

# Essay

## Role of Political leadership in undermining democracy in third world countries

### Outline

#### 1. Introduction

Thesis statement: In third world countries, the fate of democracy hinges on the leadership commitment to either strengthening democratic institutions or undermining them.

#### 2. Understanding Democracy and its Prerequisites?

#### 3. State of Democracy in third world countries but especially in Pakistan

## 4. Challenges to <sup>political</sup> Democracy in Pakistan.

a) Distorted <sup>political culture.</sup>  
Role of baradari system

b) The widening gap between the existing political parties and electoral system  
Voter turnout in elections is just 45 Percent.

c) Weak Political Parties  
PPP and PML(N) hold no internal elections for Party offices.

d) Bad governance  
Pakistan is ranked at 140<sup>th</sup> position among 180 countries in corruption.

e) Political instability

Inability of civilian governments  
to complete their tenure.

## 5. Prospects of <sup>political</sup> Democracy in Pakistan.

a) Wide acceptability of democracy  
as a form of government  
63% of Pakistanis believe  
that civilian govt can govern  
the country.

b) The growth and expansion  
of media.  
Political awareness among  
the youth is due to media

c) The emergence of an  
assertive Judiciary  
Many Chief Justices have  
considered missing Persons.

d) Appearance of an informed  
civil society

6. How to counter the  
Challenges to Democracy  
in third world countries.

7- Conclusion.

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# Essay

"Woodrow Wilson" stated that, the world must be made safe for democracy. It emphasizes the need for to protect democratic values globally. Democracy is a system of government that has the potential to steer equitable political, social, cultural and economic development through inclusiveness. It is a political system that could expand its influence even to the most marginalized section of the world - the third world countries. Miserably, the developing and under-developed countries never showed the readiness to accept true democracy, and even when it did, it was enormously fragile. It is a grim reality that democracy

failed to play a significant role in strengthening its roots in the third world countries.

Nevertheless, the powerful characteristics which democracy, as a system of government possesses, it could strengthen the authority of state. And also its writ by electing true representative of people who could capitalise the resources in an effective way for the betterment of people. It is therefore, safe to point out that democracy in the developing world has the propensity to pull third world countries out of its present-day crisis - internal as well as external.

Democracy, in its present form, has taken a long time to emerge, bolstered by many developments - from 1215, the English Magna

Carta, to the French and the American Revolutions in the eighteenth century, to the adult franchise spread in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Democracy has been established as a form of government to which every nation is entitled - whether in Europe, America, Asia or Africa. Like wise, democracy in Pakistan, still in its juvenile stage. For instance, unawareness among the masses about the nature of democracy, distorted political culture, the widening political gap between political parties and electorate are significant hurdles in democracy. Despite these challenges, it is refutable that democracy has attained a special place in Pakistan. Thus, good

governance can fill the void between the government and the masses.

Democracy is a system of government in which laws, policies, leadership and significant initiatives of a state are determined directly or indirectly by the people. Historically, this group was often a minority. Like any other form of government, democracy has its fundamentals, without which it cannot flourish in any state. For instance, free and fair elections are the pre-requisites of democracy. Moreover, free media, newspapers, and TV cannot be ignored in the contemporary era because they are essential to creating political awareness among the general public. In addition, freedom of speech and expression, is the



crucial essence of democracy.

Currently, Pakistan is experiencing a complete breakdown of democracy with a powerless interim setup at the centre provinces serving beyond their constitutional mandate. A divided judiciary that is being openly defied, and an increasingly censored media. Moreover, the post-2018 period has seen democratic reversals and regression as the hybrid arrangement entitled the military establishment.

According to the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, the phase that ended with the Parliament's dissolution in August this year is the period of democratic decline rather than democratic consolidation.

There are many culprits behind the state of democracy in the country. First, one of the significant challenges to informed choices in third world countries and especially in Pakistan is flawed Political culture.

Political culture refers to People's attributes/attitude towards the Political system. In the case of Pakistan, the Political structure is greatly influenced by caste and the radar system. Moreover, individual opinions have no value;

these are bound by the decisions of the biradari, who make decision on every Political and social aspect. According to Barbara Crossette, a New York Times reporter, the biradari system in Pakistan plays a vital role in the Party's choice

of candidates. Further, the backward rural areas of the country have feudalism. As a result, the leading Political Parties maximize their vote by harnessing landlords. Thus, in such a Political culture, informed choices do not stand a chance before the biradari or landlord.

Another factor that poses a challenge to democratic stability is what might be called the Political gap between the existing Political Parties and the electoral system. However, representative or electoral Politics have lagged and failed to reflect these changes. This has created a growing disconnect between traditional Politics and new social dynamics. A gap between electoral

Politics and changing public aspirations is the falling voter turnout.

The average voter turnout for the past nine general elections is just a little over 45%, which means that more than half of the voters do not participate in electing their new governments at the federal and provincial levels. Thus, the archaic nature of Pakistani politics puts it at odds with the changing society and its needs, making it difficult for democracy to evolve.

Moreover, the weak institution of political parties also hampers the development of democracy.

Major political parties like PPP and PML(N) hold no internal elections for party offices, which are filled through

domination and appointments. As a result, Party officials are not representatives of the workers who feel frustrated about this imposition from the top. These Party officials tend to come from the ruling classes and care little about the workers and the need to remain in touch with the problems of ordinary citizens. Thus turn into sycophant for the leaders at the top and end up insulating and isolating him from political realities, thus creating a void between the Party and its voters and allowing non-political actors to come into play.

Further, bad governance is another major hurdle in democracy, as the country

is performing poorly at all governance indicators: transparency, accountability, service delivery, and the rule of law. It is manifested in governance based on clientelist politics geared to rewarding networks of supporters rather than the needs of citizens. This encourages rent-seeking behaviour and corruption. According to the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, Pakistan is ranked at 140<sup>th</sup> position among 180 countries. Regarding other governance indicators, the government cannot provide public goods to its citizens and uphold the rule of law. Thus, the inability of the govt to govern and cater to the needs of the masses does not allow

allow democracy to flourish in the country.

Further, political instability is one of the significant challenges to democracy. This is manifested in the inability of civilian government to complete their tenure. It happens due to lack of cooperation and tolerance between the ruling party and the opposition. Thus, the clashes and conflicts between the political parties are the major impediments to the development of actual democratic norms.

Nevertheless, no matter how significant these challenges are, they cannot obstruct the dawn of democracy in the third world countries especially in Pakistan. As is evident from the changing socio-political dynamics,

only the future of democracy in Pakistan is feasible. In this regard, significant trends favouring the consolidation of democracy are discussed below.

First, Political actors - Political parties and other stakeholders and participants in the democratic process - now have a shared stake in the continuance of democracy. However, this was not always so in the past when one or another political party looked to the army to resolve their political disputes. But now, there is wide acceptance and public consensus that military intervention is not the answer or the option. In this consideration, it was stated that Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development



and Transparency's roundtable discussion on the International Day of Democracy that 63% of Pakistanis believe that a civilian government can govern the country. The military even supports this consensus, which is moving toward accepting the principle of civilian democracy.

Moreover, the growth and expansion of media-broadcast and social, has made it a powerful political force, paving the way for democracy. It is exercising this power to hold rulers to account, expose corruption and injustice, and become a platform for sustained demands for accountable governance. Undoubtedly, the media in Pakistan has become more open, direct

and Proactive. As a result, it has become an effective tool that creates Political awareness among the masses, enabling them to Participate in the political Process effectively. Consequently, Political awareness has led the youth to have Political discussions and Political Participation in different forums. This indicates the bright future of democracy in the country.

Like the media, another emerging force is the assertive judiciary that is contributing to the consolidation of democracy. To illustrate, it is seeking to operationalise democratic checks and balances, limit the excess of executive Power and focus government attention on pressing issues. Among

many cases going on at present in the Supreme Court is an investigation of missing persons allegedly picked by the country's security forces. In this regard, many chief justices have considered missing persons, and a particular cell has been made to deal with the cases. In this way, the judiciary tries to ensure that all practices are subject to the law and that Pakistan's democracy is anchored in the rule of law and does not degenerate into elected autocracy.

Similarly, the well informed civil society is another countervailing force, increasing the odds of democracy in the country. In this regard, unjust practices at national and international levels are now challenged.

more frequently and confidently citizens taking their cases to the media, the media mounting pressure, and the judiciary taking action in a mutually reinforcing manner. This illustrates a new form of citizen-driven accountability.

So, to ensure the country's democratic evolution, specific measures are suggested to avert the challenges to democracy. For example, the restructuring of political parties is of utmost significance. This institution needs to be strong strong by involving all members in decision making. Local governments are the ideal nurturing grounds for political leadership as the people serving in the union councils are

aware of the ground realities. Thus, they are more deserving of coming up in the political hierarchy of their concerned political parties. This would ultimately lead to a strong leadership, leading the country on a democratic path.

Furthermore, there is a dire need for a cooperation based system where all political state holders collaborate for the greater national good regardless of their diverse ideologies. This is necessary for the smooth functioning of the government as it would prevent the exploitive elements from taking advantage of the difference between the ruling elite and the opposition.

No less importantly, in the contemporary scenario, the most widely advocated solution to the challenges to democracy is the prompt conduct of free-fair elections. As a result, the ousting the previous government, most citizens feel betrayed as they do not believe in the legitimacy of the current interim setup. Thus, fair general election would lead to political stability.

In summary, democracy in third world countries has specific challenges like weak political parties, bad governance, the gap between the masses and the government and political instability. In third world country like Pakistan there is still the future of democracy is feasible due

to the emergence of new  
acts changing the country's  
political dynamics. For instance,  
the government is witnessing  
an interplay between a recently  
empowered judiciary, vigorous  
media, and citizen activism.  
These are excellent signs  
to argue that democracy has  
a future in Pakistan. Thus,  
to overcome the impediments  
of democracy in third world  
countries, there is a need  
to restructure the political  
parties, hold free and fair  
elections, and improving governance