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Date:

M T W T F S

Q. The evolution of democratic system has always remained a dilemma in Pakistan, even after ~~planning~~ passing more than seven decades of its existence the democracy could not get its roots. Discuss in detail.

## Introduction

Fukuyama's *The End of History and The Last Man* (1992) highlighted that democracy had reigned supreme compared to all other political and government ideologies. E.g., the world's nations strove to achieve the target of democracy. Pakistan too followed suit but struggled to no avail. The structural deficiencies, heterogeneity in the nation, insecurity and staunch resistance are some of many reasons democracy could not get its roots. In this answer, the dilemma of Pakistani democracy will be discussed in detail.

Democracy unable to get its roots in Pakistan even after seven decades  
Born a security state

In 1947, Pakistan was granted independence by the British. Soon

after Pakistan realised that relations with its neighbours, India, would be far from amicable to start, India disrupted the water supply of Pakistan and then delayed the distribution of resources to Pakistan. The nail in the coffin was the unlawful infiltration of Kashmir despite it being a Muslim state contiguous with Pakistan. Caught between a rock and a hard place, Pakistan diverted most of its resources to the military instead of developing democratic institutions. An insecure state could only depend on its military might for protection in this scenario (Abdul Sattar, Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019). Thus, democracy could not develop from the get go which is why Pakistan still struggles today.

## Dynastic politics - opposite of democracy


Pakistan has a handful of political parties that have ruled the country. The political parties are such that the set up is such that the chairmanship is passed between family members. ~~As~~ They haven't adopted democratic ideals but instead rule like monarchs <sup>few</sup> newcomers have seen the sunlight compared to the familiar faces for the last few decades. This is against democracy ~~that~~ (Hawid Khan, Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan, 2017). This is

against democracy as not everyone is given an equal chance and people are unable to elect representatives that they truly want/need

## Constant military intervention

Democracy has ~~not~~ been unable to hold its ground because just when political ~~part~~ representatives were elected democratically, the military would use the notion of necessity and takeover. Since Pakistan's independence, the country has seen military rule 4 times and for approximately 33 years, military intervention disrupted democracy to such an extent that democratic institutions could not develop (Ayesha Jalal, The Struggle for Pakistan). Hence, even after seventy years Pakistan has struggled with democracy despite consistent civilian rule since 2008, the country has been far from democratic.

## Absence of strong personalities especially in the beginning

Jinnah was the only strong personality at the time of independence. He had the ability to guide the people and was able to unite them. As said by Stanley Wolpert 

"Few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly anyone can be credited with creating a nation-state. Muhammad Ali Jinnah did all three"

Jinnah was the only source of inspiration who advocated strongly for democracy. After he died shortly after independence in 1948, leaving a unstable and insecure country that lacked guidance. Powerful and ill-intentioned people took the rights <sup>of the country</sup> and democracy took a nose-dive. Hence, democracy was a challenge in the beginning and precipitated throughout the 50 years of Pakistan's existence.

## Feudalism: chink in the armour of democracy

Pakistan is marked with backwardness and medieval institutions such as feudalism. The British in <sup>Britain</sup> Europe was able to eliminate feudalism but left this evil institution in its former colony, Pakistan. Feudals essentially mentally enslave the people of their area and ensure that they remain in power in exchange for providing basic needs of the people (if that). \* Democracy ~~could~~ could not flourish as feudalism infiltrated the government system. Any votes to political representatives ~~are~~ are in areas where feudalism

ic prevalent is not the will of the people but feudal loyalty of the impoverished and emotionally and physically blackmailed masses. \* (Anatol Lieven, Pakistan: A Hard Country)

Ethnic loyalty - not rational thinking and meritocracy guides politics

Pakistan is ethnically diverse and this challenges democracy. Heterogeneity entails that each group votes for their own in-group and is against their out-group. For instance, Sindhis tend to vote for PPP and Punjabis tend to vote for PML-N because of the ethnic make-up of the party that appeals to them. (Anatol Lieven, Pakistan: A Hard Country). This is far from the notion of democracy that entail ~~democracy~~ meritocracy and betterment of the country. This thought-process has continued since the country's inception and still persists today after 76 years.

Constitutional amendments to attain power and shun democracy

Article 58 2(b) was ~~for~~ used as a tool to maintain unsurmountable power. Through this amendment ~~that~~ the National Assembly can be dissolved by the President who ~~can~~ wielded ultimate authority. This dismissed democracy as only one person could give the government decisions of the whole country and the will of the people was ignored. Amendments 8 and 17 brought about by Zia ul Haq and Pervez Musharraf respectively were used to diminish democracy. Hence constitutional amendments have been used as tools to ~~diminish~~ <sup>harm</sup> democracy (Hamid Khan, Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan, 2017). Even now, there are talks to change the 18th amendment which entails that after 76 years, democracy has not taken its roots.

## Changing entire constitutions harms democracy

Pakistan has had 3 constitutions throughout its history. The first one was in 1956, 9 years after independence, which only lasted 2 years. The next one was in 1962 which was flawed and unicameral in nature and did not work as it was undemocratic.

Finally the 1973 constitution took root but has faced 26 amendments and has also been suspended by General Musharraf. This was Zia ul Haq. This has culminated into democracy being lit as an essential tool for democracy. So, as the constitution has faced constant changes.

### Elected Prime Ministers unable to complete their term

Despite civilian governments elected chronologically since 2008, no prime minister has completed his term. Democracy would entail that the term in office be completed by the representative elected by the common man. However, this is far from the case.

### Democracy seen as a western concept and resisted by Islamic clerics

Anything that is seen as western is resisted by the fundamentalists of Pakistan. Democracy is seen as an invention of western civilization which is

not the case as democracy was advocated for by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and was practiced by the Rightly Guided Caliphs. However, Islamic clerics resist democracy and this is one of the reasons why democracy has not taken root even after 70 years.

## Scarcity of choice in the political arena

There are only a handful of parties in Pakistan that people can choose from. Only 4 parties come to mind that have an actual shot of winning, PML-N, PPP, PTI and IJI-F at the moment. Pakistan has always provided a lack of choice and democracy cannot take root with parties that have limited ideas to offer and have minimum initiatives. Malcha Lodhi highlighted that each party offers the same thing to the public so differentiating between them and innovative thoughts are missing. According to Amir Rana, a Dream Party would promote democracy and offer more than is currently being offered. Hence, throughout history, the public has lacked choice to ensure democracy.



# Absence of females in politics

Benazir Bhutto has been the only female prime minister of Pakistan. Pakistan has lacked the female touch in the political realm. Where countries have progressed and are striving for gender equality, Pakistan lags behind. Democracy would ensure that women are present in large numbers but social barriers have prevented this. "No nation can rise to the height of its glory unless you women are side by side with you" (Ginnah).

## Why low voter turnout trend has ensured democracy does not take root

Pakistanis have unfortunately lacked faith in democratic institutions in Pakistan. In <sup>the average</sup> ~~Israel~~, for example, voter turnout for the past nine general elections is just a little over 45%. <sup>\*</sup> which means that over half the voters don't even participate in elections. <sup>\*</sup> Democracy requires mass opinion to be taken into consideration and general

will of the people be heard. Hence, democracy has not taken root as people don't even participate in elections. \* (Ahmed Bilal Mubooob, votes turnout fault lines, 2022).

## Normalisation of usurpation of power

It has become the norm in Pakistan when ~~the~~ authoritarian leaders take the reins of the country without the public's consent. The average citizen stands by and democracy is put on the backburner. When such normalisation ensues, it is easy for powerful leaders to ~~to~~ surge into positions of authority without consent. This ensures that democracy cannot take root as people have normalised usurpation of power.

## Critical analysis

The constitution of Pakistan has always been used as an accessory instead of the ultimate law of the land. It was either completely ceased or used for narrow means and manipulated by interested parties. Even now, it reads more as a magazine

that is not taken seriously and thrown away when deemed of no use (Basil Nabi Malik, No grand plan, 2023). Compared to western countries such as The US that uses the constitution as the supreme law of the land. Moreover, democratic institutions are placed in democratic countries and are worked on to promote consistent democracy. Condoleezza Rice refers to the critical nature of institutions in her book Democracy: Stories from the Long Road to Freedom (2017), calling them the 'scaffolding for democracy'. Because India saw the long-term goal and had abundant resources and structures on their side of the border, they were able to become the largest democracy in the world.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, democracy was not taken root in Pakistan due to several unfortunate factors. When Pakistan started to make progress it was pulled down by ill-intentioned forces that didn't see the long-term goals. Instead, a ~~narrow~~ narrow goal was prioritised and the common man suffered just as he is today.