

Polarized Politics: The issues and the challenges of democracy in Pakistan

1) Introduction

- o Concept of democracy
- o Hurdles
- o Prospects

Better to write in detail

2) Political Polarization in Pakistan

3) Issues and challenges of democracy in Pakistan

a) Widespread corruption in democratic institutions

Case Study: CPI Report

b) Political instability in a country

Case Study: instability of civilian government

c) Lack of accountability in institutions

Case Study: NAB's 2022 Annual Report

d) Foreign interventions in a country

Case Study: IMF terms and conditions

e) Ongoing terrorism threats

Case Study: The global terrorism index report

f) Prolonged Period of Authoritarian rule

Case Study: 35 years of martial law

g) Electoral frauds in general elections

Case Study: General Elections 2024

h) Lack of freedom of speech

Case Study: 2023 Report by Freedom House

(i) Social disparities in the society undermined democratic stability

case study: Literacy rate according to Pakistan Bureau of statistics

4) Prospect for the Future of Democracy in Pakistan

a) Growing awareness of the Youth in democratic process.

b) Wide acceptability of democracy as form of government

c) Ensuring an independent and impartial election commission

d) Promoting a culture of cooperation among political parties

5. Conclusion:

"If liberty and equality are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in government"

According to Aristotle, "Democracy is the form of government in which the free are rulers. Democracy in its present form, has taken a long time to emerge from the English Magna Carta to the French and American Revolution in the 18th century. But since the latter half of the twentieth century, democracy has become an established institution a form of government to which every nation is entitled - whether in Europe, America, Asia or Africa. Democracy is a form of government that rests on the principles of freedom, equality, and participation of the people. Democracy in Pakistan is undergoing various challenges. For instance, unawareness among masses about democracy, lack of freedom of speech, electoral frauds, weak governance, social disparities in a society, political instability and foreign interventions in the country are significant hurdles in a democracy. Despite these challenges, it is indefatigable that democracy has attained a special place in Pakistan, and if it continues to flourish, its prospects can be multiple.

It includes wide acceptance of democracy as a form of government, growing awareness among masses through media, ensuring free and fair elections and improving the structure of governance. In Pakistan, democracy has been a tumultuous journey, with periods of military rule interspersed with civilian government. As the country continues to navigate its path towards a stable democratic system, the future of democracy in Pakistan presents both challenges and prospects.

Although divergence along ethnic, religious, provincial and ideological lines has existed since Pakistan's establishment, but the political polarization in Pakistan has limited the prospects for an integrated society. The first and the foremost cause of polarization in Pakistan ^{is because of discordant} lies in the lack of political consensus among the leading national parties. State institutions such as Parliament, fail to bring political parties to agree on certain important issues. In Pakistan, the elites have tend to fracture societal formation through religious, ethnic and ideological lines. They have encouraged values that run counter to nation and state building in a demographically diversified country. Building and

Reinforcing strong, independent institutions that operate transparently and fairly can help reduce the sense of grievance that fuels polarization.

Firstly, the most significant challenge to the democracy of Pakistan is political instability. Political instability refers to a situation where a country or region experiences frequent or severe disruptions in its political system. Civilian governments have faced frequent challenges, with numerous elections and changes in leadership that often lead to political uncertainty. For instance, the major political parties are the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), and the People's Party with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) also emerging as a significant force in recent years. Frequent changes in leadership have led to shifts in policy direction and governance styles, contributing to instability. Thus, the clashes and conflicts between the political parties are the major impediments to the development of actual democratic norms.

Rising tendency of
Another challenge is the use of extremism and terrorism. Pakistan has been grappling with the menace of terrorism for decades, with militant groups posing a serious threat to the democratic process. These groups often seek to undermine democratic

institutions, impose their own extremist ideology, and perpetrate violence to disrupt the democratic system. According to an annual security report issued by the Centre for research and security studies, Pakistan witnessed 1,524 violence-related fatalities and 1,463 injuries from 789 terrorist and counter-terror operations in 2023, marking a record six-year high. The presence of such radical elements in the country poses a significant challenge to the consolidation of democracy in Pakistan.

Despite these challenges, there are prospects for the future of democracy in Pakistan. One of the key prospects is the growing awareness and participation of the youth in the democratic process. Pakistan has a large youth population, and the increased access to information and technology has empowered young people to demand accountability, transparency, and good governance from their elected representatives.

As of recent estimates of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, ≈ 64.1 of Pakistan's population is under the age of 30. This represents a significant portion of the electorate and potential participants in democratic processes.

The youth can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of democracy in

Pakistan is blessed to have youth

Pakistan through their active engagement in civic activities and promotion of democratic values.

In conclusion, the future of democracy in Pakistan presents both challenges and prospects. Political instability, extremism, lack of accountability, social disparities, lack of awareness among masses and political polarization are significant challenges that need to be addressed to ensure a democratic form of government.

However, the growing awareness and participation of the youth, the active role of media, and the consolidation of democratic institutions can contribute to the prospects of democracy in Pakistan. As the country continues to strive for a democratic system that upholds the principles of freedom, equality, and participation, addressing these challenges will be crucial for the future of democracy in Pakistan.

⁶⁶ Democracy is the ultimate, positive revolution because it gives each and every individual the power to control their lives. And we can work together to create a just, sustainable world.

(Bill Blackman)

