

# Topic: The Future of Democracy in Pakistan: Hopes and Hurdles.

1. Introduction.
2. History of ups and downs in democracy of Pakistan.
3. Present scenario of conflict and distrust.
  - i- Media hype about political activities.
  - ii- Failure of the democratic government.
  - iii- Debate on military role in politics.
  - iv- Escalating terrorism - a threat to democratic system.
4. Hopes for democracy in Pakistan:
  - i- Establishment of ECP for fair and free election. (Article 218).
  - ii- Positive role of Army regarding non-interference in political matters.
  - iii- Awareness among the people.
  - iv- Smooth transfer of power by the two democratic governments first time in the history of Pakistan.
  - v- Right to form political parties. Article (17)
5. Hurdles in the way of democracy in Pakistan:
  - i- Lack of capacity leadership.
  - ii- Feudal system / Involvement of feudals.
  - iii- Fragile democratic institutions.
  - iv- Constitutional crisis.

v- Frequent military coups.

vi- low rate of literacy.

60% illiterate people

## 6. Way forward:

i. Defined role of military.

ii- Positive role of media.

iii Democracy within parties

e.g. intra-party elections.

iv- Rule of law and order will

strengthen democracy.

v. Effective steps should be taken to get rid of illiteracy.

vi- Investment on human development indicators.

## 7. Conclusion.

### : Essay:

Democracy is the most essential and fundamental system for managing affairs of a society. True democracy leads to sustained social, economic and political stability and growth of the country. In Pakistan, various steps have been taken to make it a true democratic country.

Unfortunately, true democracy could not flourish in true spirit in Pakistan and this remains a hurdle in the way of development of Pakistan.

According to human development index 2022, Pakistan presently ranks 161 out of 192 countries.

Democracy in Pakistan faced many ups and downs from 1947 to date. From 1947 to 1958 civilian

government was in rule. In this period,

Objective Resolution was passed on 12 March 1949 which proclaimed

that the future of constitution of Pakistan, would be modeled on the ideology and democratic faith of Islam. In constitution of 1956, it

was declared that Pakistan will be an Islamic Republic with the adoption of parliamentary democratic system of government.

From 1958 to 1968, military was in rule.

Ayub Khan was the president. From

1969 to 1972, military was in rule and

the president was Yahya Khan. Economic

grievances and political disenfranchisement

in East Pakistan led to

violent political tensions and armed

repression, which ultimately led

to the birth of Bangladesh.  
Democracy again returned from 1972  
to 1977 led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.  
From 1977 to 1988, military was again  
in rule led by Zia ul Haq. From  
1988 to 1999, civilians were in rule  
led by Benazir Bhutto (1988 to 1990),  
Nawaz Sharif (1990-1992), BB (1993-1996)  
and again Nawaz Sharif (1997-1999).  
From 1999 to 2007, military was  
in rule led by ~~Asif Ali Zardari~~.

~~This was the first time in history~~  
~~of Pakistan~~ Pervez Musharraf - From  
2008-2012, civilians were again in  
rule led by Asif Ali Zardari. This  
was the first time in history of  
Pakistan that an elected civilian  
government successfully completed its  
term of five years. From 2013 to  
date, civilians are in rule ~~best~~ by  
and democracy flourishing. Political  
parties and military are showing  
maturity now.

The current pathetic situation of  
conflicts and distrust are solely  
the outcomes of a weak democratic  
setup.

Media plays a pivotal role in  
molding and reshaping the

beliefs of a layman. Unfortunately, the recent media hype in relation to the political activities has aggravated the situation - media's biasness has ignited a flame of political imbalance and disharmony, which in turn, has weakened the roots of democratic culture in Pakistan.

Another current situation is the Government has failed to address the problems of a common man effectively. After having dictatorial nightmare comprising of nine years, the ballet's strength has revived the political norms of the country. Parliamentary supremacy has been reinstated but unfortunately, rampant load-shedding, heightening, inflation momentous downfall in the Foreign Direct Investment and escalating extremism are the few challenges, to which the Government has failed to embark upon. Resultantly, the sense of deprivation among the masses may lead towards the debacle of this democratic setup.

Recent statement by a renowned politician, about the role of military in the democratic setups, has started a new debate about the military role in politics. Due to lack of political insight, our politicians have

frequently invited the military to topple the democratic government by opting un-constitutional means. Thus our incompetents leaders have endangered the survival of political and democratic values of the country.

The towering terrorism and religious fanaticism is also an ultimate threat to the democracy. They consider democracy as a non-Islamic form of government. The prevailing situation in the country and the demand for the implementation of 'Sharia' is a testimony to this ideological belief. For them, the concept of democracy is western and in contradiction with Islam. As they are already a challenge for the law enforcement agencies, they are also proving a threat for this democratic government.

The reform in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and its improved performance is ingredient that creates a hope for democracy in Pakistan. At present, the prime minister with the consultation

of leader of opposition appoints the chief election commissioner. The ruling government cannot appoint its own election commissioner to get the election rigged. Besides, a proper mechanism for the appointment of the members has also been devised to ensure the transparent elections.

A major hope for democracy in Pakistan lies in the fact the military will not come forward to impose its direct rule by dismantling the democratic system, as it did in past, because of two major reasons: firstly the military government is not recognized by the international community and is subject to various economic sanctions. Pakistan, is currently in the process of development because of the initiation of CPEC, cannot afford economic sanctions at this critical age. Secondly, martial law is often imposed under the patronage of a super power. At present, Pakistan's relations with the USA is abysmal. Therefore the army will avoid taking<sup>over</sup> of the government directly. As such, martial law is now obsolete and democratic government will continue to rule Pakistan.

The citizens of Pakistan, have, now, turned aware about the rights to rule the country and it is good sign for development of democracy. Before, many citizens welcomed dictator because the democratic leaders failed to improve their lifestyle. However, the people in uniform could not satisfy their needs as well. As a result, they have turned against dictators too. At present, almost all the citizens speak against the martial law and blame the military for their present poor conditions. Now instead of welcoming their rule, they will stand against them in the same way. The people of Turkey blocked the ~~opportunities~~ prospects of military rule by lying before the tanks. Thus, the local citizen, now loathes martial law and it is good for the prosperity of democracy in the country.

The smooth transfer of power by two democratic parties to another one has enhanced the chances of democracy to flourish the country too. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, two democratic parties



have completed and transferred their power to the third one. It has created a proper line for power transfer in the future, which is a fundamental pre-requisite for the glory of democracy in any country. Before, it was witnessed that the transfer was not smooth and created doom for the anti-democratic elements. For instance, as mentioned above, had the democratic leader, after the elections of 1977, not created problems for power transfer, the military would have not imposed martial law. It was because of non-agreement on the transfer of power in past, democracy could not survive for a long time. Thus, the smooth transfer of power, now, will ensure the continuation of democracy in Pakistan.

Every citizen shall have the freedom to form political party and freedom to form unions and associations  
(Act 17)

The ~~the~~ above act describes that every citizen has right to form political parties. The candidates set up by a party should secure 6% of the total valid votes.

A hurdle in the way of democracy in Pakistan is lack of capacity leadership. The incompetent and corrupt leaders have never allowed the democracy to flourish in the country. Since the tragic demise of the great Quaid, absence of mature leadership has been the biggest dilemma for the country. As there is no proper system of checks and balances in the country, these leaders carried on gaining the power and kept the nation deprived from the basic amenities of life. The malignant intentions of our political spearheads, have not only smudged the image of Pakistan before the globe, but have also proved fatal for the democratic survival.

The feudal lord system is acting as the stumbling rock in the way of democracy in Pakistan. Democracy relies on the votes of local citizens. However, in Pakistan, some feudal lords enjoy full control over the authority and decisions of people in their respective areas. Normally, these feudals own thousands of

acres of lands and almost all the people living in the villages act as their farmers. The people rely on them economically. It is, therefore, during elections, they vote only a candidate told by their feudal lords. They do not have their own interest, but over the command of their superiors. Thus, the feudal system is the basic hurdle in the way of democracy in Pakistan.

The fragile democratic institutions, especially the judiciary, has never given democracy a fair chance to flourish. For a steady political environment, the conformity between all the institutions of the government is pivotal. Democracy never exists without rule of law, justice, civil liberties and equality of opportunities. Moreover, the clash between the main organs of the state has leads to the catastrophe of the democratic state.

It is imperative to have a proper constitution when a country starts fresh. The delay in the formation of constitution thwarted the process of shaping the opinion in favor of

democracy as a modern political necessity. The constitution, which was drafted after nine years of the independence in 1956, was strangled after military coup by Ayub Khan in 1958. A proper constitution was formulated in 1973, but every dictator trimmed this constitution in accordance to his own personal interests.

Moreover, our political forces also played a horrible role in deteriorating the original draft and resultantly, we remained unable to establish the strong democratic traditions.

Since the day of inception, the people of Pakistan have faced many military rule than that of civilian rule. The frequent military coup, never allowed the country to adopt positive political principles. These military dictators have tarnished the democratic norms to prevail in the country. They have trimmed and amended the constitution for their personal convenience. Resultantly, the seed of a great democratic culture, sowed by the great Quaid, never appeared to turn into a strong tree.

The poor literacy rate in Pakistan

is negatively affecting the performance of the democratic governments very badly. It is known as the fact that the democratic system is successful in the countries where the literacy is good. It is because, a person with good education background knows the importance of his vote and uses it properly for the betterment of the country. As a result, efficient democratic leaders are elected that grab the rein of the country. In Pakistan, with around 50 percent illiterate people, democracy has failed to improve the lifestyle of the people and solve the existing crisis faced by the country. Thus, it is not wrong to say that the inadequate literacy rate is causing damage to democracy in Pakistan. There are pragmatic solutions to fortify the flimsy democratic culture in the country. Firstly, the role of ~~necesses~~ military shall be well defined. Military is meant to protect the borders of a country not to govern the destiny of the nations of their

country. The constitution of 1973 clearly reveals the death sentence for those who unlawfully topple the civilian government. Not only implementation but conformity to the law shall be assured to avoid any further military rule on the country.

Secondly, the positive role of media can be significant in developing perceptions of the nation. It can also amplify the public awareness regarding to their fundamental rights and can present a true picture of what is being happening beyond the curtains. Affirmative media debate can prove a key tool for reinstating the tumbling democratic ideologies as democracy flourishes the food of debate and discussion.

Thirdly, the intra party democracy is significant for the stability of political system. Hence, intra-party democracy provides a leading role to all registered members to participate directly or indirectly in the process of decision making.

Fourthly and foremost, there should be rule of law and order in the country to fortify the firmly democratic culture. No one consider himself above the law. Every citizen, no matter how powerful he is, must be answerable before the law for his ill deeds. There must be parity and equality of opportunities for every individual of the state. Merit should strictly be based upon competence and not upon the political and financial approach as King Luther revealed, "An injustice anywhere is a threat to the justice everywhere."

Fifthly, effective steps should be taken to get rid of illiteracy. A literate society is the hallmark of strong democracy. A vacant mind can be easily preoccupied with the wrong beliefs. Educational reforms are the dire need of the hour. Government should revise its educational policy and make it much more effective both in letters and spirits. An educated society resists against any un-constitutional and extra-constitutional act, thus play a pivotal role in strengthening democracy.

Lastly but not least, Government should investment on human development indicators. The frustrated people of Pakistan have always welcomed the military takeovers in the country. It is solely due to the reason that the civilian government have failed badly, in delivering the people, the basic amenities of life. So, to establish a strong democratic culture, the need to invest on providing basic facilities to the people, is crucial.

As such, ~~the~~ it is leached that there is hopes and hurdles in the way of democracy in Pakistan. Some events like the establishment of ECP and public awareness and independence of judiciary and many more have <sup>created</sup> hopes for democracy in Pakistan. In contrast, some other events like indirect military interference, feudal system, constitutional crisis and illiteracy have caused hurdles in the way of democracy in Pakistan. Thus, democracy in Pakistan faces both hurdles and hopes and it is important to remove impediments to further flourish the democracy.