

LMSID: 38986-Syeda Faiza kazmi- 077

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Democratic Unrest in Pakistan:

Causes and Consequences

Outline:

1) Introduction:

Thesis statement: Democratic unrest in Pakistan is not something new but has deep rooted history. Current democratic unrest is due to numerous factors like declining economic spectra, weakening social fabric and lagging in technological advancements. In order to come out of such unrest, pragmatic measures have to be taken.

2) Sole reasons and effects of democratic unrest in Pakistan

3) Universality of democratic unrest

a) Democratic unrest in Pakistan

b) Democratic unrest in world

13) What are the proximate causes of democratic unrest in Pakistan?

a) Lack of inter and intra-coordination in policy making institutions

b) Increasing gap between political authorities and public

c) Mismanagement in the utilization of public finance by center and province

d) Provision of poor health facilities leading to greater casualties and chaos

e) Misuse of social media for propagation and building of fake narratives

5) What are the consequences of political unrest in Pakistan?

a) Creation of deep fissure in policy (law) making institutions due to lack of democratic spirit.

b) Enhancement of political polarization and political unrest

c) Weakening of economic institutions due to lack of public cooperation for tax collection

d) Declining of social indicators like health leads to more violent protests by public

e) Fake narrative building weakens the state and provides room to proxies

6) How democratic unrest can be changed into democratic peace and stability in Pakistan?

a) Judicious way of accountability for all in front of public as in the reign of second Caliph Hazrat Umar (RA)

b) Lowering of Bureaucratic red tap so that foreign companies easily do business thus enhancing economic output

- c) Strengthening governance institutions by enhancing inter and intra-cooperation.
- d) Building up of local govt in order to solve grass root level problems.

7) Conclusion

The proverbial dog barking on his own reflection in clear water unable to realize that it is he not other. Ultimately drowned and learned nothing, the same is the current scenario of Pakistan. No institution, department or organization is incorred, but actually we are. The system is run by those common persons taken from society and not the aliens. Without correcting the public masses how the ruling class can be taught. The democratic unrest is not the problem of Pakistan, but many other countries are suffering from it. In Pakistan the proximate causes of democratic unrest are numerous like lack of coordination in policy making institutions. Also, gap between public and political authorities, mismanagement in the utilization of public finance and poor health facilities provisions. Another prominent cause of democratic unrest is misuse of social media for building fake narratives. All of

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them have serious consequences like weakening of policy making institutions, political polarizations, problems in tax collections leading to poor health infrastructures. It also promotes false narrative building and provides room to external threats a sort of cyber attacks. The democratic unrest can be changed into democratic peace through strengthening governance institutions, fair process of accountability, reducing bureaucratic red tape and through build up of local govt system to serve at grass root level. Democratic unrest in Pakistan is not something new but has deep rooted history. Current democratic unrest is due to numerous factors like declining economic spectra, weakening social fabric and lagging in technological advancement. In order to come out of such unrest pragmatic measures have to be taken.

Democratic unrest is primarily due to loss of public trust on political authorities. This unrest is not limited to one department, but has integrated effect on all departments. This has severe consequence for the survival of democratic spirit in the country.

Beyond that international image got tarnished and resulting diplomatic setbacks weaken the country. Usually the unrest get sky-rocketing effect due to social media. Social media a useful tool becomes dangerously controlled. As through it false narratives related to personalities, incidents and sometimes religion are propagated. Democratic unrest weakens the institutions by creating political unrest. But the countries like Italy, The Netherlands etc although have many national issues, but they have strong democracy and robust institutions. So, a country with sound democratic set up despite being other challenges will cope up them easily as in the case of Italy and The Netherlands.

Democratic unrest is not the issue of countries like Pakistan but many other countries. It is not only the problem of developing countries but also developed countries. Democracy is a complex subject in any country. There are no specific set of indicators that changed into democratic unrest. Sometimes, democratic unrest is due to governance issues, sometimes

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reason is economic or social or public But, Surely countries wanting to change the current political dynamic of their country may face it in a number of forms like Pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019-2020 or the military coup in Myanmar in 2021 leading to significant democratic crisis. So, it is not only Pakistan, the victim of democratic unrest.

One of the reasons Pakistan has suffered from democratic unrest is the lack of inter and intra-coordination in policy making institutions. This is clear from the current performance of institutions. Inter and intra-departmental coordination is very essential for robust policy making. Lack of this aspect in institutions of policy making leads to gaps that ultimately translated into poor and outdated performance of our institutions. For example departments like Federal Investigating Agency and Police department should work together. They are then able to formulate more effective policies. The nature of crime is changing ever since. So, the modes of

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investigations and policy making should be changed. Also among police departments there is need of intra-departmental coordination that is helpful for knowing nature of various crimes. So, the democratic unrest due to lack of departmental coordination can be controlled in this way.

The lack of institutional coordination, also increases gap between political authorities and public. Mostly the political authorities not engage public in public matters to gain their confidence. As a result sentiments of resentment are generated in masses. In many national matters, there is no desirable communication between political authorities and public. For example despite having immense hydrological potential, Kalabagh Dam construction is controversial. According to Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), Kalabagh Dam has generating capacity of 3,600 MW, which will save \$4 billion dollars annually for country. If people are persuaded by political authorities such projects construction will surely add to the economic value of the country and bring

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prosperity. This shows that how lack of consensus gap between political authorities and public leads to political unrest.

The increasing gap between political authorities and public, leads to mismanagement of public finance by center and provinces. Public finance is not spent in the areas where its need is more. The center and provinces are not actually spending the public finance in public infrastructures to its need. To add an insult to injury, the current debate and of changing / altering the vertical distribution of National Finance Commission award caused chaos. Authorities held only NFC award for all the fiscal mismanagement for this they want to alter the distribution mechanism. Lack of tax collection and revenue generation are primarily responsible for fiscal mismanagement. This creates unrest in people and they want more for development sector.

The mismanagement of public finance by center and provinces, results that there is lack of proper health facilities, and increased deaths. Lack of hospitals, doctors, paramedical staff and

free medicines is not ensured. Each province not get adequate health facilities primarily in remote areas. Lack of doctors or even in some cases their unavailability leads to death of many people. For example according to World Health Organization the health expenditure (% of GDP) is 2.91 in 2021.

This shows that meager share for 250 million peoples in Pakistan. Another reason for provision of poor health facilities is the due to the unaffordability of medical treatment particularly in Baluchistan. For example 88% people in Quetta cannot afford the cost of medicines and are unable to get treated properly. This creates resentment in people against government that leads to political chaos.

Besides provision of inadequate health facilities, misuse of social media for building fake narratives is adding to democratic unrest. Social media is a very powerful tool, that when negatively used leads to unrest in a country. Social media apps like Face-book, You-tube, What'sapps are excessively used for building and

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promoting false narratives. These narrative spread like fire which in some cases become threat to national sovereignty and security. It is one of the main contributor of political unrest and turmoil. Even its effects are beyond borders if not controlled. Like the recent rumour about the death of X-Prime Minister that spread like fire across social media. It leads to unrest and protests in country. Not only this but Indian media immediately falsely highlighted issue and tries to tarnish image of Pakistan. This shows that how social media misuse is a potent source of political unrest in the country.

As the result of above mentioned causes of political unrest in Pakistan, the country is facing various consequences like creation of deep fissure in institution. As the governing institutions like law making institutions are weaken than law and order situation become out of control. When law and order maintaining institutions weaken then numerous protests, rallies

and riots began uncontrolled by such institutions. This situation creates unrest in countries mainly affected are the common people who have no role in such incidences. And those who take part in such protests or religious riots may suffer from damages that sometimes engulf their lives & leaving their families deprived. For example numerous killings in October 2025 in Lahore due to Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), in reaction to "Al-Aqsa Gaza March", is evident example of miscalculated law and order situation. (What's behind Pakistan... .., Abid Hussain, October 2025). This shows that how democratic unrest is weakening law and order institutions. As they are being unable to control such violent protests.

Besides weakened law and order situations, democratic unrest is responsible for political polarisation and political unrest. Political polarization is the process in which countries political fabric is divided into numerous hardliner parties, that stick to one particular narrative. The country's social fabric also got divided. War of narrative began and mutual consensus vanished.

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The result of all this is in the form of lack of development. The minds which have huge potential of creativity and innovation, now become the clones of particular narratives.

According to ministry of planning and development, Pakistan is one of South Asian Countries having largest %age of youth more than 65%. This youth bulge has huge potential if utilized properly. And this is possible only when political unrest is alleviated in country. This is how democratic unrest is happening due to political polarization in Pakistan.

Due to enhanced political polarization performance of economic institutions also weaken as people are reluctant for tax submission. Tax collection is a very critical process for country's economic progress. The lack of trust of people on governmental institutions due to democratic unrest, results that people are reluctant to tax submission. It is difficult to collect taxes from people who have lost their trust on the credibility of institutions. The current Prime Minister said that Pakistan should move away from International Monetary Fund (IMF),

by working hard to increase the revenues. Furthermore, he said, FBR have to increase tax revenues by 27%. Another cause of low economic output is unending rise in corruption. According to IMF Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Report (released in November 2025) put emphasis that for combating corruption transparency should be strengthened. This show how democratic unrest is adversely affecting the sources of income for state thus economic institutions.

Not only the fragile economic system, but also the declining social indicators like health leads to more violent ^{Public} protests. Strong social indicators strengthen the societies, while poor indicators ultimately weaken it. Health is most important social indicator that not got due attention by subsequent governments. Due to improper tax collection, adequate funds are lacking to properly invest in health sector. Advanced machineries are lacking, smart way of treatments are lacking. People are dying every day because they are unable to get proper medical access. Government put more emphasis on

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building new hospital rather than providing old ones with advance medical equipments that will latter on function properly. According to the Journal of Pakistan Medical Association 83% of patients who died within 6 days of surgery for various reasons were denied proper recovery facilities. In this way poor health facilities add fuel to fire to democratic unrest.

Not only poor health services delivery but also fake narrative building weaken state by providing room to external threats and propaganda. Most of the time social media is only used to create unrest in public. The fake narrative building propagation is just like snow ball effect, that spread limitless. The entire situation is quite different from reality. The whole effect not stop, but it will make the country vulnerable to external social attacks, that tarnish country's reputation. It creates more frustration and chaos in public. People mistrust each other and particularly institutions leading to internal weakening of the country. Fake news propagation is a new type of cyberwarfare, that

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creates unrest in public like false reports about arrest and fatalities and fabricated statements rapidly circulated that undermine trust of national defence structure. Due to fake reports claiming resignation of 600 military academy cadets. (Fake news undermining governance....., Durdana Najam, Dec 2024). Hence, fake narrative weakens the state through democratic unrest.

The above mentioned consequences of democratic unrest can be changed into democratic peace and stability in following ways

To regain public interest, political authorities should hold officers accountable in front of people just as in the period of Khilafat-e-Rashida. There should be proper financial check and balance of officers and their accounts. This step will create rehabilitation of public interest on governmental officials. Particularly, during the reign of Hazrat Umar (RA) every official is held accountable in front of public and are strictly restricted from exercising protocol system. Everyone has access to officers without any barrier of protocol system. For example the incident of accountability of Khalid Bin Waleed (RA)

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by Hazrat Umar (RA) Present role model for currently serving leaders. In which when Hazrat Khalid Bin Waleed gifted 10000 dirhams to a poet, then Hazrat Umar (RA) immediately summoned him and said the wealth belong to muslims and you cannot give it away as personal generosity. In this way open accountability ensures peace and stability in the state.

Besides ensuring transparency and accountability there is dire need of eliminating bureaucratic red tap that will enhance foreign direct investment. There is need to eliminate complex processes of approval for a business start up. By doing so foreign investors attract toward Pakistan. Their startup business will create job opportunities and will contribute to the betterment of country. This step will lower political unrest and other crimes resulted due to poverty. We should smooth the process for foreign companies to invest in Pakistan through business promotion. Countries like UEA are among the top 20 countries that are attractive for foreign investments, business registration and international trade. So, by eliminating red tap we can bring prosperity

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in the country.

Not only by attracting foreign investments and but also by promoting inter and intra-cooperation in governance institutions, democratic peace can be achieved. Political stability is inevitable for the prosperity of the country. It can be achieved through building consensus in institutions. This can be done through ensuring true separation of power and by keeping aside of professional bureaucracy from political interference.

There should be a system that Singapore adopted which is world's strongest merit based apolitical bureaucratic systems. So, in this way cooperation in institution can be achieved.

The strengthening of institutional cooperation works well when local govt is empowered. Local govt is one of three main tiers of any state that play very important role in solving daily life matters of common man. They are among the common people so they can better understand their issues. The strength of a local govt in a country is a direct measure of the country's progress from grass

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root level. Many countries of the world like China, Denmark, Switzerland have strongest local govt system model that is reflected from countries prosperity. The direct measure to achieve/gain prosperity is to strengthen local govt system in our country and empowering it to the extent of developed nations.

Conclusively, there are various causes that leads to democratic unrest in Pakistan. Chief among them are lack of mutual consensus among institution, lack of rule of law, Political divide that promotes economic unsustainability in the country. This leads to social unrest and mass don't get access to life necessities like health the most important one. The whole scenario makes populational vulnerable to get entangled in social media misinformation (SMM). These causes have adverse consequence on the governance structure, resulting in political divide. The economic sustainability also vanishes with political / democratic unrest. Young people like doctors are unwilling to perform duties, and resultingly

numerous health crisis emerges with increased fatalities. Under such circumstance the country become vulnerable to external threat that may involve youth in illegal activities. But the whole unrest can be controlled by introducing pragmatic measures like ensuring transparency through accountability, eliminating bureaucratic red tap. Moreover increasing departmental co-ordinating and strengthening role of local govt will surely bring peace and prosperity in the country.

In the words of Amartya Sen:

"Democracy is a universal value because it enhances freedom and prevents violence"