to look for the similar goods in alternate places. These people keep reality check on their pockets and are not self-wallowed and carried away by their presumed decorum. Unlike the members of old middle class the members of the new middle class have their heart set on government employment, which they still find attractive and a mark of honour, but public sector employment does not provide enough income to attain their idealised level of middle-class utilisation of retail brands. For this motivation, this group supplement their income from government job by investing in property and land owning. Some of the members of this class have semi-skilled jobs in North America or Gulf Countries, which later became the source of somehow lavish capital being owned by them. The jobs include, industrial work in Britain in the 1960s, labour for construction in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s and 1980s and, taxi driving, restaurant employment has been popular jobs in the United States. Lately, the Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia and now globalised Islamic designs practiced by the muslims residing in the west better explains contemporary religious trends that are visible in the form of religiosity of the new middle class. The fear cultural invasion forced the overseas Pakistanis to practice their religion to fullest as much as possible. They also inspired their family members living in Pakistan and made them acquainted with Muslim practices abroad. The introduction of Quran schools and religious study centres in new urban localities and the replacement of dupatta and chadars by head scarves and cloaks speak volumes about the change. If the analytical comparisons are supposed to be drawn between the old and modern middle class, one thing is quite clear that after the denial of the status of a notable class in the local hierarchy, these groups look for it through a familiarity with a global Muslim community. Which has honestly given them political, economic and social status in the country as now in politics and economics policies are being made to attract this class towards the market and increase its profits and in the political vote bank is highly demanded to bring the democracy back on right direction? (Maqsood, 2017).

### **Analysis**

A coherent and systematic administration is tilled by the government which is being supported by ever expanding cooperation by the masses and which undertakes the initiatives and arrangements for the advantage of all the society instead of uncommon interests and the only possibility for such situation lies in the presence of strong, powerful and dominant middle class. Contrariwise, a powerless white-collar class with financial disparities makes the political framework imbalanced and demoralises the well-off class from political participation and resultantly declining voter discourse can be seen. The philosophies of classic and modern thinkers are in compliance with this point of view. According to Aristotle, “an administration which is made out of the working class is more efficient than to majority rule system and theocracy”. So one

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can assume that a responding and participating middle-class can ensure a good quality vote bank. In Pakistan's screenplay, one must revisit the perceived qualification for the enlistment in this group as our middle class is not more than 15 percent and this small number is not helpful for any worthy purpose. We cannot go along with just owning cars, air conditioners, washing machines and television as only yardstick. In reference to what has been said, owning capital should be one of the points of citation to be in this esteemed social class. Pakistan's urban populace is accounted for 38 percent around which only 15 percent fits in the unfeigned category of middle class. A vibrant middle class economy can only be built, if there is a strong and well represented political system. As politics and economy are twinned together and no matter how much we hold on to the thought that "politics, not economy is the gateway to success" at the end we need to comprehend both of these ideas. To embark upon a profit-based and flourishing economy, the Sri Lankan economy provides a perfect example about the importance of a white-collar class in generating a sturdy economic progress. Sri Lanka's economy experienced a shift from being a chiefly a rural-based economy to a more urbanised one and attributing towards manufacturing and providing services. On the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) index Sri Lanka has done a much better job as it has achieved the target of halving the acute poverty. Their mantra was to introduce several small and medium sized enterprises to cater the lower income group to climb up the ladder of class structure so that they can be included in middle class. Consequently a better democratic political process in their country today seems to be reviving.

To put it more meticulously, every political game is all about attracting masses on populist agendas. Unfortunately, today the preferences of political leadership and Filofax of mobilisation looks more towards in the favour of the more prosperous in the society as people have been exploited by the people through these well tested and tried techniques. In many developing countries, this is the dilemma which democracy principally faces and it needs to be addressed immediately. The good old days of consumerism, consumption and political aspirations must be brought back to put the country back on track. The decade of democracy might have been sustained by the same kind of the injuries and risibility including political conflicts, persisting uncertainty and institutional crisis. There is much room for improvement in the system and scheme for this needs to be drafted from the same cobweb of the state of affairs and the results of recent elections have proved this point quite well. The similar and traditional working of the polity during last two democratic regimes in Pakistan has still managed to secure some discrete and nonetheless concrete changes in the political framework. The credit for this change and impact goes to urbanisation and growth of middle class. During the pre-election period, the campaigns of all the major political parties showed this discord of competition which is the evidence of this discrete change. A revolution and abrupt change is never possible in this country, if the truth was to be beheld, the institutions accustomed to assert themselves over everything and anything identifies the deep-seated old ways of managing the political story-line.

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And this is far too difficult to be done straight away. Many questions regarding the nature of the state, and its contract with citizens are being posed by intellectuals, academics and media that are still left to be asked and solved. The only possible answer these questions is to preserve and nourish democracy and let the egalitarian process take its course with all its passion and faith

### **Conclusion**

The demographic shift in the urban population in Pakistan marks the fast growth rate of the middle class. The prospects for the development of this class are not up to the mark as there is a gap between the individuals belonging from different social cadres. This divide can only be minimized, if professional, bureaucratic and presence of this class is transformed into a wider political role being assigned to this educated class. The political culture of Pakistan needs to be greased with new liberal and democratic trends so that this modern and advanced social group can be uplifted to the new walk-on-path in the society. The intellectual and philosophical gardens are enriched with the fruits reaped by the seeds sowed by the middle class in bringing democratic governance. This class undoubtedly, fosters more citizenry participation in the political process, as politics by this class is perceived as a roadmap towards the ideals of accountability, checks and balance, equality and political participation of the masses. The developmental policies can serve multiple purposes ranging from progressive economy to growth of this class in particular and stability of the system, as a whole. Comprehensively speaking, economy is what drives the middle class all around and economy can have a smooth drive only if politics is well – engineered on the democratic route.

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