

Outline

(1) Introduction:

Thesis statement:

The democracy of Pakistan witnessed both ebb and flow since its inception. The ~~hopes~~ ^{hopes} in the way of democracy are obsolescence of martial law, public awareness, strengthening of institutions, ~~improved~~ ^{increasing} voter turnout, ~~increasing~~ ^{increasing} role of media of women in politics and reforms in Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). However, the democracy has certain hurdles including indirect military interventions, corrupt leadership, low literacy rate, surge in terrorism, political instability and dynastic politics.

(2) History of democratic struggle in Pakistan (1947-2008)

(3) Hopes regarding better democracy in the country:

3.1) Martial law is obsolete:

- Article 6-A of 1973 Constitution
- (3.2) Increasing awareness in public
 - (3.3) Strengthening of institutions:
FIA > NAB
 - ~~3.4~~ ~~Improved voter turnout:~~
 - (3.4) Efficient role of media
 - (3.5) Improved role of women in politics
 - (3.6) Reforms in Election Commission of Pakistan
 - (4.) **Stumbling blocks in the way of democracy in Pakistan:**
 - (4.1) Indirect military interventions in the democratic government
 - (4.2) Corrupt leadership: Pakistan ranks 133 out of 180 countries
 - (4.3) Low literacy rate - 59%: 152nd rank globally
 - (4.4) Surge in terrorism: 245 attacks between January and April 2024
 - (4.5) Political instability: A tug of war between major political parties:
 - (4.6) Dynastic politics: PMLN and PPP
 - (5) **Conclusion:**

Democracy in Pakistan: Hopes and Hurdles

The charismatic president of America ^{Abraham Lincoln} said that democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people. Pakistan adopted democratic system of government at the time of the partition of India. The phrase 'the Islamic Republic of Pakistan' itself advocates the supremacy of common masses within defined boundaries of Islam. Democracy in Pakistan since 1947, is always remained in chaos. The hopes in the way of democracy are obsolescence of martial law, public awareness, strengthening of institutions, increasing role of media, increasing participation of women in politics and reforms in Election Commission of Pakistan. However, democracy in Pakistan has certain hurdles including indirect military interventions, corrupt leadership, low literacy

rate, surge in terrorism, political instability and dynastic politics

∴ Pakistan has experienced a tumultuous history marked by the period of political instability, military interventions and struggles for democratic control. The founder of nation Muhammad Ali Jinnah was keen to introduce democratic system in Pakistan. However, his sudden death impeded its proper imposition. Liaquat Ali Khan, afterward, carried his vision but failed to give it a practical shape. The imposition of martial law by Ayub Khan closed the doors for democracy and Pakistan had to spend several decades under military rule. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, as a protector of democracy, appeared in the politics but after a short time Zia ul Haq imposed the martial law and blocked the hope of progress. After Zia, the short and fragile terms of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz

Sharif were also witnessed but another dictator, Pervez Musharraf signalled its victory. These military rulers did not only overthrow the democratic governments ~~and~~ but also committed the heinous crime of abrogating the constitution. In result of this judiciary became ineffective and gave rise to lawlessness in the country. After Musharraf, the democracy in Pakistan witnessed good days. But, this democracy is still not free of obstacles. Thus, frequent military take overs are the major factor responsible for poor state democracy.

There are many hopes regarding democratic system of Pakistan. One of them is end of martial law trend. Pakistan is having smooth transition of power in democratic way since 2008.

Civilian supremacy is the essence of democracy. 18th amendment in the 1973 constitution has blocked all the gates of military intervention. Article 6-A of the constitution dictates that any

person who abrogates or subverts or suspends or holds in abeyance, the constitution by use of force or show of force or by any other unconstitutional means shall be guilty of high treason. Not only this but further amendments in article-6 emphasize that the person who assists the guilty will also be charged high treason and any court either supreme or high cannot validate that punishment. This amendment restricts courts to give verdict in favour of guilty people. In past abrogation of constitution was validated by apex court under the doctrine of necessity as in the case of *Molvi Tamiz ud din*. But now, the interests of public are superior and military is kept in its limits by supreme law of land. Thus, the halt of military interventions strengthens democracy.

Surprisingly, general public has become more aware of politics than politicians these days. People are more aware of their legal and political rights and pose power to thwart any tyrannical steps by officials of the state.

Problems at grass root levels are getting highlighted and in most cases supreme courts has to take suo Motu due to public pressure. If extra taxes are imposed or budgets are against locals' interests, masses record their protests or boycotts. For example in Pervez Musharraf's regime Justice Iftakhar Chaudhry was suspended but, raising public pressure brought him back into office and led to the resignation of the dictator.

The icing on the cake is that institutions of the country are strengthened. In the case of former Premier Nawaz Sharif, state institutions like

FIA and NAB worked independently and outed him outside the ^{city} office. Similarly National Accountability Bureau (NAB) investigate PPP chairman Asif Ali Zardari on corruption charges related to misuse of authority and embezzlement of public funds. Therefore, the politicians are more alert to corrupt practices as otherwise, they are aware that they would land in hot water.

The role of media is also commendable in this regard. Media holds the power of accountability of all institutions of state. It promotes free and fair elections with every minute update. In case of any irregularity or rigging the culprits cannot ~~be~~ escape from the lens of media. Along with this it also examines human rights provision and violation and highlight suppressed voices.

All successive governments in Pakistan have tried to cage

the media. For instance the Press and Publication Ordinance (PPO) was promulgated in 1962 by Gen. Ayub Khan to control the media. Walter Cronkite has rightly stated, "Freedom of media/press is not just important to democracy, it is democracy."

Empowered women are the building blocks of progressive society. In the case of democratic stability of Pakistan, the role of women politicians is undeniable. The first female prime minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto struggled symbolically for the revival of democracy. She faced home detention, exile and arrests for several times but she remained firm in her mission. Another lady in this regard is Tehmina Arif who served as first female speaker of national assembly. Other names include Nusrat Sahar Abbasi, Maryam Nawaz, Shireen Muzaffar.

Zartaj Gul, Sherry Rehman and Aisha Bhutto are the prominent names in Pakistan's politics. To empower women in politics 17.5% seats are reserved in national assembly, 17% in Senate and 33% in local government. It is said that, if you want something to say ask a man, but if you want something to be done ask a woman. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the increasing and improved representation of women in politics as a major hope for stability in democracy.

Finally, the reforms in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), and its improved performance is another ingredient that creates hope for better 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 the chief election commission according to its will to get the election signed.

Besides, a proper mechanism for the appointment of the members has also been devised to ensure the transparent election. In 2019, the two vacant seats of ECP members could not be filled since eight months despite the constitutional provision of filling the seats in 45 days. It was because the federal government under Imran Khan and the opposition could not reach the consensus on the names. In a surprise government appointed members by its own but ECP chairman refused to administer the oath. Thus it is reached that the reforms in the ECP is playing a vital role in promoting the democracy by conducting smooth and transparent election.

As the prior segment of the essay shed light on the hopes of democracy in

in Pakistan, the latter will highlight the obstacles in the path of it.

A major hurdle of course, is the indirect interference of the military in the democratic government. The military not only frame foreign policy of Pakistan, but also implement it. The civilians have no say in the policies towards India, Afghanistan and the US. Besides, the ~~at~~ head of Intelligence Bureau or other sensitive institutions like defence is always retired military officer. It means that the civilians are not trusted in sensitive policies.

A meme circulated on the Facebook that common man are not eligible ^{for admittance in} government job after his 30s while a military man is most desired person for government offices as head after retirement. Isn't it a great irony? Similarly, Lt. Gen (Retd). Muhammad Abdul Aziz is serving as the chairman of Punjab Public service commission & currently. WAPDA

chairman is also a retired
Lt Gen. : Sajjad Ghani. In a
same way, Lt (Retired) Gen.
Nazir Ahmad Bhatt is the
chairman of NAB. So holding
government and public officers
as chairman they pose hurdle
by indirect intervention. For
instance, PTI refused to
talk with government for
the release of Imran Khan.
Leaders of the party stated
that they want to discuss
this with real power which
is the establishment or army.

Corruption is a
menace for Pakistan. The
democracy is in major threat
for due to corruption of
the leaders of the country.

According to recent report
Pakistan ranks 133 out of 180
countries in corruption. Majority
of government officials favour
their self interest and also
follow the rule of nepotism.

They appoint people of their
choice in offices to exercise

monopoly over the system. Former Prime Minister Imran Khan was arrested in 2023 for the charges of corruption in Toshakhan case. Similarly, PMLN supreme Nawaz Sharif was also found guilty in Panama leaks. Benazir Bhutto was also dismissed from her first term due to corruption charges. The history of Pakistan's politicians is full of corruption that's why no one could complete their tenure yet. So, if the guards of the palace are muggers themselves who would be believed then?

It is believed that democracy and illiteracy cannot move together. Pakistan is democratic country but it has poor literacy rate of 59% which ranks 152nd out of 180 countries. It is negatively impacting the performance of democratic governments. It is known that democracy

is successful in the countries where literacy rate is high. It is because a person who has good educational background knows the value of his vote and can properly use it for the betterment of the country. In a country like Pakistan, where literacy is too low that people are unaware of the symbol of their desired candidate. Mostly people vote on more than one signs and nullify the vote. Others don't know the value of their vote. Sometimes they sell their vote ~~on~~ for a 'plate of Biryani' or just to maintain hierarchy. Thus, it is not wrong to say inadequate literacy rate is causing damage to democracy in Pakistan.

According to Benazir Bhutto, "Democracy is necessary to peace and to undermining the forces of terrorism." But, if terrorism in a country is

on its peak, ~~it~~ how will
democracy survive? Terrorism
is the root cause of
instability in the country.
In year 2024 Pakistan has
faced 245 terrorist attacks
between January and
April. It lead to more than
300 casualties and many
more injuries. This will ~~destr~~
impact the image of the ^{country}
and the foreign
^{direct} investment. Alongwith this,
this raises human rights
concerns and sanctions may
be imposed by global autho
on Pakistan, resultantly, ^{ritic}
impacting the performance
of democracy. Significantly,
counter-terrorism efforts like
mission Zarb e Azab and
Azm e Istakam strain the
already threatened economy of
the state. Terrorism has
therefore vitally challenged
Pakistan's democratic develo
Political instability ^{prevail}
in Islamabad has hindered

democratic stability. This is the reason Pakistan has experienced numerous changes in government. In 2023, a case law government ruled the country. ^{Neither of the} ~~any~~ Prime ministers could complete his time. The politics of hate has ultimately worsened the democratic conditions of the country. Nawaz Sharif was removed from the office in 2017; Imran Khan was ousted in 2022 with no confidence vote in Parliament, Benazir Bhutto's term was cut short by her assassination in 2007, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was assassinated in 1979. Along with this elections were also not held on time ever. Moreover, after elections election controversies always arise. After 2018 elections when PTI came into power, opposition started the cases of fraud rigging and brought social unrest. Similarly, in

2024, PTI blamed lack of transparency after the success of PMLN. The slogans of 'form 47 and form 45' were so high that US congress also presented its resolution for investigation of Feb-8 polls. Not only this, but political parties often use state institutions to target opposition. Therefore, every former Prime Minister ^{is} either sent to 'Adiala jail' or 'Kot Lakhpat Jail'. Unfortunately, this musical chair game of power has halted democracy in every possible way.

Imran Khan once said that the only negative thing in Pakistan is not having a democracy. Apparently, Pakistan is a democratic country but its major parties are the followers of dynastic politics. Dynastic politics is a serious problem in Pakistan's political system. The descendants of ruling elites continued to take it as their

progrative or birth right to rule the country. The people from the grass root level were never allowed to enter the politics. The father of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was the clewan of princely states of Junagar. The politics then transmitted to Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, his daughter Benazir and grand-children Bilawal and Arifa. Uniformly, PMLN power vested in the hands of Nawaz Sharif, Shshbarz Sharif, Hamza Shshbarz and Mariam Nawaz. Therefore, it would not wrong to say that democracy in Pakistan is of ~~the~~ elite, by elite and for elite.

In conclusion, there are hopes as well as hurdles in the way of democracy in Pakistan. Some situations like end of martial laws, increas awareness in public, streng^{ing}thening of institutions, efficient role of media, improved role of women in politics,

and reforms in EGP has created hope for democracy in Pakistan. In the contrast, indirect interference of military, corrupt leaderships, low literacy rates, surge in terrorism, political instability, and dynastic politics has caused hurdles in the way of democracy. Keeping in view this situation, an association of democratic nation should be formed to eradicate anti-democratic means from the countries. Despite of certain hurdles there is still light at the end of tunnel. And this light can be clearly interpreted from the words of Quaid-e-Azam. He said, "Democracy is in the blood of Muslims who look upon complete equality of manhood --- and believe in fraternity, equality and liberty."