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# Democratic downfall in Pakistan: Causes and Solutions

## Outline

1. Introduction

2. Causes of democratic downfall in Pakistan

a) Governance issues

(ie; corruption and nepotism etc)

b) Political Instability

(Frequent change in governments etc)

c) Socio-economic issues

(poverty, inequality, lack of education)

d) constitutional issues

(Flaws in 8<sup>th</sup> amendment)



2e) Frequent military interventions  
(military trial courts, martial laws)

2f) External influence in politics

### 3. Solutions of democratic downfall in Pakistan.

3a) Improving Governance  
Addressing corruption, ensuring transparency

3b) Encouraging political inclusivity  
(free & fair elections, equal representation)

3c) Addressing socio-economic issues.

(implement policies to reduce poverty and inequality)

3d) Constitutional reforms  
Addressing 8th amendment

3e) Reducing military influence  
(establishing clear civilian control)



3f) International cooperation  
(Addressing external influence)

## 4. Conclusion

Usama khilji writes in an opinion, "Pakistan is experiencing a complete breakdown of democracy with a powerless civilian set-up at the centre, ~~and~~ Kp serving beyond their constitutional mandate, a divided judiciary that is being openly defied, and an increasingly censored media; all result in a helpless populace; especially those sections that held hopes for rule of law in the country". Although Usama khilji <sup>has</sup> have mentioned some important factors, but there are many other factors which contributed to democratic downfall in Pakistan. So, Addressing The democratic downfall in Pakistan requires a multifaced



approach. Strengthening institutions by enhancing capacity, independence and democratic accountability is the basic potential solution.

Moreover, improving governance, reducing military influence and encouraging political inclusivity can rebuild and strengthen Pakistan's democratic foundation. Although many factors have cumulatively contributed to the democratic downfall in Pakistan, but, the country can strengthen and rebuild true democratic norms by suitable efforts.

Governance issues have significantly contributed to the democratic downfall in Pakistan. One major issue is the concentration of power in the hands of few individuals, leading to a lack of accountability and transparency.

Furthermore, corruption and nepotism have plagued Pakistan's governance, with the country ranking



140<sup>th</sup> out of 180 in Transparency International's corruption perception Index. Such governance issues have eroded trust in democratic institutions, paving the way for military interventions and undermining the democratic process.

Likewise, Political instability has been a significant factor in Pakistan's democratic downfall. Frequent changes in governments, political polarization, and lack of consensus have hindered democratic progress. Since its inception, Pakistan has experienced numerous military coups. Additionally, political parties have been unable to complete their terms, with the average tenure of a government being just 2.5 years. Moreover, political polarization has led to gridlock, making it challenging to pass legislation and implement policies and further weakening



democratic governance.

Moreover, socio-economic issues have contributed many times in its democratic downfall. Widespread poverty, inequality and lack of access to basic services like education and healthcare have created a sense of disillusionment among citizens, leading to decreased trust in democratic institutions. As Pakistan's poverty rate stands at 39% (according to World Bank), and country ranks 154th out of 189 in Human Development Index (UNDP). These socio-economic challenges have created an environment conducive to democratic instability, allowing non-democratic forces to exploit public discontent and undermine democratic processes.

Similarly, constitutional issues also play a notable role in Pakistan's democratic disturbance.

The country's constitution has



amended numerous times, often to consolidate power or justify military interventions. For instance, the 8th amendment (1985) and the Seventeenth amendment (2004) expanded presidential powers, allowing for dismissal of governments and the dissolution of parliament. These constitutional flaws have created an environment in which democratic norms are frequently violated, paving the way for non-democratic forces to ~~se~~ seize power.

Frequent military interventions have been a major contributor to Pakistan's democratic downfall. Since its inception, Pakistan has experienced four direct military coups (1958, 1969, 1977 and 1999) and several indirect interventions, where the military has influenced politics from the behind scenes. These interventions have led to



dismissal of elected governments, and resulted in the imposition of martial law. As noted by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, "the military's role in politics has been a major obstacle in democratization" (HRCP, 2020). Hence, a cycle of instability and authoritarianism was seen as a result of military interventions in democratic norms:

Likewise, External influence is also a major obstacle in democracy of Pakistan. The country's strategic location and geopolitical significance have made it a focal point for foreign powers, often leading to influence internal affairs. For instance, Pakistan's dependence on foreign aids and loans has made it vulnerable to external pressure, allowing donors to influence policy decisions and undermine democratic processes. Thus,



external interference has weakened democratic institutions, perpetuated authoritarianism, and hindered Pakistan's ability to develop a sustainable democratic system.

It is obvious that no one can navigate above discussed challenges in way of stable and robust democratic system of Pakistan. But there are some potential solution, in which, Pakistan need a multi-facted approach.

Firstly, improving governance can help address Pakistan's democratic downfall. By strengthening institutions, enhancing capacity within institutes, enhancing accountability and increasing transparency, governance can be improved effectively. Effective governance can ensure the rule of law, protect human rights, and promote inclusive decision-making. For instance, strengthening institutes like



Election Commission, judiciary and Parliament can ensure free and fair elections, impartial justice, and representative legislation. Thus, by improving governance, Pakistan can address the root cause of democratic instability.

Secondly, encouraging political inclusivity can address Pakistan's democratic downfall. This can be achieved by promoting equal representation, participation and engagement of diverse groups in the political process. Inclusivity can bridge the gap between marginalized communities and the political elite, reducing feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement. A study by the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) found that inclusive decision-making processes lead to more effective and sustainable policy outcomes. Thus, encouraging political



inclusivity can address democratic downfall.

Thirdly, addressing socio-economic issues can help to resolve Pakistan's problematic democratic norms. By reducing inequality, improving living standards, and increasing citizens' trust in democratic institutions, norms of democracy can be protected. For instance, a study by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) found that investments in education and healthcare can lead to increased political participation and civic engagement. Thus, by prioritizing socio-economic development, Pakistan can address the root causes of democratic instability, build a more equitable society, and strengthen its democratic foundation.

Additionally, constitutional reforms hold the key to revitalizing Pakistan's democracy. By addressing



the structural weaknesses in the Constitution, reforms can help to clearly define the military role, devolve powers to provinces and can safeguard judicial independence. According to research by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, constitutional reforms can help to consolidate democracy, reduce political instability, and promote inclusive governance. Hence, by undertaking comprehensive constitutional reforms, Pakistan can build a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable democratic system.

Similarly, Reducing military influence is crucial to solving Pakistan's democratic downfall. By reducing its influence, Pakistan can decrease the risk of military coups, enhance civilian control, reduce military's economic interests, increase transparency and empower parliament to exercise its powers.



more effectively. A study by PILDAT found that reducing military influence can lead to increased trust in democratic institutions, improved governance and enhanced civil-military relations. Thus, by reducing military influence, Pakistan can establish a more balanced and sustainable democratic system.

Moreover, International cooperation can play a crucial role in solving democratic disturbance in Pakistan. Collaborative efforts with international organizations, such as United Nations and European Union can promote democratic values, Encourage human rights, ensure rule of law and provide economic aid and investment on democratic progress. By engaging in international cooperation, Pakistan can leverage global expertise, resources, and



support to strengthen its democratic system and promote sustainable development, as evidenced by Brookings institution.

Thus, Pakistan can leverage global support to overcome its democratic hurdles and achieve sustainable development by engaging with international community.

It is obvious that Pakistan's democracy is facing downfall because of political instability and poor governance which can be resolved by implementing conducive measures of good governance and political inclusivity etc. ~~Except~~

Along with poor governance and political instability, there are other challenges of socio-economic inequalities, constitutional issues, and external influence on politics, to the democratic norms of Pakistan. But this is not a problem without solutions. Improving



governing methodologies, constitutional reforms, reducing military influence and seeking international cooperation are potential solutions. It's not a issue unique to Pakistan. Many countries which are now at the top of democracy index had once faced similar challenges. So it will be true to say that, Pakistan can regain or resolve its democratic challenges with effective and prioritized measures.