

DISPUTE ON ' THE VOTE' BEYOND 'VOTE FRAUD' By Dr Ijaz Shafi Gilani

Can there be a democracy without civilian supremacy? This is a perennial yet undecided question in Pakistan. Opinion polls show some shifts over the last 25 years, but the shift is not enough to give comfort to civilians elected to be in command of national affairs. According to polls conducted by Gallup Pakistan, a bare majority, 56%, in 1991 believed the Prime Minister should have more powers than the head of the military (13%) or the President (22%) whose powers in the constitution were ceremonial except (*in practice*) to intervene when so wished by the military.

Even though the constitution is now unambiguous about the supremacy of the office of the Prime Minister, popular views on the subject continue to be contested. Quarter of a century later, in February 2015, six weeks after the incident of indiscriminate killing of school children in Peshawar by Taliban, Gallup Pakistan has found that still only 50% believe the Prime Minister should exercise the supreme authority, slightly short of the figure in 1991.

As many as 24% believe that supreme authority should lie with the head of the military, while 15% believe it should rest with the President, whose office is currently totally ceremonial, and he is handpicked almost at will by the Prime Minister.

Apparently the Prime Minister and his political colleagues have yet to earn a wider consensus from citizens in the state before democracy gets firmly grounded.

CHANGED PROFILE OF DEMOCRACY DOUBTERS

What could be worrisome for Nawaz is a shift in the profile of doubters of democracy. Twenty five years ago, the poll showed that doubters of democracy were not clustered in a powerful social class. They were equally distributed across various income and educational segments. The latest poll shows a wide social difference. Thus among those at the top end of income and education ladder, only 37% favor Prime Ministerial supremacy, almost an equal number, 36% favor head of Military, while 20% opt for the President, perhaps a gesture to dispute the role of the

Prime Minister. To add to the worries of Prime Minister Nawaz, this social class has rallied around Imran Khan, who is consistently disputing the legitimacy of Nawaz Sharif to run the country. The latest poll shows that those who intend to vote for the party of Imran Khan, 44 % believe the head of military should have more powers than the Prime Minister. Imran Khan's campaign focuses on vote fraud in the last election, which elected Nawaz. But according to some analysts what is at dispute is not 'vote fraud' but 'the vote' and its legitimacy to exercise supremacy of power in the country. Deep down, a sizeable sections of the population, in particular the elite groups at top end of social ladder are not yet convinced about that.

Section # 2

IN PAKISTAN THE NATURE OF FEARS FROM INDIA IS CHANGING. BUT PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT PERSIST AND COME BACK IN CRISIS TIME:

In Pakistan fear from its large neighbour India has in recent years been tempered by other global and local concerns. However when there is a serious crisis in Pakistan, fear about threat from India bounces back.

GLOBAL THREAT TO PAKISTAN From among the following three

	India	America	Taliban
March 2009	18%	59%	18%
January 2015	39%	33%	28%

FEAR OF IMMINENT WAR WITH INDIA

(January) 1990	40%
(June) 1999	38%
(December) 2014	15%