

**Q. No. 5.** 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. **(20)**

Ans:-

## Democratic Regression in Pakistan: <sup>The</sup> Troubling Trend:

Pakistan's troubled political past has seen it swing between long bouts of military rule and periods of fragile civilian democratic governments. Even the post 1988 revival of democracy and subsequent democratic decade saw interventions by military backed president to oust elected governments - Another democratic phase began in 2008 set a much better record with political leaders showing mutual tolerance, respect for civil liberties and independent media but 2018 elections ushered in a period of hybrid rule that continues to this day.

### International Report of Economist Intelligence Unit's

Survey: Many democracies across world are challenged by polarisation, intolerance and toxic politics. They have also seen an erosion of civil liberties and media freedom and its suppression of dissent - The Economist Unit conducts a survey of health of democracy of 167 countries, assessing them across five measures - They are

electoral process and pluralism, political participation, a functioning government acting in public interests, civil liberties.

Its 2022 report concluded that only 8% of people in world live in full democracy, with over a third residing in authoritarianism regime, 37% in flawed democracy and 18% in hybrid democracy. which is how ~~how~~ it classifies Pakistan.

## Factors Contributing to Economic democratic regression:

Here are different factors contributing to democratic regression mentioned explained below:

### 1) Lack of genuine democratic practices within political parties: -

Section 8 of political parties order, 2002 says that candidates for party posts should be elected through transparent elections - But leaders in all political parties nominate office bearers who are elected by complaint electorate and list of elected persons is submitted to ECP under

Signature of party leader, whose own election is managed. So, there is little scope for political workers in Pakistan to work his way up to the leadership of his party.

### ② Financial Implications of Elections:

General and by elections cost around RS 80m and RS 90m per National Assembly constituency. Despite incurring a huge cost, the 45% of voter turnout for the last ten elections is among the lowest in world in which global average is 60%. (How expensive is democracy, Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, 2022) Pakistan's constitution places no bar on number of constituencies. For example, Ex PM won from five NA seats during 2018 general elections and vacated but one seat which mean re-election in four constituencies by public expenditure.

### ③ Dynastic democracy bolsters the family driven status quo:-

The election of top leaders has been a mere formality since inception of political parties. It is just about party elections of course, because regardless of who

Occupies position within party, final decision comes from the same individuals and families that remote control their them from top to bottom. For example, it does not matter what the party rank and file feel about next anything, they will only be announced when families and individuals leading the ruling coalition decide the right time.

#### (4) Social costs of protests undermining the primary democracy.

Democracy allows people, political parties and interest groups to protest but right to protest is subject to certain conditions - such as not intervening in public or obstructing business and public services like schooling sadly. These restrictions are seldomly respected and businesses and public services are adversely hit costing millions, if not billions - The federal government's Economic Coordination Committee approved an initial sum of 40m to deal the Imran Khan's Haaveerizadi March (How expensive is democracy, Bilal Mehboob, 2022). Maintaining

law and order, during long marches and protests cost the taxpayers.

### ⑤ Hybrid Rule: post 2018 elections:

2018 elections ushered in a period of hybrid rule that continues to this day. The post 2018 period has seen democratic regression and reversals as the hybrid engagement arrangement has entailed the military establishment acquiring expansive role in politics, governance and even the economy. This has been accompanied by mostly politically motivated corruption cases against opposition leaders, jailing of political leaders, activists and media controls, defiance of rule of law and marginalisation of parliament.

### ⑥ Challenge to accountability and change in public perception:

The attitude and thought process of public is worrying. If PM is accused of corruption, they say why don't you catch other corrupt. The argument that you have to start somewhere - and it is better to start at top - does not satisfy them.

There is great comfort in following the status quo.

## ⑦ Democracy in Pakistan is a political tool for power:

In Pakistan's case, "democracy" is just a political tool for dominant social groups to maintain their wealth and status. The other instrument is military rule. But beneficiaries are roughly the same in both models - the whole panoply of power comprising the top tiers of politicians, bureaucrats, the military, judiciary, business folk, and landed' who among them monopolise the country's economic resources.

The civil and military may compete for power but eventually cooperate to maintain status quo. They are allies as well rivals - In Why Nations Fail, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson trace the evolution of political and economic institutions and argued that nations are not destined to succeed or fail due to culture but because of emergence of extractive and ~~inclusive~~ inclusive institutions within them.

## ⑧ Erosion of democratic values:

Members and top political leaders

show little respect for legislative proceedings as attendance frequently falls way below the 25% mark leading to premature abrogations when Nawaz Sharif was in power he seldom attended sessions. The then opposition leaders too had been responsible for undermining the role of parliament. P.T.I boycotted the National Assembly for one year and Ex PM Imran Khan never refrained from expressing disdain for electoral forum - He rarely appeared in house even after his party ended the boycott. This has led <sup>to inability of</sup> lawmakers to resolve the political and institutional crisis.

### ① Judicial Influence: The creeping phenomena:

The government's failure in institutional consultative decision making process is a major factor & in the expansion of space for this unelected institution some judges appear to have succumbed to populist pressures when they give mostly unwarranted observations during the course of judicial proceedings. With parliament and civilian law enforcement



agencies rendered ineffective by the elected leadership, weak governance has allowed the judiciary to ~~inter~~ extend its influence.

### (10) Decline in quality of democracy:-

~~These is~~ According to Report by Pakistan Institute of Development and Transparency the quality of democracy scored its highest at 56% in first four years of this decade - Then the score slid ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> 40% in 2014 to 44%, rose a little to 50% in 2015 and slipped again in 2016 to 46%. This situation has worsened in last few years. (Challenges to Democracy, Zahid Hussain)

### (11) Lack of democratic principles in political culture:

There is no tradition of intra party debate on critical issues and it all depends on whims of party leaders. The ~~clear~~ intra party elections are sham and are conducted only for fulfilling the legal formality. The swiftness with which the party members change their affiliations overnight for sake of

their expediency and the manner in which the political parties woo the so-called electables illustrate the lack of principles in political culture.

### Conclusion:

These are vital issues plaguing the country's democracy. The parliament and government will have to address these key issues in order to consolidate the governance and deliver to electorate. It is apparent that democracy cannot function without rule of law. There is need for structural reforms to achieve these objectives. Readers must make effort to learn from shortcomings and take the country towards the democratic stability.