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## WHY PAKISTAN WILL NOT BECOME A FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY?

### A. Introduction

Thesis Statement:

There are unpteen socio-economic and political factors that has stymied the functioning of democracy in Pakistan. Some prudent measures are indispensible to make Pakistan a functioning democracy.

### B. Political history of Pakistan: a tale of struggling democracy

frequent change in governments, delay in constitution making, military interventions, rigged election

### C. Understanding the concept of functioning democracy

D. A Brief comparative analysis  
of a flawed democracy  
and a functioning democracy

Case study of

Pakistan and

the United States

of America

E. Why Pakistan has not become  
a functioning democracy  
so far?

1. Colossal proportion of the  
populace are illiterate

2. Parochial political culture  
where political allegiance  
is inclined towards tribe  
or clan

3. Perennial interference by the  
non-democratic forces,  
subverting the constitution

4. Compromised judiciary, unable  
to function as guardian  
of the <sup>social</sup> contract

5. Ineffective local government

system: they serve as breeding grounds for democracy

6. Lack of women's participation in democratic process

7. Dynastic political parties make the system exclusive for common man

8. Controlled and biased media: subjective analysis and partisan coverage

9. Abrogators of the constitution have not been held accountable

10. Delay in constitution making has created a syndrome that a country can function <sup>even</sup> without it

11. Dictatorial periods have generally created exorbitant economic growth, though temporary, so the ignorant mass lambast the elected governments.

F. Some prudent measures are paramount to make Pakistan a functioning democracy:

1. Impart quality education among public : allocate global standard of 4% of GDP for education
2. Create socio-political consciousness among masses
3. Ensure independence of judiciary
4. Establish empowered local government to ensure service delivery
5. Engender women participation in electoral process
6. Ensure freedom of media

## G. Conclusion

"Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely".  
Former US President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Although there are more than 167 democratic countries in the world, almost two-third of them are either struggling democracies or hybrid regimes, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit. The number of democratic countries engendered exhorbantly, after the second and the Third Wave of Democratization. But these nascent democracies, by and large, could not hold its grounds based on democratic ideals of equality, liberty, human rights, and others. In the same way, Pakistan could not become a functioning democracy owing to plethora of reasons. These umpteen reasons include: the large illiterate population, parochial political culture,

and frequent intervention by non-democratic forces. The dynastic political parties and non-existence of <sup>effective</sup> local government further exacerbated the derailment of democracy in the country. Furthermore, at the precipice of constitutional dilemma, the guardians of the constitution remained at the beck and call of the non-democratic forces: The Dosso case and Nusrat Bhutto case are evidence in this regard. In this was malicious acts of abrogating the constitution, election rigging, controlling media remained at a discount while accountability, rule of law, participatory and consensus ~~or~~ oriented decision making at premium. Moreover, the delay in constitution making ~~has~~ created a syndrome, that a country can function even in its absence. Here so, various stratagems like ensuring quality

education, independence of judiciary and democratic accountability are indispensable to make Pakistan a functioning democracy.

In short, though there are umpteen socio-economic and political factors that stymied the functioning of democracy in Pakistan, some prudent measures are paramount to make the country a functioning democracy.

The democratic progress has no smooth sail in the political history of Pakistan. Various cultural, political and social reasons impeded democratic values to excel in the country. The Constituent Assembly formed soon after independence itself was lacking political legitimacy as most of the members were elected from the areas, now part of India, as they were not representing the areas later constituted Pakistan. Similarly, due to the early demise of Quaid,

issues of settlement of refugees and the war with its eastern neighbour in 1948, the state couldn't pay much attention to consolidate state institutions. The frequent changes in central government created discontinuity syndrome. The governments were formed and dissolved on the behest of ~~an~~ a non-democratically elected governor general, later on the president, instead of removing the elections and democratic accountability. Besides, the military intervened in the democratic process four times, ~~through~~ either subverting, abrogating or suspending the constitution. By and large all of the elections in the history of the country are rigged. All these factors, ~~tells a~~ show unfolds, the political history of Pakistan as a tale of struggling democracy.



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So, -the history of -the country  
plethora of reasons that impeded  
Pakistan to ~~be~~ become a  
functioning democracy. Now, a  
question arises; What is a functioning  
democracy? What are the sine qua non  
to become a functioning democracy?  
The reply is simple and straight,  
in a functional democracy, there  
are state institutions, that work  
according to the mandate and  
responsibility given to them by  
the people of that country  
through a constitution. The people  
design themselves, the social  
contract for them, ~~by~~ ~~elect~~  
through their chosen representatives.  
Furthermore, the state protects  
and ensure equality, justice  
and liberty of its citizens.  
The elected government spends  
the national exchequer for the  
public cause and they are  
accountable before the public.

Everyone has freedom to express his/her views about any policy of the government. Service delivery is ensured and the state is responsive to public grievance. Now, for all these, an educated, informed and participant political culture are prerequisite. This is a short story of a true or a functioning democracy.

Going on <sup>Further</sup> with this explanation of a functioning democracy, a comparative analysis of the democratic condition of the United States of ~~Pakistan~~ <sup>America</sup> and that of Pakistan further elucidates the notions of a functioning democracy and a flawed democracy. During the long history of two hundred and forty seven years, all the elections were on time despite the civil war, both of the World Wars. The military never transgress from its constitutional mandate. The ~~war~~ war time hero, General

McArthur, commander of the Allied forces in Japan and South China Sea in World War 2, expressed his from restraining the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel line between North and South Korea during the Korean war and crossed it. The then, US president Harry Truman, dismissed him by saying, "I can do nothing then to dismiss this son of ----, and to ensure civilian supremacy and the constitution." Moreover, the American state ensure freedom of its citizen, the state institutions do not interfere into each others affairs. The judiciary is independent enough, that, it can even strike down the law even found against public interest, same with the presidential order. Unlike, Pakistan, where practically ~~at~~ most of the institutions are paralyzed. The feudal elite forms

governments either with the help of the non-democratic forces or with the coalition of dynastic political parties. The judicial system is much cumbersome, that the citizen remained at the doors of power ~~by~~ begging for their rights for years. This is a bird eye view of a functional democracy and a flawed one.

There are various reasons that has stymied the flourishing of democracy in Pakistan.

First and foremost is the colossal proportion of the population of the country are illiterate. The illiterate and uninformed populace cannot choose their leaders wisely. Moreover, an informed public keeps a check on the government if it transgress from its borders. Like other nascent democracies, since

Pakistan has mass illiteracy. According to the first census held in 1951 the country's literacy rate was only 13% of the population. The condition of the women's literacy rate was even more deploring, only 8% of them were literate. So, how even after seventy five years of independence the literacy rate has reached only at 63% according to the first digital census held last year by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. With a literate means one who can write his name and read a paragraph. So, how can such a gargantuan level of illiteracy make a functioning democracy.

Besides mass illiteracy, the parochial political culture impedes the growth of democratic ideals in Pakistan. In a parochial political culture the loyalty of the subjects or citizens are more inclined

respective tribe or clan instead of the national government or state. They take their political decision for the benefit of their caste, clan or sect rather than national interests. The caste system; Arayan, Jatt, Malik etc in Punjab, the

- Sayeen and Kamce divide in Sindh, Bughti, Sardar, Nawab in Baluchistan the ~~Kha~~ Yousafzai, Wazir, Marwat in KPK, hinders elections or voting on a party manifesto like that in the United States. The feudal lords in most of the rural areas of the country, treat the masses as their own subjects, and hinder the state to show its writ.

The acclaimed writer Anatol Lieven, mentioned in his book, "Pakistan a Hard Country", that during his visit to Sindh, one of the feud ordered the local incharge of police station to arrest four persons of his choice, for the recent

incident of the murder in that village, sparing the real culprits. Same is the condition of other far flung areas of the country. In this way, democracy gets compromised in Pakistan.

Furthermore, perennial interference by non-democratic forces in politics subdues democratic progress. During its life of seventy six years, military dictators ruled the country for thirty years. They intervened into politics either by subverting, abrogating the constitution or by suspending it. ~~and send~~ The crackdown against already nascent political parties further impeded the political socialization of young people through political parties. They used either non-democratic tactics to prolong their rules. The first one, launching a constitution of his own choice, the second using the religion to cover his illegitimate rule and last taking

advantage of the security situation in the region. The real, genuine political leaders and parties were either banned or a kings party was installed to suppress the true popular parties. The result even led to the division of the country. In short, non-democratic forces intervention stymied the progress of democracy.

Likewise, the judiciary could ~~cannot~~ function as the guardian of the constitution. In a vibrant democracy, the judiciary keeps a check on those who are crossing the constitutional limits. In this regard, the landmark judgment by Indian Supreme Court in 1973, i.e. Kesavananda Bharati v. the Union State of Kerala is worth noticing. As the Supreme Court upholding the Basic Structure Doctrine, ~~and~~ ~~was~~ consequently putting an end to the long era of emergency imposed by the then Indian prime



Minister Indra Gandhi. Unlike, India Pakistan's apex court legitimized the unconstitutional rule first in the Dosso case and later ~~on~~ on the Nusrat Bhutto Case and Zafar Ali Shah case. Similarly, at lower courts level the criminal justice system is so much cumbersome that to get justice is like nothing less than a nightmare. In this way, in the country rule of law has become an impracticable myth, which is pre-requisite for democracy.

Moreover, the ineffective and paralyzed local government system further add salts to the injuries of the democratic progress in the country. Local government serves as a breeding ground for ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~city~~ <sup>city</sup> democracy. Many future leaders get trained and take part in political process.

The former Mayor of Istanbul and London, ~~are~~ ultimately ~~been~~ ended up been the President and Prime Minister of their respective countries are the product of the local government. Turkish President Rajab Tayyab Erdaon the former and former British PM Boris Johnson the latter. Unlike, in Pakistan the civilian political government <sup>have</sup> intend to devolve power at grass root level and the dictatorial powers devolved power to local governments just to legitimize their rule. So, the spirit of local government was not achieved as ~~if~~ it should be. The Basic Democracies (BD) by the then President was to elect himself from his hand picked BD members, rather from the direct public. In a nutshell, the fruits of local government as a breeding ground for democracy could not be achieved.

Similarly, lack of women's participation in the democratic process has made it a wild goose chase to become a functioning democracy. Women make almost half of the country's head count, but their participation as voters, candidates and others are miniscule. Women play an important role in democratic progress. If they choose the leader, who addresses pertaining to women, it makes the decision making <sup>process</sup> more participatory and consensus oriented, ~~this~~ which is what <sup>happan</sup> a true and functioning democracy. According to the Election Commission of Pakistan (henceforth ECP) says in 2018 General Elections only 41% women voted. Similarly, according to a report of (CEDAW) Convention on Elimination of all form of Discrimination Against Women, only 17%

women are in the Parliament of Pakistan. Likewise, at the provincial level the situation is further grim. In most of the rural areas women are even not allowed to cast their votes. The ECP has to in this way, lack of women's participation in political process impedes the country to become an established democracy.

Besides, lack of women's participation, the dynastic political parties make the political system exclusive for the common ~~man~~ <sup>man</sup> mass. Political parties serve as a platform where the citizen can discuss about the problems facing the country and ~~strategies~~ vistas to overcome these predicaments. Almost all the political parties are dynastic, as the party leadership ~~can~~ position can only be held by a specific family.

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Intra-party elections are an alien concept in Pakistan. Though, all the parties hold elections, ~~but~~ these are nothing ~~more~~ than a ~~rubber~~ rubber stamp on the decision of the party head. So, genuine leaders never get a chance to lead. The two main parties the (PML-N) ~~PML-N~~ and PPP, mandated that the leadership of the party president from Sharif family or Bhutto family. Same is the other regional parties the ANP with Wali Khan's family, JUI with Maulana Mufti Mehmood and his family. Same is the condition of DTI, where seven members from Khattak family contested for various seats at provincial level. So, these dynastic parties never provide fair chance on meritocracy, resulting in kinship base political culture.

Moreover, media in Pakistan

has never played as the fourth pillar of the state. During the course of history it has either remained controlled by interest groups or the media outlets themselves showed biasness. Despite, ~~being~~ <sup>to be</sup> the mouth piece of downtrodden, ~~they~~ their subjective analysis and partisan coverage for their narrow interest has withered away the image of media in Pakistan. Similarly, the non-democratic forces always tried to control the media. During the rule of the then President General Zia ul Haq, all the newspapers were first bowdlerize by the government and then allowed to distribute, as narrated by one of the journalist of that epoch. So, media's role as a check on government has never been achieved in its true sense in the country.

Furthermore, the delay in constitution making has created

a syndrome that the country can run without it. Soon, after the independence the Government of India Act 1955 <sup>with certain changes,</sup> was promulgated as interim constitution. The Constituent Assembly was mandated to form a Social Contract, according to the aspirations of the public. For the next nine years the constitution making process remain in doldrum. The first constitution was, finally, ~~was~~ promulgated in 1958, albeit it proved short-lived, within months it was abrogated and martial law was imposed. In this way the general mass accepted that the constitutions are nothing more than a piece of paper. So, the after passing decades the syndrome still continues, hampering democratic process.

Although there are plethora of issues hindering democratic progress, some measures are paramount to put the country on the vista

of a true democracy. Some of them are as follow.

Imparting quality education among the general public is paramount for democratic transition. Educated citizens are sine qua non for a functional democracy. Pakistan is at 101<sup>th</sup> out of 167 countries in Global Democracy Index, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit in <sup>2022</sup> and Norway on top of the list. If the literacy rate of both the countries are compared that the literacy rate in Norway is almost 99% while that of Pakistan is 63%. So, this analysis gives a clear indication that democracy and literacy go hand in hand. Therefore, Pakistan should spend almost 4% of its GDP on education, even with bottom dollars, so as



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to make the country a democratic one.

Ensure independence of judiciary as the only difference between a democratic and a despotic government is only the presence of independent <sup>and</sup> impartial judiciary. The judiciary not only serves as guardian of the constitution but also it resolves the issues when the two other branches of the states come to a deadlock (i.e. the executive and legislature). The independence of judiciary has been comparatively ensured by enacting the 18<sup>th</sup> Eighteenth Amendment to the constitution of 1973. In this regard, the appointment <sup>and renewal</sup> of judges under Article - 1 by Supreme Judicial Council, the judges retirement ages increased, the suo motto power under Article 184(3) are few of them. Further, independence at lower courts are paramount.

Similarly, the freedom of media must be ensured, so that it can act as a watchdog on the government and the non-democratic entities. The mishaps, subjugation of human rights, enforced disappearances, extra-judicial killings and other crime must be kept in check, an impartial, objective media is indispensable in this regard. Pakistan is at 157<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in World Press Freedom Index 2022 report. In an established democracy the media has access to the information of public interest. So, the media rights must be protected constitutionally and breath them the free air to report, what uncensored. Freedom of expression is of the key ideals of a true democracy. So, a free press is very important

in this regard.

To boil down all these, though there are umpteen socio-economic and political factors that has stymied the functioning of democracy in Pakistan, some prudent steps are paramount to make the country a functioning democracy. The various reasons include mass illiteracy, parochial political culture, and interference from the military in politics. Similarly, the compromised judiciary and biased media also exacerbated to be a flawed democracy. The ineffective local government, dynastic political parties make the system exclusive for masses. Lack of participation of women in political process despite their gargantuan population, has created a non-participatory decision making which is against democratic ideals. The delay in <sup>framing</sup> the constitution ~~making~~ has also contributed

in pushing the country into  
~~the~~ hands of non-democratic  
forces. Despite all these ills,  
measures like educating  
the masses, spreading aware-  
ness, ensurance of independent  
judiciary and free media  
are indispensable for the  
country to become a functioning  
democracy.