

Social Media and Its Impacts on Democracy.

Outline

1. Introduction

- a. Rise of social media
- b. Dual nature of its impacts on democracy
- c. Thesis statement

2. Positive Impacts of Social Media on Democracy

- a. Increased political engagement
 - i. Social media incites the interest of youth in politics
 - ii. It also gives a voice to marginalised people

- b. Efficient service delivery by governments

- i. According to Meta, 87% of governments of world are on Facebook

- ii. People can easily reach out to governments regarding issues they are facing

- c. A tool for accountability of the governments

- i. Case of Panama papers

- ii. A medium to display public opinion regarding any political decision

- d. Global collaboration and support regarding democratic values and movements

- i- Arab Spring
- ii- #MeToo movement
- e. People use social media for factchecking and counter propaganda
 - i- Countering of Israeli Propaganda by journalists in Gaza
- f. An efficient tool for political campaigning during elections
 - i- Use of social media by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Talbat during 2018 elections.

3. Negative Impacts of Social Media on Democracy

- a. Rise in political polarization
 - i- Social media can act as echo chamber; as discussed in 'Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation and Radicalization of American Politics'
- b. A tool for spreading fake news and propaganda
 - ii- The narrative of Hamas decapitating babies by US president to gain sympathy for Israeli people

c - Increase in online harassment of politicians and journalists

i - Spread of doctored pictures of female politicians and journalists in Pakistan

d - Disruption ^{in working} of social media sites to suppress political events conducted by opposition parties.

i - The example for shutting down internet during PTI's online political Jalsa

e - Governments use social media as tool to spy on the people.

i - Social credit system in China

4- Conclusion

Essay

In an ever-changing, ever evolving landscape of communication social media has appeared as force that is shaping the dynamics of democracy. Its influence is undeniable, manifesting both positive and negative impacts on the democratic fabric of communities all over the globe. On the positive side, social media is contributing towards increased

interest of people in the democratic process, efficient and quick response of governments towards the plight of people and better accountability of the executives, contributing to. It has also proven pivotal in shattering the geographical boundaries and uniting people from all over the globe for the movements that strengthen the democratic values. It has also enabled people who are not from mainstream political parties to launch their political careers and fact check any political propaganda being imposed on them. However, challenges being posed by rise of social media are casting shadows over democratic landscape. Increased use of social media has ^{been} contributing to polarization of politics, spreading fake news, and an uptick in online harassment of female politicians and journalists. Authoritarian governments also use social media for surveillance purposes and to reduce the access to internet facilities of their political influence opponents. ^{In this} essay explores the potential of social media to strengthen the democratic principles, at the same time analysing the drawbacks that can impede the progress of democracy.

First and foremost, positive impact of social media on democracy is the increased political engagement of people. Most of the youngsters, do not read conventional mediums of political news i.e. newspapers. However, they do use social media frequently. All the political issues come under discussion on social media platforms. In that way, more and more people are getting politically aware of their political rights. Social media also give a platform to marginalised communities to raise the issues they are facing. For example, recently social media has been used by Baloch activists to raise awareness against forced and illegal disappearances of their loved ones. Traditionally their protest do not get this much attention, but due to boom of social media they are able to express their democratic right to protest in an efficient manner. Hence, it can be said that rise of social media has positively impacted democracy.

Secondly, social media, has also made it possible for the governments around the world to efficiently address the issues of people.

According to Mata, 87% of the governments from across the world have presence on facebook.

People now have access to their political representatives. They can share the issues they are facing without having to leave their houses. This was not the

case before the advancement of social media. It has helped in bringing down bureaucratic barriers between people and the government representatives and contributed toward the goal of good governance. This is why it can be said that social media has positively influenced the democracy.

Adding to the previous idea, social media has also resulted in improved accountability of the ruling class. The increased access to political ~~represent~~ representatives has allowed people to hold them accountable as well. Now when people

See the ruling class indulging in corrupt practices, they use their social media platforms to expose them. It has made people more vigilant about protection of their rights. An example of it is leaking of Panama papers, which exposed the corrupt practices of various political personalities from all over the world. People from the affected countries, used social media to put pressure on their political representatives. and This resulted in resignation and disqualification of a number of politicians around the world. This incident also acted as deterrent to other politicians against corruption. Hence, it can be said that social media is positively influencing the democratic practices around the world.

Moreover, increased spread of social media has also contributed to global support for democratic movements. People from all over the world are well connected due to social media's presence in every corner of the world. This is why, when #MeToo

movement started in America, it gained support from all over the world. Women from all over the world, shared their experiences related to sexual harassment and this led to the accountability of even the most powerful people in the world. Similarly, people from Arab world also used social media to organise protests against their dictatorial governments. Thus, social media is contributing to promote democratic values all over the world.

Furthermore, social media is also used by people to factcheck any news they receive. In this way, social media is used to counter any propaganda being forced on people by any government. A recent example of this can be seen in Hamas - Israel conflict unfolding in Gaza. President of the United States of America, pushed a narrative that Hamas is decapitating babies in order to garner support for relentless bombing of Gaza by Israeli defence force. However, this propaganda was debunked by the journalists, working in Gaza.

by sharing the authentic news live from the ground, through their social media handles. People from all over the world, saw what was actually happening on the ground, and debunked the propaganda being pushed by the USA through fact checking using social media. In this way, social media is helping in strengthening the democratic values. Last but not the least, social media is also used during the election process to maintain the transparency of this electoral exercise. It also enables the political candidates to spread their political agenda to people in an efficient way. If people see any irregularity during elections, they can record it on their phones and bring it to the attention of relevant authority using their social media. Social media is used by the politician to launch their political career as well. An example of this is rise of Ishaq Khan to the position of Member National Assembly of Pakistan. He started his political career by launching a campaign

by the name of 'fix it' on social media. He gained popularity through it and ultimately ended up winning the elections from Karachi in 2018 elections. In this way, social media also gives a chance to people to have a political career who are not from a political background. Thus, it can be said that social media is positively impacting the democracy.

In the above paragraphs, it is discussed in details how democracy is being positively influenced by social media. The coming discussion will focus on the setbacks to democracy due to rise of social media.

First of all, the increase in use of social media has resulted in polarization of the political environment. In his book, 'Network Propagand: Manipulation, Disinformation and Radicalization of American Politics' the author sheds the light on social media echo chambers and their role in increase of political polarization.

People look for evidence on social media that synchronises with their narrative and ignore the contradicting evidence due to their 'confirmation bias'. Apart from this, people also seem to think that they can get away with anything they say while sitting behind the screen as they do not have to meet that person in real life. These factors have resulted in polarization of political views that people hold. Thus, it points out towards the negative impacts of social media on democracy.

Moreover, social media is also used as tool to spread fake news and propaganda. The sponsored posts on social media can reach any target group identified by the user. An example of this was seen during US ^{presidential} election held in 2016 where Russian sponsored facebook posts were used to influence the political views of American voters. Apart from this, the recent examples of biased and fake news were propagated by western media regarding the 'savage' behavior.

of Hamas fighters. These examples show how social media can act as a tool to spread fake news and propaganda and undermine democratic principles during this process.

Furthermore, social media has also been used to harass politicians and journalists. Politicians and journalists represent the interests of the public and bring their issues to the public sphere. They also are responsible for defending the rights of people if someone is trying to usurp them. When they come across against people with vested interests who try to undermine rights of people, they face a backlash. Due to the rise in social media usage, this backlash can turn into online harassment as well. It is evident through the resolution passed by female senators of Pakistan, who faced these social media threats in 2022. Thus, social media can also prove to be a hindrance in the growth of democracy.

Apart from this, social media is used as a weapon by governments to suppress the voice of opposition. In her

book, 'Twitter and Teargas: The power and fragility of networked protests' Zeynep Tufekci explains that governments in power use state apparatus to sideline their political opponents in digital domain as well. Due to state's monopoly over communications in the country, it can altogether block the access of public to use internet and hamper their ability to use social media to organise any protests against the government. An example of this was seen in Pakistan, when state blocked the internet access during an ex-PM's address. In this way, people's dependence on social media can also work against them and end up in hurting democratic principle of right to information of people.

Lastly, governments have also used social media applications to spy on their citizens. While registering themselves on social media, people usually do not read terms and conditions of the registration. Authoritarian governments use this human vulnerability to get access to their private data and spy on them. P.W Singer in his book, 'LikeWar: The Weaponisation of

Social media' quotes the example of China using Tiktok app to collect the data of users. He also criticizes their social credit system which uses social media applications to track every movement of their citizen. Thus, another drawback of social media is that it can be used by authoritarian countries to spy on people.

In conclusion, social media's rise is a double edged sword, where its positive impacts strengthen the democratic principles but the challenges arising from it hinder the democratic progress. Looking at the positive aspects, social media has resulted in increasing the interest of youth in politics and given a voice to marginalised communities. The role of social media in improving the governance and accountability is undeniable. It has played a key role in global cooperation on democratic movements and increasing the transparency of electoral process. However, increased use of

social media has given rise to certain apprehensions regarding its role in down fall of democracy too. It is responsible for increasing political polarization, and spreading fake news and propaganda. Social media has also been used as tool to coerce political rivals through online harassment and suspension of online internet applications. It has also been weaponised by authoritarian regimes to spy on the people as well. In order to increase the potential of social media to strengthen democracy and keep its pitfalls at bay, a balanced approach has to be adopted. Governments, civil society and large social media cooperat corporations have to join hands and come up with social media protocols, increase digital literacy and strict checks in order to mitigate the adverse effects of social media on democracy. By adopting a balanced approach, potential of social media to positively impact democracy can be increased and drawbacks that hinder the progress of democracy can be avoided.

Downfall of Democracy in Pakistan

Outline

1. Introduction

- i- Overview of democracy
- ii- why democracy is not flourishing in Pakistan
- iii- Thesis statement

2. Factors Contributing to Downfall of Democracy in Pakistan

- i- Recurring military coups
- ii- Imbalance in civil-military relationships
 - a- Post colonial strong army and weak civilian institutes discussed in 'Democracy and Authoritarianism' by Aisha Jalal
- iii- Religious and sectarian tensions
 - a- The after effects of using religion as tool in cold war discussed in 'Pakistan between Mosque and Military' by Hussain Haqqani
- iv- Ethnic divide and regional political parties
 - a- Ethnic divide makes it difficult to form consensus between various factions
- v- Dynastic politics and nepotism
 - a- It deprives people from holding various political positions as discussed

in 'The Political Economy
of Reforms in Pakistan' by
Ishrat Hussain

vi - Irregularities in election
Process

a - Pre-poll rigging undermines
legitimacy of elected govern-
ments as discussed in
'Elections in Asia and
Pacific' by Dieter Nohlan

vii - Inability of judiciary to protect
previous constitutions

a - Legitimising military coups
through Dossó, Begum
Nusrat Bhutto and Sir
Zafar Ali Shah case

viii - Restrictions on media

a - Media often acts on
whims of powers that
be as discussed in
'Manufacturing Consent' by
Noam Chomsky

ix - Prevailing illiteracy hampers
progress of democracy in
Pakistan

a - Literacy rate in Pakistan
is 62.8% according to
economic survey of
Pakistan

x - Detriment of local government
system in Pakistan

a - It hampers infiltration

of democracy to the grassroots level as discussed in 'Local Government and the Rural Development in Pakistan' by Saeed Shafiqat.

3. Conclusion

Essay

Democracy, a beacon of governance, encapsulates the essence of collective empowerment and civic participation. At its core, it is not merely a system of governance; it is an intricate tapestry woven with the threads of individual freedom, equal representation and pursuit of justice. These principles were the very foundation of Pakistan movement, which led to its inception in 1947. However, the tumultuous journey of democracy in Pakistan is fraught with a myriad of challenges and setbacks. Pakistan has faced multiple military coups in the past. These coups disrupted the growth of democracy in Pakistan. Pakistan's security challenges, border tensions with its neighbours and its role in war against terror in Afghanistan, increased the role of military in policy decisions. The inheritance of a post

their growth and Pakistan could not develop democratic norms. Thus it can be seen, how military coups contributed to the downfall of democracy.

Building on the previous point, military in Pakistan was able to take over the reign of the government multiple times, as like most of post colonial countries like Thailand and Chad, Pakistan inherited a strong army and weak civilian institutes. This led to an a power imbalance between military and civilian set up. Aisha Jalal in her book 'Democracy and Authoritarianism' explains that even after india independence, role of military in policy decision remained strong due to security threats from the neighbours. However, military's indulgence in civilian decision making severely undermined democratic norms. In this way, post colonial strong army contributed to regression in democratic norms in Pakistan.

Moreover, ethnic divide and regional political parties also contributed to fall of democracy in Pakistan. Pakistan's social fabric consists of various nationalities ethnicities. They have their distinct cultural

identity. So it becomes a difficult task to bring them all to a common point. Consensus building is the bedrock of a democracy. This also leads to rise of regional political parties who raise voice for the issues of people of their particular region. Lack of any national level political party due to diverse ethnic background of the people, also hurts democracy in Pakistan.

Apart from variety in terms of ethnicities, Pakistan is also home to people from different religions and sects. Hussain Haqqani in his book, 'Pakistan between Mosque and Military' argues that military used religion as tool during the cold war era. They trained people from all over the world to take part in 'holy war' against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Once the war was over, these trained militants formed various factions and started attacking various state organs in Pakistan. The reason of these attacks was that these religiously extremist factions considered democracy as a western system of governance so they attacked the state symbols like military and police. Due to this increased

militarism and religious extremism, the progress of democracy in Pakistan is on a downward path.

Furthermore, Pakistan is home to dynastic politics. In his book, 'The Political Economy of Repress in Pakistan', Ishrat Husein talks about lack of democracy within the political parties. The top brass of political parties in Pakistan is made up of feudal lords and industrial elite. The political workers working at grassroots level do not even get an opportunity to rise through political ranks. This is against the basic democratic principles of equal political opportunity for everyone. This is why it can be said that democracy in Pakistan is struggling due to dynastic politics.

Apart from dynastic politics, irregularities in election process in Pakistan is also one of major reasons of democracy not flourishing in Pakistan. It is argued in book, 'Elections in Asia and Pacific' that elections in this part of the world are rigged by powers that be. Usually, the political party in power, uses government machinery for their political campaign. They

also arrest the leaders of main opposition parties or does not let them participate in elections. A recent example of this can be seen in Bangladesh, where leader of opposition party is arrested. On the election day, fake votes are polled and voters from the rival parties are coerced into not using their political rights. This is one of major reasons, why democracy is struggling in Pakistan.

Moreover, inability of judiciary to protect incursions against constitution and legitimising military coups have also badly tarnished the ~~reputation~~^{image} of democracy in Pakistan. It is one of fundamental functions of judiciary to protect the constitution of Pakistan. However, judiciary could not only save the constitution but also ended up providing judicial cover to the military coups through Dosso Case, Begum Nusrat Bhutto case and Sir Zafar Ali Shoh case. Thus democracy in Pakistan is struggling due to weakness of judiciary.

Apart from judiciary, Media also could not act as check on executive's authority to

Keep democracy strong in Pakistan. Media is considered fourth pillar of state as it acts as a check to other three pillars. However, democracy suffers when media does not perform its role, democracy suffers. Noam Chomsky in his book, 'Manufacturing Consent' argues that media houses end up providing biased news when they use government as their source. ^{Also} Since most of political parties in Pakistan are ruled by feudals and industrial elite, they either own media house or contribute significantly to their advertisement revenue. This results in biased reporting of news and democracy suffers as a consequence of that.

contributing to Another major factor of downfall of democracy in Pakistan is rampant illiteracy. Without proper education, people can not realise their political rights. They do not hold their rulers accountable. Lack of education also results in polarization of politics due to lack of civil discourse around political issues. The ruling class is also suffers from lack of wisdom, the education imparts. These impacts of illiteracy are all more evident in Pakistan as literacy rate stands at...

more 62.8%. according to economic survey of Pakistan. Thus, prevailing illiteracy is also one of major reasons of hurting progress of democracy in Pakistan.

Lastly, lack of attention towards promotion of local governments in Pakistan, is also resulting in stagnation of democracy in Pakistan.

In the book, 'Local government and the rural empowerment of Pakistan', Saeed Shafiqat argues that unwillingness of political elite to devolve power to third tier of government is one of the major reasons of failure of local governments in Pakistan. This results in concentration of power in hands of few select ones and it deprives people to resolve their own issues on their own at grass-root level. Thus negligence towards promotion of local governments, results in downfall of democracy in Pakistan.

In conclusion, downfall of democracy in Pakistan is due to overall effects of multiple factors including frequent military interventions in civilian governments affairs, and resulting civil-military imbalance, religious extremism, sectarian divide, ethnic divide, regional parties, dynastic

politics and nepotism, pre-poll rigging, weak civilian institutes like judiciary and media, rampant illiteracy and detriment of local government system in Pakistan. Zooming out of these specific factors, a larger picture comes into focus. All these issues stem from unwillingness of power elite to share their power, prioritising of their personal interest by ruling class over greater national interests and preference of regional interests. However, this diagnosis is not condemnation but a roadmap to rejuvenation. People of Pakistan have shown the spirit of compromise over their regional and personal interests for greater national interests when they agreed on 18th amendment in the constitution. ^{Moving on} Path to a stronger democracy is continued process. By keeping the spirit of compromise for greater good alive, Pakistan can definitely become a flourishing democracy.