

Democracy in Pakistan:

Hopes and Hurdles

Thesis Statement

Democracy in Pakistan carries strong hopes for Public Participation, Political stability and rule of law, yet it faces serious hurdles including weak Political institutions, Corruption and repeated military interferences.

Outline

I. Introduction

II. Hopes for democracy in Pakistan

- a) Constitutional framework is strengthening democracy
- b) Regular general election since 2008
- c) Active role of media
- d) Rising Political awareness in the country
- e) Youth Participation in Politics
- f) Growing Women Participation in Political rallies and seminars
- g) Strong desire for civilian rule

III. Hurdles for democracy in Pakistan

- a) Repeated military interventions
- b) Low literacy rate in the country
- c) outdated electoral system
- d) Corruption and economic crisis

e) Feudal based Politics in Pakistan

f) ~~Weak~~ Political Instability in the Country

IV - Some Suggestive measures to strengthen democracy in Pakistan -:

a) Promoting education in the country

b) Digitalization of electoral system in Pakistan

V - Conclusion

Essay

Democracy is not perfect, but it's best system we have - Winston Churchill. This statement of ex

British Prime Minister captures Pakistan's democratic

experience, which is full of both hopes and hurdles.

Since independence, Pakistan has struggled to establish

a stable democratic structure, due to weak political

institutions, corruption and repeated military interventions.

Despite the challenges, democracy remains the most

desired system in the country, as it ensures accountability,

rule of law, equality and Public Participation - People

of Pakistan actively demand transparency and

Judicial supremacy, which demonstrates that future

of democracy is bright in the country - However,

feudal based politics, low literacy rate and Political

instability remain the hurdle in achieving the

robust democratic system. Therefore, democracy

in Pakistan is filled with both, hope for better future through democracy and continuous struggle to overcome struggles in the pathway.

In order to shed light on hopes for democracy in Pakistan, following arguments merit attention-

To begin with, Constitutional framework of Pakistan is the greatest hope for establishing a stable democracy in the country. Constitution of Pakistan 1973 promotes the civilian rule over the country. Moreover, it also protects the democracy in the country. Recent amendments in the constitution were meant to strengthen democracy. For example 18th Amendment in the constitution ended the power of president to dissolve assembly, directed judiciary not to legalize the military rule and declared abrogation of constitutions as high treason. Hence, this aforementioned framework has remained successful in the last fifteen years to keep democracy alive in the country.

Furthermore, repeated general elections since 2008 is another prospect for stability of democracy in Pakistan. Since independence of the country, there has never been a time period, wherein the civilian rule remained for more than ten years

Forexample, previous governments never completed their five years tenure, as they were either dissolved by the then presidents or were overthrown by military dictators. However, after the election in 2008, there's continuity of civilian rule over country. Hence, the regular general election keep a hope for robust democracy to be achieved in the country.

Similarly, active role of media in the country allows the democracy to resist in the country. In every democratic country, media plays an important role to ensure answerability, accountability and rule of law, ultimately strengthening the democracy. Likewise, rise of private media channels in the country and their active role has promoted democracy in Pakistan too. Before 2005, the only media that existed in country was state controlled, due to which there was no transparency in the country and it was easier for dictators to rule over country, as evident in four military coups. However, the current outflow of private media in the country has ensured accountability and equality in the country, at some level. Thus, active media's role provides hope for democracy in Pakistan.

Subsequently, rising political awareness in the Pakistan has strengthened democracy in the country. Political awareness is the most important factor that plays vital role in promoting democracy in the country. If the people of any country are unaware about their rights, equality and importance of civilian rule in bringing prosperity, they are not likely to quest for maintaining democracy in the country, as it highly demands awareness among the masses. However, Pakistan has witnessed increase in political awareness as demonstrated by large participation in political rallies, protest and debates on politics over social media. In this backdrop, this growing political awareness in Pakistan keeps hope for stable democracy in the country.

Likewise, growing youth participation in politics of Pakistan also manifests the stable future of democracy in Pakistan. Majority of the population of Pakistan comprises of younger generation. Participation of youth in politics is an obligatory phase for robust democracy, otherwise it not possible to proceed in the matter. Case in point in previous three general elections in the country, wherein the majority of voters were young aging less than thirty

five years old. This increased participation of youth in political process of Pakistan fosters the bright future of democracy in the country.

Moreover, rising women participation in political rallies and seminars also manifest the increasing chances of strong democracy in the country. Women mainly comprise of half of the population of the country. Without ~~half~~ population women participation in politics, it seems impossible to achieve stability in democracy. However, recent surge in women involvement in politics have raised the hopes for democracy in Pakistan. For example, it was observed mainly in urban areas of Pakistan that women actively participated in political seminars and also in protests ~~for~~ - demanding basic rights. In this aspect, women participation in ~~political~~ politics demonstrate another hope for robust democracy in Pakistan.

Finally, the strong desire for civilian rule among the people of Pakistan also gives hope to democratic stability in the country. In the late 90s, it was observed that people manifested less interest in the maintenance of civilian rule over country, likely due to the poor service delivery and weak governance. This lack of interest allowed the military leadership

to take over the government without any resistance. However, rise in private media, education and social media gave political awareness to the masses and made them understand that democracy is its weakest form is still better than dictatorship. Due to which, people of Pakistan have established strong desire for civilian rule. Gallup Survey of 2021 highlighted that over seventy percent of people declared democracy the only acceptable system in the country. This desire for civilian rule also fosters hope for democracy in Pakistan.

Having understood the hopes for democracy in Pakistan, it is necessary to highlight the hurdles in the pathway of democracy of country in the country.

Firstly, repeated military interventions in the democratic process, remain the hurdle for stability of democracy in the country. Any state stands on three pillars including executive, legislative and judicial branch. It is imperative for each of said pillars to remain independent and keep check on the other two, as evident in the developed world. However, Pakistan's executive branch especially military has influenced the judicial and legislative branch. Four military coups in the past history also demonstrate

Same. This process of military interventions in the legislative branch or judicial branch, weakens the democracy and paves way for dictatorship. In this regard, continuous military intervention remain hurdle for stable democracy in Pakistan.

Secondly, low literacy rate in the country also suppress the democracy, to become a robust system in Pakistan. In any democratic country, it is prudent that its people are educated and have awareness about the rights and wrong. This process of literacy ^{allows} ~~makes~~ them ^{to} question their leaders regarding their performance and resist against any non democratic takeover. However, majority of people in Pakistan are either illiterate or attained education upto primary. For example, Human Development Index ranks Pakistan lowest in the list of countries providing education to their citizen. Moreover, it was reported that over twenty million children were out of school in ^{the} year 2025. ~~Hence,~~ Due to which, people are easily fooled by the political leaders and are unaware about their basic rights. Hence, low literacy rate in the country is another hurdle for democracy in Pakistan.

Thirdly, outdated electoral system in Pakistan also weakens the democracy in the country. Electoral process is the most significant elements that ensures free and fair elections and ensures that only those can rule over country, who have been elected by the people of the country. Many developed and even developing countries have shifted their electoral process from old ballot system to digital electorate process. This digitalization lowers the margin of any unlawful activities including the rigging of elections. However, Pakistan stills keeps the old and antiquated electoral system, which raises questions over election fairness. For example, previous four general elections were accused for being rigged by the losing parties. Hence, weak electoral system also contributes in weakening the democracy in Pakistan.

Consequently, rising deepening corruption and chronic economic crisis of Pakistan don't allow the democracy to become stable in the country. The main purpose of the democracy in any state is to ensure public participation, good service delivery, equality and economic prosperity. These aforementioned aspects strengthen the need of democracy in the country, wherein people quest to maintain the same, while also resist against military coup.

However, huge Corruption and persistent economic crisis in Pakistan further damage the ~~demo~~ already fragile democracy in the country. International Monetary funds reported that there were miscalculation of over thirty billion dollars in the budget. Whereas, trillions of dollars of Corruption was also noted by the report published by IMF. Similarly, the rising inflation, poverty and unemployment are also the crisis that persist in Pakistan for decades. In this context, Corruption and economic problem also suppress the stability of democracy in Pakistan.

Also, feudal based politics in Pakistan is also responsible for weakening democracy in the country. Democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people, wherein every citizen gets equal opportunity to participate in the elections. Furthermore, strong democracies are liable to ensure that every participant gets level playing field to compete in the elections. However, Pakistan's politics is based on principles of feudalism, having a hierarchical structure, in which only those get the chance who are either rich to spend on campaigns or have some relations with current politicians. Election report of 2024 and 2018 highlighted that only two percent elected candidates belonged to common class. Whereby, the rest 98 percent candidates were either belonging

elite class or were related to Politicians - Thus, feudal based politics in Pakistan damages the democracy in the nation.

Last but not least, Political instability in the country also holds the responsibility for weak democracy in Pakistan - Political stability means that every elected Prime Minister in the country is allowed to complete his constitutional term of five years - This political stability allows the policy consistency and better service delivery, ultimately building the trust of people on democracy - However, Political Stability in Pakistan still remains a dream to be fulfilled even after 77 years of independence - For example not even a single Prime Minister completed his five year legal tenure as he was either ~~declared~~ replaced by another PM or was overthrown by a dictator - Therefore, Political instability also is also a hurdle for consistency of democracy in Pakistan -

Having established that democracy in Pakistan is an experience, filled with hopes and hurdles - Undermentioned ~~are~~ suggestions and measures are suggested to strengthen the democracy in Pakistan

To start with, providing quality education to the citizens can help in strengthening the democracy in the country - Democracy demands awareness among the people for its stability - If the people of any country are literate and have awareness regarding their basic rights including participation, transparency, equality and rule of law, they will definitely resist against non democratic takeovers and will promote political stability - Case in point are the European countries including Germany and France, which have robust democracies due to high literacy rate - Hence, promoting education can help in stabilizing the democracy in Pakistan -

Likewise, digitalization of electoral system can also help in strengthening the democracy in Pakistan - Electoral process is the most important component of democracy, which ^{not only} ensures free & fair elections but also forces the political leadership to lay their focus on performance in order to get reelected - Case in point is the electoral system of India, where there are no allegations of rigged elections, regardless of the fact that it is world's largest country in terms of population - Moreover, India is known as the mother of democracy due to its capability of ensuring the fair ~~to~~ conduct of elections - In this backdrop, digitalization of electoral system in Pakistan can

help in strengthening the democracy in the Country -

Thus, it is evident that Pakistan's democratic experience is filled with both, hopes and hurdles. One on side, the regular general election since 2008, constitutional framework, rising public participation and active media role, provide strong hopes for stability of democracy in the Country. However, on the other side, repeated military interventions in the past, weak electoral system and low literacy rate of masses become the hurdle in the pathway. Nevertheless, some suggestive measures including provision of education and digitalization of electoral system can help the democracy to persist in Pakistan.

