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DEMOCRATIC UNREST IN PAKISTAN: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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Democracy, a political system which aims

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In the era of ~~yearly cold~~
~~war~~ Iranian government decided to take the ownership of oil resources from British. This move triggered a widespread unrest ~~in the~~ west. So CIA launched an operation to overthrow the then Iranian government. Later in 2013, the US officials acknowledged that they ignited the public and caused widespread democratic unrest in Iran to overthrow the government. Media was used to turn the general public against the government. Ultimately, in 1953, the government was sent home through a revolution. The democratic unrest ultimately ended in a fiasco for Iran. This demonstrates that democratic unrest has many hidden and unhidden causes and a number of undesirable impacts on a state. As far as the Pakistan is concerned, history of democratic unrest is as old as the history of Pakistan itself. In context of Pakistan, there are numerous causes of political unrest. These causes include

military intervention in politics, balance of powers issues in institutions, domestic politics, undemocratic norms within the political parties, leadership gap, social structure of society and propaganda by social media. The democratic unrest has numerous undesirable consequences like economic crises, use of pressure groups, inconsistent foreign policy, decision making issues, law and order situation and compromise on social well being.

To begin with, one major cause of political unrest in Pakistan is political polarization and intolerance in the society. According to SPRI, a significant increase in incidents of intolerance was observed post 2010. This intolerance led to political polarization and widened the gap between supporters of main political parties of Pakistan. Politics of name and shame reached its zenith post Musharraf era. The emotional youth and teenagers added fuel to the fire. The emotions of youth and teenagers were cashed by politicians and populist due to which democratic unrest prevailed in the society.

Regrettably military interventions in politics are one among the many reasons of democratic unrest in Pakistan. Since its inception, Pakistan has faced the problem of military interventions. From Ayub Khan to General Zia and then Musharraf Era, a direct military rule was observed. The 18th amendment, by virtue of Article 6, has remained successful to stop the direct military interventions, yet indirect interference was still observed post 18th amendment. The role of military was seen as a direct threat to rule of law and thus it became a major cause of democratic unrest in Pakistan.

Similarly, the emergence and rise of pressure groups is another cause of political unrest in Pakistan. Pressure groups, in name of religion and ethnic discriminations are major threat to democratic system in Pakistan. Use of violence and force by ethnic and religious entities undermines the democratic progress of society. The acceptance of demands of

pressure groups by government leads to resentment in people who believe in rule of law and hence democratic values in a society are undermined.

likewise, excessive misuse of social media is a major cause of democratic unrest in Pakistan.

The use of AI tools and lack of cyber knowledge has added fuel to the fire.

General masses fall a prey to propaganda and fake news spread by social media. Their inability to differentiate between truth and propaganda due to lack of cyber and social media know how leads to a resentment and hence democratic unrest prevails in the society.

Chankija, one of the greatest statesman of sub-continent, once remarked, "If I lie is told

repeatedly, it becomes a truth".

This stands true regarding

democratic culture of Pakistan. The excessive propagation of fake news ultimately ends in democratic unrest in Pakistan.

Feudalism is another cause of democratic unrest in Pakistan. Feudal lords manipulate the drawbacks in the democratic system for ~~their own~~ benefits. Similarly, they keep the masses away from education to impede their critical abilities. They do so to keep the masses at their service and to enjoy the superiority and position through votebank of uneducated masses. The misuse of innocent souls for political ~~reasons~~ on snatching of educational rights ultimately ends in democratic unrest in Pakistan.

Another important cause of democratic unrest in Pakistan is dynastic politics. Almost all the major parties of Pakistan show the culture of dynastic tendencies in one or other way. Those tendencies lead to loss of potential and capable candidates, who are sacrificed for dynastic politics. This leads to leadership gap in the society and democratic values are lost. Likewise, dynastic politics lead to

a compromise on democracy with in the party. A political party which struggles for democracy do not possess democratic norms. This leads to democratic unrest in the society.

Democratic unrest leads to a number of undesired consequences. Economic downfall is one of such consequences which Pakistan faces due to democratic unrest.

The widespread democratic unrest hampers the government's ability to make key decisions regarding economy. This is due to public pressure, opposition and pressure groups who use the unrest as a weapon to interfere in critical economic decisions.

In order to improve, economic conditions government has to take difficult steps and protectionist measures, which are challenged by the opposition using propaganda and causing unrest. For example, in 2019,

PM (UN) government decided to privatize certain governmental institutions including energy sector and trains, which were in loss.

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The opposition badly criticized the decision and hence government had to step back. When the then opposition came to power, it took the same decision in 2019, which was opposed by PML(N) in opposition. This is a manifestation of use of economic interest for sake of political gains.

In the same way, democratic unrest leads to a weak and massive foreign policy. Foreign policy decisions are also impacted by democratic unrest in Pakistan.

Take the example of CPEC. Even the vital projects like CPEC were questioned by the then opposition. Almost all the important foreign policy projects and decisions are used for undemocratic point scoring. Use of democratic unrest to hamper decisions like role in Russia-Ukraine conflict, KSA versus Iran and sending troops or alienating in Yemen crises are among such examples. Thus democratic unrest hamper the state's ability to pursue a bold and independent foreign policy.

Democratic unrest also leads to gender based bullying and harassment which widens the gender gap. For example, due to undemocratic norms, female politicians from Maryam Nawaz and Zartaj Gul were harassed on social media. Use of AI tools to make deep fake and AI generated videos worsened the scenario. This led to a widespread gender gap in politics, where female participation ratio was already low.

In the same manner, the democratic unrest leads to capitalists manipulation. Capitalists take advantage of democratic unrest and exploit the politician through fund to survive in a hostile environment. In return, they take advantages related to financial domains like subsidies from government.

Sugar and construction industries in Pakistan are well known to get benefit of such unrest. The funding made to politicians had to return from public tax, which not only hampers

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The ~~spending~~ of social well being but also impedes good governance. Such soft of practices lead to corruption at governmental levels. Ultimately state is used as a mean for personal benefits of capitalists.

~~Democratic~~ unrest results in weak democratic institutions. In a society where no democracy prevails, cooperation of powers and check and balance system becomes utopic. The institutions interfere in domains of one another, which compromise social justice and social well being. For example, the unnecessary intervention of judiciary in executive and legislative affairs impedes its ability to provide justice, which is its primary task.

Due to judicial interference, the ~~executive~~ becomes unable to perform its duty for well being of the society.

Likewise, democratic unrest leads to deteriorated law and order situation in Pakistan. This is because due to widespread

resentment, government becomes paralyze and hence it is not able efficiently execute its policy. Take the example of rising extremism in Pakistan. When government decided to do an operation in KP, due to widespread opposition, ~~at~~ from KP government and masses, it had to step back which led to failure of government to tackle the issue of terrorism and law and order situation.

Similarly, the undemocratic norms and values deepen the ethnic crises. This is because the ethnic issues are exploited by the so called politicians for the sake of their political interests. Discriminations are given the colours of state's hostility. Populists use this issue to secure their political positions and national integration is compromised due to widespread unrest in Pakistan.

Otherwise, democratic unrest leads to fascist tendencies in the society. Political leaders in power starts to balance their score

with opposition. They respect no limits and fascist tendencies of authoritarianism prevail in the society. Pakistan has witnessed fascist tendencies in one or other form whenever the democratic unrest prevailed. State institutions and machinery were used against the political opponents. The decade of uncertainty (1989-1999) is an evidence of democratic unrest as a cause of fascist approach in Pakistani politics.

To conclude, there are numerous causes of democratic unrest in Pakistan like political polarization, military interventions, pressure groups, social media and feudalism.

The undesired consequences include ethnic crises, gender gap, compromised economic and foreign policy, capitalists manipulation and weak democratic institutions in Pakistan.