

Title: "Democracy in Pakistan: Hopes and Hurdles"

Outline

1- Introduction

2- Historical Outlook of Democracy in Pakistan highlighting Hopes and Hurdles

3- Hopes for Democracy in Pakistan:

a- Strong Institutional build-up in the country.

b- Improved economic structure of the country

c. Mature Leadership

d. Improved Social Indicators i.e Human Development Index (HDI), health, education.

e- Awareness among public

f- Maintaining law and order situation.

#### 4. Hurdles in the way of democracy in Pakistan:

- a- Polarized politics as an impediment
- b- Feudal system promoting federalism.
- c- Corruption of political leaders
- d- Imbalanced civil-military relations
- e- Low rate of literacy.

#### 5. Suggestions to implement strong democracy in the country:

- i- Balancing relations among all three tiers of governance
- ii- Strengthening accountability and transparency
- iii- ~~E~~ governance to be materialized

#### 6- Conclusion

A rule of majority is also a demand of majority, but dreams seldom come true. Democracy, or the rule of majority, is the most prevalent and acceptable form of government in the world. Many people in the different countries of world demand and desire this system, but few tend to maintain it. Pakistan is also among those <sup>minority</sup> countries, where democracy is facing several challenges since the birth of the country. From Quaid to the present-day leaders, democracy continued to find its way to thrive, as it ~~could~~ <sup>would</sup> pave way for the foundation of strong institutions <sup>and</sup> improved economic structure of the country. ~~and~~ The social indicators of the country which include the human development Index, health and education, ~~would~~ also present a clear image of a robust democracy in the country. Moreover, an informed population serves in best interest of the country. However, the challenges in

this regard are widespread. The most critical hurdles include polarized politics, the dominance of feudal system and the corruption of political leaders. A strong counter measures including the balance of civil-military relations and strengthening transparency practices are important to maintain democracy in the country. In a nutshell, Democracy in Pakistan remains the most critical system in the country, as it is there are multiple hopes pertaining to it. It faces numerous hurdles in it that hinders the effectiveness of democratic system in the country, which need to be countered.

Pakistan, since it got independence, presents a fragmented picture of the democratic system of government. The Quaid-e-Azam, who was the nation builder, laid the framework of democratic system in the country. But the passing course of time changed the democratic system into an authori-

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torian one. From Liaquat Ali Khan to Ayub Khan, and then to the other military generals, the shift of power highlighted dictatorship as the prevalent form of government at that time.

From martial laws to deteriorating economic sector, Pakistan experienced democracy in its worst phases. It always raised hopes for promoting a system of people-powered and public-friendly leadership through the power of vote but it was not able to achieve its desired goal.

Among the multiple hopes pertaining to democracy in Pakistan, the most significant is the strong institutional buildup in the country. The strong institutions lay the foundation for public trust and confidence. The public and private sector institutions present an outlook of collective will and support of people in the democratic process. The Election Commission of Pakistan, in collabor-

ration with other institutions, it holds the authority and serves as the beacon of hope for demonstrating democratic representation of public. These institutions, according to Ishaat Hussain, are the "torchbearers" for "Democratic Governance" in Pakistan. (Governing the Ungovernable: Institutional Reforms for Democratic Governance by Ishaat Hussain).

Besides institutional building, democratic government in Pakistan would improve the economic structure as well. The strong and stable democratic governments pave way for long-term policies and brotherly relations with the international community. This serves in best interests of the country as strong ties with the countries help in maintaining <sup>relations regarding</sup> trade, investments and foreign businesses in the Pakistan. This boosts the economic sector of the country, which is currently ailing due to the burden

of external debt and interest payments.

The investment of China ~~is~~ via CPEC and Gulf states via multiple agreements on infrastructure <sup>and</sup> energy are the example of foreign investment which would bear fruit once the country is democratically run and equipped.

Moreover, a robust democracy gives birth to a mature leadership. The leadership, ~~once~~ elected by the public is the representation of a country.

Pakistan faces leadership crisis which is dealt through a leader which is mature enough to make decisions and deal with public concerns. It is essential ~~due to~~ in the current scenario

where the country is facing the malaise of corruption and inefficiency on the part of rulers. ~~to~~ leaders like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Junior are the most inspiring examples. Mandela's dedication to ending apartheid resulted in a democratic South Africa.

~~of Pakistan~~ Thus, a mature and foresighted

Leadership to sustain democracy in Pakistan  
~~is the~~

Furthermore, a strengthened democracy presents an outlook of a nation with improved and sustainable social indicators. These social indicators include Human Development Index (HDI), health and educational standards that are easily accessible to every citizen in the country. As Pakistan ~~is~~ does not seem to make good progress in these indicators, a strong democracy is the need of the hour to make these indicators favourable for the nation. The UNDP's Human Development Report of 2023-24 places Pakistan in the "low" human development index value of 0.540, and global ranking of 184 out of 194 countries. This indicates a troublesome situation which can be improved through a government chosen by people, for the people.

Additionally, a democratic set-up in the country would ~~is~~ pave way for

well-informed citizens in that country. Democracy raises awareness among the public by promoting public friendly projects; keeping in consideration the demands and needs of a country required for its success. In the same way, it promotes transparency and accountability along with services that benefit people in the long run. The citizens, thus, can keep an eye on the daily course of action of the rulers and can hold them accountable according to their acts and sayings.

Under the same arguments, democracy is essential not only for the awareness of people, but also serves major function in maintaining the law and order situation of the country. As strict law and order situation is equally important for the progress of the people, like all other elements of it democracy; it needs to be formalised by state and its institutions. The

disrupted law and order situation in the country accounts for multiple issues such as increase in crime rates, cybercrimes, gender-based issues and problems concerning national security. These crises can be dealt when public representatives holding mandates come to power and consider the adversity of these problems. As Pakistan is ranked 129<sup>th</sup> across 142 countries in the World Justice Project Rule of Law, a strong democracy would ultimately heal all the issues concerning law and order in the country.

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However, there are various hurdles in the way of democracy in Pakistan. Polarized politics is <sup>one</sup> among those impediments. The different political parties and the people affiliated to those do not adhere to accept the other group as their leaders. This creates a situation of rivalries and strong opposition, leading to massive conflicts if their party is not supported.

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This polarization brings conflicts and chaos, that is a great hurdle for implementing a democratic system with majority all people agreeing to support a mature and foresighted leadership for the future well-being of nation.

Correspondingly, feudal system supporting federalism is also a barrier. The tribal and feudal lords do not support the collective policies and projects that are necessary for the welfare of Pakistan. Their demands, leadership criteria and supremacist tendencies worsen the state of democracy in Pakistan.

Raza Ahmed discusses in his article "The Endemic Crisis of Federalism in Pakistan" be more creative like this problems in federalism may have led to what may be called a "failing society." Thus, such issues are a real barrier in the way of stable and successful democracy in Pakistan.

Not only feudalism, but corruption among the political leaders is also a challenge in the implementation

of strong democracy in the country. Throughout the history of Pakistan, corruption on the part of leadership was evident, which made the leaders think and work only for their benefits and vested interests. This aspect proved to be fatal for the nation, as <sup>political</sup> corruption polluted every sector — may it be economic, social or any other sector.

The country got indebted due to this corruption, social indicators degraded and it is now among the most crucial problem in the way of democracy.

The Economist article titled 'Damaging ties' argued that in several Asian countries, leaders impeded economic growth because of their interest collided with the need of reform. Thus, a major hurdle ~~is~~ regarding democracy is corruption of political leaders.

§ In addition to this, imbalanced civil-military relations seem to be a resister in democracy in Pakistan. The intervention of military in civilian govern-

ment and bureaucracy tends to disturb the balance of power structure. In the similar manner, judicial and executive relations and any strife in them also disrupts the balance of power structures. This hinders effective functioning of a democratic system. The imbalanced ties also affect the foreign relations along with changing dynamics of internal situation in the country.

Low rate of Literacy in Pakistan<sup>is</sup> also a challenge for democracy. As this situation prevails, most of the youth - who are the voters <sup>or</sup> of the real force of change, are not educated enough to know about their rights and responsibilities. Thus, when they are in the position to choose their leader, they are unaware ~~at~~ about their qualities that a democratically-chosen representative ruler should possess to make a country ~~state~~ a developed and successful one. The illiterate population, merely becomes

a youth bulge, which are <sup>like</sup> more a burden on the economy, <sup>rather</sup> than ~~the~~ a force for change. Pakistan has world's second highest out-of-school children, Over 26 million are ~~#~~ out of school. (ASER Education Report, 2024). This extremely low literacy rate is not favourable for democracy in Pakistan.

In order to implement strong democracy in Pakistan, the country needs to ~~im~~ make reforms, with citizens at the forefront of it to implement those reforms. With the concerted efforts of governments and the public, the balance of power structures need to be stabilized. In coordination to it, strengthening the mechanism of transparency and accountability is crucial in this regard. Moreover, the e-governance models of Sweden and <sup>some</sup> the Western democracies need to be imitated. Consequently, the country would

make progress and strengthen itself against the ills of poverty, unemployment and economic death, once the people in power come with the mandate of public.

In conclusion to all that stated above, <sup>strong</sup> Democracy in Pakistan is the need of present time. There are many hopes pertaining to a democratic system, with several hurdles impeding the process. Pakistan struggles with the crisis of democracy since its independence due to various ills present in the system. Democracy is essential for turning the fate of the country towards progress by institutional build up, economic growth, educating the masses, and bringing a mature leadership on the front. Nevertheless, multiple barriers impede the democratic process in the country ranging from political polarization to feudalism and imbalanced civil-military

relations. Strong reforms through public association and governmental maturity can strengthen democracy in Pakistan and pave way for the success of country in the ongoing ~~century~~ century.

