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Polarized Politics: The Issues and Challenges of Democracy in Pakistan

a- Introduction

1- Definition of Polarized Politics

2- Thesis Statement

b- Manifestations of Polarized Politics in Pakistan

1- "Us vs Them" Political culture

i- Politics framed in rigid binaries:

Patriots vs anti-state

ii- Lack of compromise and cooperation

2- Cycle of Political Revenge and institutional abuse

i- Exploitation of courts, anti-corruption bodies, and security agencies for targeting opponents

ii- Former victims seeking revenge after government changes (Mawaz

Sharif in 2018, and Imran Khan in 2023)

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C-Issues and challenges of Polarized Politics for Democracy in Pakistan

1- crisis of Electoral Credibility

- i- Every election is followed by rigging allegations (The 1977, 2018, and 2024 elections)

2- Breakdown of Parliamentary Functioning

- i- Boycotts, walkouts, and legislative obstruction

- ii- Parliament reduced to a battleground (PPP walkouts against PML-N speeches)

3- Regime changes and Policy Discontinuity

- i- Opposition parties lobby to remove the Prime Minister

- ii- Successive governments reversing policies (PTI's tariffs and circular debt reforms partially reversed)

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4- Societal Fragmentation and intolerance

i- Citizens split into hostile political camps

ii- Use of derogatory terms for rival supporters (Youthia, Patwari, Jigala)

5- Opening space for undemocratic interventions

i- Persistent political chaos

invites non-political actors to "stabilize" the system. (1958, and 1977 Martial laws)

6- Economic Fallout of Polarized Politics Undermining Democracy

i- Political uncertainty discouraging investment and growth

ii- Erosion of public trust weakening democratic legitimacy

7- Weakening of Federal Harmony

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i- strained centre-province relations
(center considering governor's role
in KP in late 2025)

8- Media Polarization and Opinion
Wars Threatening Democratic
Functioning

i- Informed decision-making
undermined

d-Way Forward: Managing Political Polarization

1- Promote Political culture

i- Parliamentary norms over
street politics

ii- consensus building and cooperation

2- Strengthen Electoral and Account-
ability Institutions

i- Detach accountability from
political vendetta

ii- Transparency and procedural
fairness

e-Conclusion