

The evolution of democratic system has always remained a dilemma in Pakistan----

Introduction:

Pakistan has adopted parliamentary democracy since the inception. But the true form of democracy could not flourish due to military interventions, dynastic politics, politicization of politics, blow to judicial independence, suppression of freedom of speech, provincial governments not transferring powers to local leaders, election rigging, elite-capture of policy-making and patron-client system. The prioritization of one province results into feelings of marginalisation of Pakistan in the other province. Due to these factors, democracy could not get its roots.

(I) Brief overview of the democracy in Pakistan:

Pakistan drafted its first constitution after the 9 years of its independence. First general election held in 1970 and after 1988 election were held frequently because no elected government completed its full term.

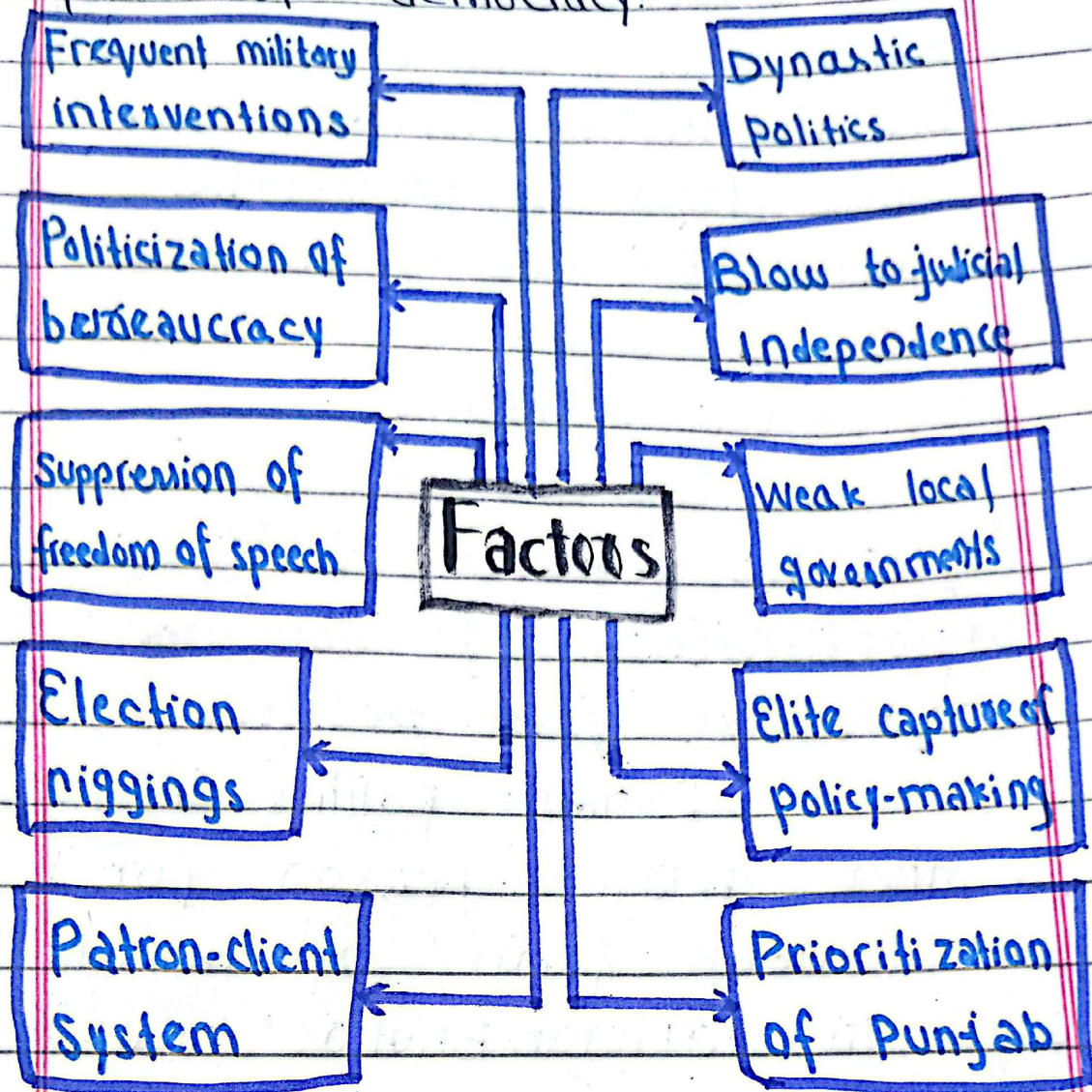
Pakistan's history is full of the examples where the elected governments are removed from their offices, showing the weak rule of democracy.

Pakistan: A Modern History by IAN Talbot

(II) Factors responsible for the weak democratic system in Pakistan:

Various factors have contributed towards the weak

form of democracy:



i) Frequent military interventions deteriorating democratic form of governments:

Pakistan has faced martial law and military intervention in the decision-making directly or indirectly.

The military interference in the polity has resulted into weak civilian institution, losing the public trust in democratic institutions. "Federalism and Ethnic Conflict Resolution in South Asia" by Katharine Adeney.

ii) Dynastic politics obstructing opportunities of common people to join politics:

Dynastic politics is another major reason for the weak form of democracy in Pakistan. Bhuttos and Nawaz families are ruling political landscape since decades.

The dynastic politics of Pakistan obstruct the opportunities of common people to join politics by granting party tickets to their own family members. Source: Modern Diplomacy.

iii) Politicization of Bureaucracy blind allegiance instead of questioning:

The bureaucracy of Pakistan is completely politicized. The bureaucrats did not make decisions independently. This results into flawed democracy in institutions.

The politicization of bureaucracy has resulted in poor governance and weak accountability.

"Governing the Ungovernable" by
Ishrat Hussain.

iv) 26th Amendment - a blow to judicial independence:

The judiciary was independent from the political interference before the 26th amendment. But 26th Amendment take the suo moto power of judiciary and the selection of

judges was by the political entities.

The 26th Amendment is a blow to judicial independence by taking *suo moto* and selection of judges. Source: Bloomberg

v) Suppression of freedom of speech - A death-knell to democracy:

The government of Pakistan introduced PECA Act. According to this act, criticism of government institutions is crime and spreading any videos against the government on the media will be punished.

The PECA Act is the suppression of freedom of speech and independent journalism. Source: ISSI

vi) Provincial governments not

transferring power to local level- Poor service delivery:

The military regimes hand over the powers to the local governments. But the elected governments hesitate in transferring power to local governments.

The provincial governments retaining powers in their hands shows the fragile democracy and poor service delivery is outcome. Source: SSRN

vii) Election riggings resulting into mandate theft:

The Election Commission of Pakistan is not much empowered to conduct transparent elections. The result is the elections rigging.

Recent government of Pakistan is alleged of mandate thief by the opposition. Source: Dawn News.

viii) Elite-capture of policy-making resulting into fragile democracy:

The elite-capture of policy-making in Pakistan shapes crony-capitalism. The policies are made to promote businesses of friends and relatives.

The elite-capture of policy-making ignores the welfare of public and favors the crony, showing fragile democracy. The Research Gate

ix) Patron-client system-rewarding the loyalist in place of honest officials:

Patron-client system is the major hurdle in the way of establishing true democracy. The ruling parties gave rewards and promotions to their loyalist.

Patron-client system rewards

the loyalist, opening the doors of corruption and dysfunctionality of institutions.

Source: Pakistan Social Science Review

x) Prioritization of Punjab at the expense of other provinces:

Equality, the basic pillar of democracy is ignored when the governments prioritize Punjab at the expense of other provinces.

The prioritization of Punjab has resulted into feelings of alienation and Punjabisation of Pakistan in other provinces. This marked the way of political instability. Source: IPR

(III) Critical Analysis: A way forward to strengthen roots

of democracy in Pakistan:

The roots of democracy can be strengthened by ensuring transparency and accountability in governing institutions. The ECP should be empowered to conduct transparent elections. The provincial governments should transfer power to the local governments to improve service delivery.

Conclusion:

Hence, from the above discussion it is clear that certain factors are responsible for weak democracy in Pakistan. By resolving these factors, democracy would be strengthened in Pakistan.