

Democracy in Pakistan: Hopes and Hurdles.

Outline:-

1. Introduction

Thesis Statement: The Journey of Democracy in Pakistan has been marked by both hopes and hurdles, with aspirations for political stability, citizens participation and human rights, standing in contrast to challenges like military intervention, corruption and ethnic division. It is necessary to addressing these obstacles for fostering a robust democratic system.

2. Crunch Paragraph

3. Democracy in Pakistan

4. Hurdles for Democracy in Pakistan.

- a) Military Interference
- b) Corruption and Lack of accountability
- c) Weak Judicial system.
- d) Electoral irregularities
- e) Lack of political inclusivity
- f) Economic challenges.
- g) Media control and censorship

h) Feudal Lord System

i) Successive series of dynastic Politics

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5. Hopes for Democracy in Pakistan

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c) Civil liberties and Human rights.

d) Press freedom

e) Rule of Law

f) Economic Growth and Development

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7. Conclusion

Democracy in Pakistan: Hopes and Hurdles

Democracy is in the blood of the Muslims, who look upon complete equality of mankind and believe in fraternity, equality and liberty. Jinnah advocated for a democratic system that ensures equality and freedom for all citizens. But today's Democracy is fragile because it is beset by hurdles like military intervention, corruption, and weak judiciary that are the obstacles in the way of development but institutional stability, civil liberties and human rights are the lamp of hopes for our country. The journey of Democracy in Pakistan has been marked by both hopes and hurdles, with aspiration for political stability, citizens participation and human rights standing in contrast to challenges like military intervention, corruption and

ethnic division. It is necessary to addressing these obstacles for fostering a robust democratic system.

Democracy in Pakistan has been a subject of both progress and challenges since its independence in 1947. The country has experienced periods of civilian rule alongside military interventions. Despite facing political instability, Pakistan has witnessed a growing awareness and desire for democratic values among its populace. General elections are held regularly, allowing citizens to elect their representatives at various levels of government. However, issues like corruption, weak institutions and lack of political consensus have hindered the smooth functioning of democracy. Now there is a need for continuous efforts to remove these obstacles.

Democracy in Pakistan has faced several significant hurdles that have impeded its smooth progress, military interventions is one of them.

Pakistan has experienced multiple military coups throughout its history, leading to the imposition of martial law and the suspension of democratic processes. General Ayub Khan's coup in 1958 and General Pervez Musharraf's coup in 1999 disrupted the democratic system and weakened civilian institutions. Interventions of military is the main hurdle that have impeded its smooth progress.

Moreover, Pakistan has experienced rampant corruption and nepotism within its political system. These have undermined democracy's principles of transparency and accountability. High-profile corruption cases involving politicians and public officials have raised concerns about the integrity of the democratic institutions.

Panama papers Scandal in 2016

Which exposed offshore wealth of several Pakistani politicians, leading to widespread public outrage. Similarly, 2023 Toshakhan case is also the example of corruption, these corrupt practices are the main hurdles in the way of democracy.

Moreover, the weak judicial system in Pakistan has been a significant hurdle in the path of strengthening democracy.

The courts in Pakistan are burdened with a massive backlog of cases, leading to significant delays in delivering justice. This backlog can result in prolonged legal proceedings, which not only deny justice to the parties involved but also erode public confidence in the judiciary. For instance, according to a report by the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan, there were approximately 1.9 million pending cases in the country's courts in 2020.

Weak judiciary are also a major obstacle in the way of democracy. Similarly, Electoral irregularities are a significant hurdle in upholding the principles of democracy in any country. These irregularities encompass various issues, including voter fraud, manipulation and unfair practices that undermine the legitimacy and integrity of elections. In Pakistan, instances of electoral irregularities have been reported, raising concerns about the transparency and credibility of the electoral process. Allegations of vote-rigging, ballot-stuffing, and the use of state resources to influence elections have been documented in various elections held in the country. Such practices not only erode public trust in the electoral system but also hinder the development of a

Political instability is indeed a significant hurdle in sustaining democracy. It refers to the frequent changes in government, lack of political consensus, and inability to maintain a stable governing system. According to Khan, M.M. (2017) Democracy and Political instability in Pakistan from 1947 to 2021, Pakistan has seen multiple changes in government through both democratic and military transitions. Frequent shifts in political leadership can hinder the implementation of long-term policies and development plans, leading to an uncertain and volatile political environment. Political instability can also create opportunities for non-democratic forces to influence or intervene in the democratic process, further eroding democratic norms and principles.

Economic Challenges can indeed pose significant hurdles in the functioning and sustainability of democracy. In Pakistan, the country has faced various economic challenges over the years, including high inflation, unemployment, and fiscal deficits. These economic hardships can create a sense of disillusionment among the population, leading to demands for immediate solutions and putting pressure on the government. Economic challenges can also influence voting patterns, as citizens may support populist or authoritarian leaders promising quick fixes, which may not always align with democratic values and principles.

Khan, M.M. (2021). Economic Challenges and democracy: Evidence from South Asia.

Similarly, Media control and censorship can indeed be significant hurdles in maintaining a vibrant

democracy. When the media is controlled or censored, it can limit the free flow of information, stifle dissenting voices and manipulate public opinion. In Pakistan, there have been instances of media censorship and restrictions on freedom of the press. According to Freedom House (2021), Pakistan

during periods of political turmoil or military interventions media outlets have faced pressure or even shutdown. The control of the narrative and limit criticism of those in power. Such an action restricts citizen's access to diverse and unbiased information, hindering their ability to make informed decisions and participate effectively in the democratic process.

Moreover, the feudal lords system can indeed present significant challenges to democracy

In such systems, feudal landlords or powerful elites wield considerable influence over local communities, often controlling resources, economic opportunities, and political power. This concentration of power can lead to patronage politics and lack of genuine representation for the broader population. In Pakistan, the feudal lords' influence has been particularly long-standing, particularly in rural areas, where they often dominate local politics and wield significant control over electoral outcomes. (Butt, U.R. (2016) Feudalism in Pakistan. Pakistan Vision.

This can hinder the emergence of new leadership, discourage political participation from marginalized groups, and create dependence, making it difficult for true democratic representation to thrive.

Successive series of dynastic politics can indeed pose a significant hurdle to democracy.

Dynastic politics is a pattern where political power is concentrated within a particular family. In Pakistan, there have been instances of dynastic politics where certain families have dominated the political landscape for generations holding key positions of power. reference.

This kind of political monopoly can lead to a lack of fresh ideas. This phenomenon can hinder meritocracy, discourage political voices within a democratic system. (Khan, H. R. (2019). The Dynastic politics in Pakistan)

Similarly, Extremism and terrorism can indeed be significant hurdles in sustaining democracy. Both phenomena pose a threat to the safety and security of citizens, disrupt governance and undermine democratic values. In Pakistan, the country

has faced challenges from extremist groups and terrorist organizations that have carried out violent attacks, targeting civilians, political leaders and even democratic institutions. (Nasr, S. V. (2019)

The Rise of Militant Extremism in Pakistan). These acts of violence create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, making it difficult for citizens to freely express their opinions and participate in the democratic process. Extremist ideologies can promote intolerance, which can erode the spirit of democracy. Hopes for democracy in Pakistan lie in the potential for positive change and progress through an inclusive and participatory political system. Despite the challenges, there are several reasons to be optimistic about the future of democracy in the country.

Institutional stability is a crucial hope for democracy in Pakistan, as it ensures the consistent functioning of democratic institutions and uphold the rule of law. A stable judiciary ensure fair and impartial adjudication providing a check on the executive's powers and protecting citizens' rights. Similarly, a stable parliament and executive enable the government to focus on long-term development plans and address the country's challenges. By maintaining institutional stability, Pakistan can strengthen its democratic foundations and build public trust in the political system. (Rashid, A. (2018)).

Institutional stability and good governance in Pakistan. Pakistan Development Review.

Similarly, participation in politics is a crucial hope for democracy in Pakistan.

as it empowers citizens to engage actively in the decision-making process and influence policies that affect their lives. When people participate in elections, join political parties and voice their opinions through peaceful protests and activism, it strengthens democratic governance. For instance, the 2018 general elections in Pakistan saw a surge in voter turnout, indicating a growing interest in political participation and the desire for change.

Additionally, movements like the Pashtun Tahafuz movement (PTM) have emerged as a platform for marginalized communities to demand their rights and representation. When citizens participate in politics, it fosters a sense of ownership in the democratic system.

Rehman (2019) Political participation

and democratic governance.

Similarly, Civil liberties and human rights are essential hopes for democracy in Pakistan as they protect the fundamental freedoms and dignity of individuals, ensuring a just and inclusive society. In a democratic system, the protection of civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, allows citizens to express their opinions. Safeguarding human rights ensures that all individuals, regardless of their background, enjoy equal protection under the law. According to Behman (2015) The Supreme Court of Pakistan's treatment of human rights claims. The Supreme Court of Pakistan played a crucial role in upholding human rights as seen in cases like Suo moto action taken for missing person's rights. Upholding Civil

Liberties and human rights not only strengthened democratic values but also fosters social cohesion and respect for diversity, contributing to a more vibrant and inclusive democracy.

Similarly, Press freedom is a crucial hope for democracy in Pakistan as it ensures the free flow of information. In a Pakistani Democratic Society a free and independent press serves as a watch dog, reporting on government actions, exposing corruption. According to World Press Freedom Index (2021) during the Panama papers scandal in 2016, Pakistan's media played a vital role in investigating and reporting on offshore assets of politicians, creating public awareness and demanding accountability. By safeguarding press freedom, Pakistan can

nurture a culture of open dialogue, pluralism and accountability contributing to a vibrant and robust democracy.

Moreover, rule of law is a fundamental hope for democracy in Pakistan as it ensures that laws are applied uniformly to all individuals including those in positions of power. In a democratic system, the rule of law acts as a check on arbitrary actions by the government and protects citizens' rights and liberties. According to Aslam (2019) Rule of law and democracy. Evidence: from South Asia (GSDRC). The 2018 landmark verdict by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, disqualifying former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on charges of corruption, exemplified the principle of the rule of law being applied without favouritism. Upholding the rule of law ensures

that institutions function independently, and citizens can seek legal redress for their grievances, strengthening democratic governance and trust in the political system.

Similarly, Economic growth and development are crucial hopes for democracy in Pakistan as they can enhance the overall well-being of citizens and create opportunities for social progress and political stability. The expansion of the middle class and improved economic condition can empower citizens to actively participate in the country's democratic system. Additionally, economic development can generate resources for investments in education, healthcare and infrastructure. A study by Akram and Haider (2018) highlights how economic growth is positively correlated with democratic stability in Pakistan.

emphasizing the importance of sustainable economic development for strengthening democratic institutions and fostering social cohesion.

Similarly, Pakistan has a significant youth population, with many young people actively participating in politics and advocating for change. Youth-led movements, such as the 2014 Azadi March and 2018 (PTM) have demonstrated a strong desire for social and political reforms. The enthusiasm and energy of the youth can play a vital role in shaping the future of democracy. Moreover, improving the literacy rate is a crucial hope for democracy in Pakistan as it empowers citizens with knowledge and critical thinking skills.

enabling them to actively participate in the democratic system. Countries with higher literacy rates often exhibit higher political awareness and greater civic engagement. As more people become literates, they are more likely to demand accountability from their elected representatives, advocate for their rights, and contribute to the democratic development of the nation. A study by Guai and Menla (2017) emphasizes the positive relationship between literacy and political participation, underscoring the importance of investing in education to foster democratic values and active citizenship.

Similarly, Women empowerment is a vital hope for democracy in Pakistan as it promotes gender equality and the active participation of

Women in political, social and economic spheres. In a democratic system when women are empowered they can contribute their unique perspective and experiences to decision making process. According to Kabear, (2013) "Gender equality and economic growth: Is there a win-win?" The election of Benazir Bhutto as the first female prime Minister of Pakistan in 1988 marked a significant milestone of women's empowerment in the country. A study by Kabear and Natali (2013) highlights the positive impacts of women's empowerment on democratic governance, emphasizing how increasing women's political representation leads to more inclusive and responsive policies benefitting the entire society.

Recommendations for strengthening democracy in Pakistan are essential to address existing challenges and promote democratic values. Here are some key recommendations written below:

1. Implement electoral reforms to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections. This may include measures to prevent vote-rigging, improve voter registration processes, and enhance the independence and effectiveness of the Election Commission of Pakistan. For example, strengthening the oversight of electoral process can enhance public trust in the credibility of the results.

2. Moreover, uphold the rule of law by ensuring equal treatment under the law and an independent judiciary. This involves

Safeguarding the judiciary's autonomy, enhancing legal mechanisms for addressing human rights violations and protecting citizen's rights to due process. For instance,

reforms that expedite the judicial process and increase access to justice can improve the rule of law.

Similarly, invest in education and literacy programs to empower citizens with knowledge and critical thinking skills. A literate and educated population is more likely to participate actively in the democratic process, demand accountability and contribute to informed decision-making. For example, targeted initiatives to promote girls' education can advance women's empowerment

and democratic values.

Similarly, strengthen counter-terrorism efforts to create a safe environment for democratic participation.

Address the root causes of extremism, including social and economic disparities, to promote social cohesion and political stability. By addressing these challenges, Pakistan can foster an environment conducive to democratic governance.

Moreover, ensure gender equality and women's empowerment in all spheres of society, including politics. Encourage women's political participation and representation in decision-making bodies. For instance, quotas or reserved seats for women in parliament can increase their political presence and influence.

In nutshell, democracy in Pakistan embodies both hopes and hurdles on its journey towards a more robust and inclusive system of governance. The hopes lie in the potential for positive change and progress through an inclusive and participatory political system. Youth engagement, civil society activism and a free press are some of the promising factors that can foster democratic values and empower citizens to actively participate in decision making process. Strengthening rule of law, promoting women's empowerment, and investing in education and literacy are vital steps to ensure a more vibrant and accountable democracy.

However, the path to a flourishing democratic system is not without challenges. Political instability, institutional weaknesses and electoral irregularities

pose significant hurdles to democratic consolidation. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders, as well as a commitment to upholding democratic values, protecting civil liberties, and ensuring the rule of law. By overcoming these hurdles and nurturing the hopes for democracy, Pakistan can strive towards a more resilient and inclusive democratic future.