

Democracy in Pakistan: Prospects and Challenges.

Thesis Statement

Outline

- 1- Introduction
- 2- Understanding the term democracy
- 3- Prospects of Democracy in Pakistan:

- A) Democratic constitution and pro-democratic amendments.
- B) Successful transition of political power.
- C) Increasing literacy rate in the masses
- D) Emerging local government system
- E) Existence of active civil society
- F) Empowerment of women.
- G) Active role of social media

4- Challenges of Democracy in Pakistan:

- A) Non expansion of participatory opportunities
- B) Failure to consensus on the operational norms of political system.
- C) Ineffective role of political parties
- D) ~~Rise~~ Reemergence of terrorism.
- E) Military rule; constitutional and political engineering.
- F) Growing political instability.
- G) Growing economic instability.
- H) Ethnic and regional issues confronting by democracy of Pakistan.
- I) Dynastic politics is a big hurdle in democratic setup of Pakistan

5- Suggestions to Improve Democracy of Pakistan:

- A) Political consensus among the major political parties on major issues.
- B) Strong institutional check and balance.
- C) Harmony among provinces and centre

- d) Improving Governance structure.
- e) Harmony in civil military relation
- f) Following constitution in its original spirit
- g) Strengthening role of civil society.
- h) Strengthening role of media.

6) Conclusion

Democracy in Pakistan is strengthening day by day because of democratic constitution, peaceful transition of power, existence of active civil society and growing role of social media. On the other hand it also faces some challenges: no participatory opportunities, lack of consensus; civil military tension, growing political and economic instability and reemergence of terrorism. However, these challenges overcome through consensus, strong constitutional check and balance improving governance structure and active role of civil society.

Today's world slogans are democracy, participatory governance, fair free and competitive elections. Pakistan is a democratic set of government by its constitution, growing literacy rate and active role of civil society leads to peaceful transition of power in Pakistan. Further active role of social media strengthen democracy in Pakistan. With this women political participation is growing day by day. Moreover, local government institutions are playing its role in flourishing democracy in Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan's democracy faces some challenges: Firstly, non participatory opportunities to all masses of the country. Secondly, failure to consensus on operation

above mentioned factors there are many more which can strengthen democracy in Pakistan. However, with these some challenges

3

norms of political system. Thirdly, ineffective role of political parties and leadership, fourthly, military role, political and constitutional breakdown. Fifthly, growing political and economic instability. Lastly, dynastic politics and reemergence of terrorism in Pakistan. However, these challenges overcome through consensus among the major state holders on major issues; institutional check and balance, harmony among provinces and centre; improving governance structure, following constitution in its original spirit, and enhancing role of civil society and social media.

This essay aims to explore the prospects of democracy in Pakistan, challenges face by democracy of Pakistan. Furthermore, it highlights some suggestions to improve democracy in Pakistan.

The democratic constitution and pro democratic constitutional amendments in Pakistan shows prospects of democracy. Pakistan's 1973 constitution is a provided a democratic setup of government. According to which the people of Pakistan through adult franchise elect their representatives for a term of five years. Further, some undemocratic amendment passed by military regime such as 8th amendment which curtail the power of prime minister which was later amended by democratic govt through 13th amendment. Democratic govt also reversed 17th amendment through passing 18th amendment which was a great step towards democratic setup of government. This, pro democratic amendments show tilt towards democracy.

4

Successful transition of power is another mile stone in strengthening of democracy. Earlier than Mushraf regime there were not ^{peacefully} ~~transitions~~ of power. The recent govt government of 2013 and 2018 peacefully transfer power to successive government which is sign of strengthening democracy.

Literacy rate is the most important element for strengthening of democracy. In Pakistan this is growing day by day. When Pakistan came into existence it was about 40%, but now it reached to 58%, and successive government trying to enhance this for the success of democracy. As it is seen that many democracy succeeded with high literacy rate. Pakistan should also invest in education to get the fruits of democracy.

Local governments are very important for the success of democracy. It goes without saying that without local government democracy is an illusion. In Pakistan constitution provided local government system which further strengthens through 18th amendment. Article 140A says that every province shall have local government system with its own financial administration. In Pakistan around all provinces have its own local setup and conduct elections. Anyhow, these local bodies are yet not fully independent because some factors not allows them to work independently and properly. Provincial government not devolving power to local governments. If they properly functionalize democracy can be succeeded.

⑤

Success of democracy is depends upon the active role of civil society. In Pakistan's civil society has great potential to strengthen democracy. They give policy recommendations on diverse issues such as politics, economy, social, gender and educational. The needs is to implement their policies to strengthen and flourish democratic institution in the country.

For the success of democracy women empowerment is most important. Pakistan through its constitution provide representation to women. by which in parliament 60 seats reserved for women. with this constitution provides right to women to participate in every sphere of life. This shows great potential of Pakistan's in women empowerment.

Social media plays a vital role in flourishing democracy. it gives greater chances of political participation and accountability. in recent history in the development of democratic norms in Pakistan it play it utmost role. It awakes people for their right and duties which is important for democracy. It should be regularize by state and provides such programs which are cooperative and helpful for flourishing democracy.

With all above mentioned factors there are many more which can strengthen democracy in Pakistan. However, with these some challenges are also faces by Pakistan's democracy which will discuss in coming paragraphs.

Non expansion of participatory opportunities is a big hurdle face by democracy of Pakistan. since

6

Its inception Pakistan not allowed common citizens to hold elections, take part in state's affairs. without common people admission in politics how democracy flourish. Some elites dominated political structure. this was strengthened by Ayoub regimes, during his regime the wealth and political power was concentrated about 22 families who are in some way running state. with this political parties also not allows common man to participate because of their self interest. they, no extension of opportunities is a hurdle in the way of Pakistan democracy.

Another big hurdle in Pakistan's democracy is lack of consensus among the different stake holder on political system norms that is essential for promotion of democracy. Every stake holder search their own self interest rather than national interest.

Ineffective role of political parties is utmost challenge in the promotion of Pakistan's democracy. It is clear that political parties are building block of democracy. unfortunately, Pakistan's political parties are not working on democratic principles. within political parties there is no concept of democracy, how they promote democracy in Pakistan. Every major political party politics is base on self oriented agenda rather than solving complex issues of the nation. Leaders of political parties are hunger for power and autocratic in nature. All important decisions are making by their own sweet will. Major stalwart of parties opinion is some times ignored.

(7)

Thus, ineffective role of political parties is a major hurdle in Pakistan's democracy.

Re-emergence of terrorism is another hurdle in development of democracy of Pakistan. It is a known fact that during peace democracy can do work effectively. and the rise of terrorism did not leave states to focus on development of democracy. According to Centre for Research and Security Studies 267 fatalities of security personnel recorded in the first two quarters of 2023. This terrorism is not a new phenomenon but it has a long history. After war on terror Pakistan became the centre of terrorism specifically Khyberpukhtunkhwa and Balochistan. This menace of terrorism did not allow Pakistan to focus on development of democracy.

Frequent military rule and constitutional break down is another hurdle in the way of promoting Pakistan's democracy. After 9 years of struggle 1956 constitution was made and implemented in the country, which was abrogated in 1958 and Ayub Khan became dictator who run the country by his own sweet will. Later on 1962 constitution was made by military dictator and power was centralized in his own hand which did not allow democracy to be flourish. Not only this, but, again in 1969 Yahya Khan imposed martial law and issued legal framework order. with this the current constitution of 1973, also suspended by military rule several times and changes constitution for the sake of gaining power such as addition of Article 58(2)(b) which

empowered President to dissolve National Assembly. In the result of this four democratically elected govt government sent home. Thus, it is proved that military intervention and constitutional breakdown is a major hurdle in promotion of democracy in Pakistan.

Political stability is a pre requisite for democracy. Unfortunately, in Pakistan growing political instability do not allows that government focus on development of democracy; their all focus is concentration is on opposition. The recent crises of political instability between PDM and PTF shows that government full concentration is on controlling opposition parties rather than democracy. Hence, without political stability the democracy is not developing, which is a growing issue of Pakistan.

Political stability directly affects economic stability and both are necessary for the promotion of democracy. Economic stability not allows government to concentrate on the development of democracy. Pakistan faces current account defect, balance of payment, energy crises, these all are causes because of lack of economic stability. Every successive government tries to stabilize economy. For this they go to IMF which gives loans on high rate of interest. which further deteriorate its situation. So, economic instability is major hurdle in the development of democracy in Pakistan.

Democracy demands diversity and tolerance. In Pakistan ethnic and regional issues are major challenges for promotion of democracy.

9

Ethnic and regional division is deteriorating for Pakistan's democracy. The dominance of Punjab is not acceptable to other small provinces. Small provinces and ethnicity complaining of using their natural resources and not paying return to them, specifically, Baluchistan, therefore they raise the slogan of their rights which state suppressed through violence and force. This can be seen from the fall of Dhaka in 1971. This was a linguistic and ethnic issue. For therefore, it is proved from the fact the ethnic and regional issues are major challenge in Pakistan's democracy.

Dynastic politics is another big challenge for Pakistan democracy. The major political parties do not allow other than their family members to command party policy if there is no democracy within political parties then this is possible to enhance democracy within country. Further, it is the essence of democracy to have periodic election, and for that political parties are required, but the case of Pakistan is different from the rest of the world successful democracy, where there is intra party election by they bring those to run the country affairs who are able and know how to run the system. Hence, it is proved that dynastic politics is a hurdle in the development of Pakistan's democracy.

The above mentioned challenges faces by the democracy of Pakistan are not preparatory. However, these challenges may overcome

(10)

some policy measures which will shall be explore in upcoming paragraph.

Political consensus among the political parties of the country on major issues can solve the above challenges. All stakeholder come together avoiding self interest and focusing on national interest can solve these issue and prospects of democracy can be seen in the country.

There should be strong check and balance on the power of legislature, executive and judiciary. the fruits of this check and balance can be seen in democracy of United States of America, where one institution do not allow to cross its limits and that is necessary, this should apply in Pakistan in its true spirit.

Harmony among the provinces and centre is another measure by which ethnic and regional division can eliminate and democracy work as a model. Again, this can be seen in the political system of U.S. where diverse regions are united and democracy work as a successful model.

Improving governance structure is another major option to resolve the challenges of democracy. Pakistan should restructure its old laws and adapt such laws which are the need of the hour. World democracy succeeded because of improving governance.

Harmony in civil military relation is utmost important for the success of democracy. It is

11

Seen from the world history that those democracies flourished where there is harmony between civil and military relation. So, it is also a policy option for Pakistan to harmonize civil military relation for the sake of democracy.

The most important measure is to following constitution in its original spirit because the working of democracy of the globe is following its constitution. Therefore, the reach the peak of development. Furthermore, Pakistan follow its constitution and punish the culprit whatever he/she is or belong to which sector of life.

Strong role of civil society and media is the most important option for the development of democracy. Therefore Pakistan should invest in civil society in return they perform better, ultimately, democracy get succeeded.

These policy options are necessary for the development of democracy in Pakistan. However, with these some other options may be utilize for the success of democracy. The above mention factors ~~is~~ is conclude in the successive paragraph.

Pakistan has a democratic setup of government which has great potential of its success. These includes: democratic constitution, successful transition of power; growing literacy rate in the masses, emerging local government systems, emerging of active civil society, role of media and women empowerment. However, Pakistan democracy is not also free

(12)

from challenges which are includes: lack of participatory opportunities; failure of mutual consensus of bigger stake holder in the country. ineffective role of political parties and dynastic leadership within political parties. Re-emergence of terrorism, frequent military rule and constitutional breakdown. Growing political and economic instability. Furthermore ethnic and regional disparities are major hurdles. However, these challenges may overcome to improve democracy through the following measures. these includes: Political consensus building among the major political parties of the country. Introducing separation of powers; Improving governance structure, harmony among provinces and centre. with these, unity in civil military relations; following constitution in its original spirit. last, but not the least, strengthening role of civil society and media.