

1. The evolution of democratic system has always remained a dilemma in Pakistan, even after passing more than seven decades of its existence the democracy could not get its roots. Discuss in detail. (CE-2023-5)

# Introduction

Pakistan, a country that gained independence in 1947, has struggled with the evolution of a democratic system since its inception. Despite more than seven decades of existence, democracy in Pakistan has been marked by continuous dilemma and failed to establish firm roots. Several reasons can be identified for why democracy never took hold in Pakistan includes Pakistan's historical reasons, demography, security imperatives, external influences, role of civil society and media.

## Pakistan's Democratic system at a Glance

Pakistan adopted a democratic system of governance upon its independence in 1947.



The country's constitution, formulated in 1956, establishing a parliamentary democracy with a president as the head of state and the PM as head of government.

However, Pakistan's democratic journey has been tumultuous,

characterized by periods of military rule and political instability.

The ongoing dilemma surrounding the evolution of Pakistan's democracy has witnessed:

### 1) Military intervention.

Pakistan has experienced several military interventions and periods of martial law throughout its history. The military has wielded significant influence over the political landscape, often interrupting democratic processes and governance.

Prominent examples include the



coups in 1958, 1977, and 1999.

which had long lasting effects on democratic institutions.

## 2) Political instability:

Pakistan's democratic institutions have grappled with corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of accountability. The judiciary, bureaucracy, and elaborated bodies have faced criticism for their inability to deliver justice and conduct fair and transparent elections.

## 3) Socioeconomic factors:

Pakistan's socioeconomic factors characterized by widespread poverty, income inequality and regional disparities poses challenges to democratic development. Socioeconomic grievances often fuel political unrest and ethnic tensions, which can destabilize the democratic process and hinder inclusive governance.



#### 4) Geostrategic influence.

Pakistan's democratic system also has been influenced by the foreign powers. These powers have exerted their influence on Pakistan's politics. International aid and conditionalities attached to it have shaped policy decisions, sometimes limiting the autonomy of democratic process.

#### Factors which have tangled democracy in Pakistan for seven decades.

Several factors have identified <sup>due to</sup> which democracy never took hold in Pakistan. These are following:

##### 1) Pakistan's colonial history:

First factor relates to Pakistan's colonial history.



Many provinces of India experienced forms of democratization at the local level as early as the 1890s. Key provinces of territory that was to become Pakistan had different story.

First these were conquered and/or constituted late, sometimes after a long military campaigns and became laboratories for an authoritarian bureaucracy.

Punjab, this pattern of "paternalism" involved a strong British bureaucracy levying taxes and administering not only police but also judiciary.

Second, Punjab and NWFP did not benefit from some democratization process

as others because of security imperatives, being on frontline of Raj's "Great Game" with Russian empire.

Finally, Punjab and NWFP were major recruiting grounds for army and consequently, developed a military ethos.



## 2) Immediate post independence era:

In immediate post independence era, a set of security imperatives came to force. Pakistan felt insecure due to its smaller size and much weaker in terms of resources.

A new state of Pakistan represented a 23% of area and 18% of population of British India, and it inherited no more than 10% of Raj's industrial resources.

Although Pakistan did not lose its fight war against India in 1947-48, it was unable to achieve its stated objectives with regards to disputed territory of Kashmir.

Pakistan had to build its administrative capacity on its own. Democracy

as a consequence, was a lower

priority than national security:

In 1950s, Pakistan's army could claim easily that national mobilization and discipline were



the order of the day, while politicians seemed to waste their time and energy unnecessarily bickering.

### 3) Arithmetic of Demographics in Pakistan

In 1950s census, Bengalis in East Pakistan represented 55%

of population of Pakistan, and Punjabis about 25%. Followed by Sindhis, Balochi, Pashtuns, and Mohajirs.

Being in majority, Bengalis demanded the establishment of democratic system. But power was in hands of Mohajirs and of Punjabis, who dominated the army and these minorities did not want to relinquish their control of Pakistani politics by adopting a government based on "one man, one vote" principle.

For Punjabis, retaining power was another reason not to support democracy.

This configuration changed in 1971 with the creation of Bangladesh



from East Pakistan, and) not  
Coincidentally, Pakistan experienced  
its first period of democracy  
in 1970s -

But on the army, by that time  
well entrenched, played on fears of  
further breakup of country by India,  
and continued placing a premium  
on security.

4) Political <sup>parties</sup> ~~powers~~ have lost credibility

Despite the resilience of political parties

Civilian rulers have largely  
discredited themselves. Since  
assuming power in aftermath  
of Musharraf's resignation, the  
political parties lost much of  
credibility, not only because of  
old patron client ties they  
continue to rely upon, to  
consolidate their power as the  
role of hereditary pros. in  
the stronghold of the PPP



but also because of their autocratic tendencies (former PM Nawaz Sharif had indulged in autocratic tendencies during his second term (1997-99) and even more importantly perhaps, because of incompetence and corruption.

President Zardari's image is particularly tarnished on these grounds today. His image much like Musharraf's before he left office is also marked by his perceived proximity to west, in particular the United States.

### 5) Growing influence of Islamists over society:

Islamists were are exerting a growing influence over society. This development finds expressions in cultural policing, in the widespread support for assassination



of the opponents of recently proposed anti blasphemy law, and in the rise of sectarianism. — in particular, violence between the Shia and Suni.

Many Islamists, in contrast, are hostile to west, engaged in social work and delivers justice in some form, such as parallel judicial system established in the tribal regions by Pakistani Taliban. The rise of certain militant Islamist groups such as Lashker-e-Taiba is also due to the protection they enjoy from army, which, despite fighting against Pakistani Taliban, Al Qaida, and sectarian groups such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, cultivates its relations with anti India Jihadists active in Kashmir and elsewhere.



6) Army has become state within state:

Army has effectively become a state within the state. Although civilians has returned to the power each every decade or so, they have lost ground each time.

For example in 1970s, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto could confront the army in many realms. By 1980s, 1990s pm Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif had lost all the influence in the at least three major domains — nuclear policy, Afghanistan policy and Indian policy — where the army and intelligence agencies enjoyed monopoly.

Today, army has also acquired an important position in economic realm.

It has its own companies that partake in industry and commerce and own land throughout country.



## Critical Analysis of Democratic ups and downs in Pakistan:

Democracy in Pakistan  
exclaims the Marxism conflict  
embedded in the political culture  
of Pakistan where a dummy system  
at local level is orchestrated  
to serve the objectives of elite  
class encapsulating the  
military elite, the feudalists,  
political elite, media elite.

In whole saga, there is  
unanswering impact of political  
instability, weak institutions,  
socioeconomic factors and external  
influence on democratic  
development.

Nonetheless, the challenges  
faced by political parties, legacy  
of military rule, corruption,  
and sluggish role of civil society  
and media highlight the  
need for constitutional reforms  
, effective governance and



civic awareness to tackle the challenges and find the potential solutions for democratic consolidation in Pakistan.

## Conclusion

The idea of substance is that evolution of democratic systems in Pakistan has been plagued by persistent challenges and dilemmas, preventing it from firmly establishing its roots even after more than seven decades of existence.

This historical context, frequent military interventions, political instability, and weak institutions contributed to fragility of democracy in Pakistan.

The dominance of mainstream political parties, internal party politics, and lack of frequent effective party reforms also hindered democratic process development.



Despite these challenges, civil society organizations and media have played an important role for democratic principles and holding government accountable.

To overcome these Pakistan needs sustained efforts and reforms. While the road to democratic consolidation in Pakistan may be long and arduous, there is hope for strong democratic systems in future.

With concerted efforts of stakeholders, Pakistan can overcome its challenges and build a sustainable democracy that holds the principles of inclusivity, accountability, and good governance.