

Democratic unrest in Pakistan: Causes and Consequences.

OUTLINE

I. Introduction.

Undoubtedly, Pakistan is going through democratic unrest. There are several causes behind it. ~~How~~ which have produced severe consequences in the country. However, by taking pragmatic measures, situation can be reversed.

II Causes of Democratic unrest in Pakistan:

- ① Frequently rigged elections.
- ② Increasing illiteracy among masses.
- ③ Lack of freedom of speech
- ④ Judicial scrutiny by political actors.

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⑤ Weak enforcement of laws

⑥ Lack of Rule of law observance.

III Consequences of Democratic unrest in Pakistan:

① Increasing mistrust of public in state institutions

② Widespread human rights violation

③ Slowed economic growth

④ Widespread corruption

⑤ Mass vulnerability to propaganda and extremism.

IV Solutions:

① To ensure free and fair elections

② To improve literacy rate

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⑦ Enhance accountability mechanisms.

⑧ To ensure speedy justice.

V. Conclusion.

Democracy is a widely adopted form of government across the globe. Countries are putting efforts to enhance productivity of their democracies to deliver more results. However, Pakistan lags behind in it. Democracy in Pakistan is in doldrums. ~~There~~ Despite almost 75 years of independence, Pakistan has not achieved mature democracy. There are ~~the~~ several causes behind democratic unrest in Pakistan. Frequently rigged elections, low literacy rate, and scrutinized judiciary are some to name.

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Owing to these factors, democracy is unable to perform well in the ~~the~~ country. As a result, Pakistan is facing severe consequences such as ~~growing~~ public mistrust, ^{increasing} human rights violations, and slowed economic growth. However, all is not lost yet. By taking some pragmatic measures, situation can be reversed. These measures include, ensuring free and fair elections, improving literacy rate, and ensuring speedy justice to all. By taking these measures it is believed that someday Pakistan's democracy will be among top performing democracies of the world.

To begin with, frequently rigged elections is a major cause behind democratic unrest in Pakistan. In the

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Country, elections are manipulated to empower desired parties to fulfill personal interests.

Thus, people's voting goes futile which erupts mass frustration. According to Reuters report (2024), "all previously held elections in Pakistan were manipulated and managed.

This shows that election rigging culture undermines progress of democracy in Pakistan. Therefore, it can be said that election rigging does not allow democracy to prosper in Pakistan.

Moreover, Low literacy rate is a stumbling block in the way of democracy in Pakistan. Pakistan's literacy rate has always hovered ~~at~~ between 55% to 65%. It means more than half of population is unable to participate in contribute to democracy.

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Maleeha Lodhi writes in her book = Pakistan search for stability that low performance of educational institutions indirectly contributes to eroding democracy in Pakistan. The author further adds that owing to unawareness people misuse their votes and fall prey to false claims of shrewd politicians. This shows that low literacy rate is a culprit behind democratic unrest in Pakistan.

Besides, lack of freedom of speech is a major cause behind democratic unrest in Pakistan. In Pakistan, people are highly dictated for their opinions and actions. All voices which hurt personal interest of any organization or party are silenced. It is pertinent to mention here that Al-Jazeera reported, "Only 1 person out of

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If people is able to speak against state injustice in Pakistan. This shows, that people are afraid of participating in public discussions. As a result, inclusivity and diversity is not achieved yet which is essence of a democracy. Thus, it can be stated that democratic unrest is caused by dictation of speech of people.

Similarly, judicial scrutiny instills democratic unrest in Pakistan. On one hand, judicial process are too lengthy and hectic which frustrate citizens. On other hand, judicial powers are manipulated by political actors to fulfill their personal interests. 20th and 27th amendments are the glaring example in this regard. Through these amendments judiciary is highly under-powered to deliver justice without any

discrimination. In this regard, Jeremy Nicole, Human rights representative, rightly argued that the constitutional amendments directed at judiciary severely undermine democratic health of Pakistan. This also indicates that democracy is unable to deliver results due to judicial scrutiny and interference.

In addition to this, weak enforcement of laws adds to democratic unrest in Pakistan.

In Pakistan, laws are made in full spirit but with time they go un-implemented. In this regard, Akbar ~~Ali~~ writes in his article "Democracy in crisis in Pakistan" that law enforcement agencies are unable to protect citizens' rights; therefore, they tend to go against state institutions and create turmoil in the society. This demonstrates

That weak enforcement of laws causes ~~upst~~ public uprisings, which lead to chaos and civil unrest in the country. Therefore, it can be argued that democratic unrest is assisted by no implementation of laws.

Last but not least, lack of rule of law derails democracy in Pakistan. It is an open ~~secret~~ secret that law is for only poor people in Pakistan. While affluent people can do whatever they want. The rich people are provided ^{with} speedy justice while the poor suffer for years. This discrimination, on the basis of wealth status causes frustration and civil unrest in the society. As a result, people's trust erodes in state institutions. Therefore, democracy fails to gain grounds in Pakistan.

The consequences of democratic unrest in Pakistan are severe. The first and foremost is the increasing public mistrust in state institutions. When people are unable to secure their fundamental rights, they tend to doubt authenticity and credibility of state institutions. According to Bloomberg report 2023, "only 2 out of 7 trust state institutions' credibility and efficiency". This reflects that people are not confident enough to handover their decisions and rights to the institutions. Thus, it can be argued that public trust erodes due to low performance of democracy in Pakistan.

Furthermore, widespread human rights violations is the result of ~~and~~ poor performance of democracy in Pakistan.

On human rights protection index, Pakistan ranks on 168th out of 193 countries. This reflects that human rights are not fully ensured in the country. Moreover, United Nations Human Rights report (2004) revealed that Pakistan has experienced 8% surge in human rights violation. Therefore, it can be safely said that weak democratic culture leads to human rights violation in Pakistan.

Similarly, slowed economic growth is a result of democratic unrest in Pakistan. On one hand, foreign investors are hesitant to invest in the country due to political and social crises. On other hand, ~~existing~~ local investors are taking off their capital from the country due to lawlessness. In this context, it is worth-

mentioning that Apple brand declined Pakistan's offer for opening an outlet in Islamabad. As a result, to such crises and civil unrest, Pakistan's economy is failing to prosper. Therefore, poor economic growth can be linked to weak democracy of Pakistan.

Moreover, Corruption is mounting in Pakistan due to poor performance of democracy. ~~not~~ Pakistan has climbed two ~~po~~ points on Corruption index from 133 to 135 out of 183. This indicates corruption is surging in the country. Lack of accountability provides opportunity to office holders to accept bribe to issue orders. It is a common phenomenon that people are forced to pay some amount for co-operation in any state affairs. Even legitimate

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tasks of citizens are halted just because they refused to pay bribes. Sadly, the accountability institutions are also involved in this nasty business. Thus, corruption increases by leaps and bounds.

Last but not least, weak democratic culture has given rise to mass vulnerability to propaganda and extremism. When citizens do not secure basic human rights, the foreign actors exploit this frustration. They manipulate victims' emotions and feelings and drive them against state and other factions. As a result, mass extremism and sectarianism strengthens. Therefore, it can be said that democratic unrest in Pakistan results into ~~the~~ extremism and mass propaganda.

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As it is said that there is always a method to madness. Similarly, there are some remedies to strengthen democracy in Pakistan. Ensuring free and fair elections is one of them. The government should digitalize the election process so that many people can participate timely. On other hand, digitalization will allow to avoid election rigging and manipulation. Denmark is a glowing example of this. In Denmark, election process is totally digitalize which maintains security and ensures maximum participation. As a result, Denmark is ranked first on democratic index in the world. Thus, Pakistan ~~can~~ should follow this pursuit to enhance pace of democratization in Pakistan.

Secondly, Pakistan's government should take steps to improve literacy rate to strengthen democracy. Educated citizens are essence of democracy. Without them, democracy cannot flourish in true. Educated citizens will make decisions wisely and elect leaders carefully. They will respect one another's opinions and show tolerance against harsh argument. As a result, the political and social landscape will achieve maturity in Pakistan. Thus, it can be said that for well performing democracy, educated citizens are essential.

Thirdly, for betterment of democracy, accountability mechanisms should be improved. The existing accountability institutions are working under shadow of politics and corruption. So, new mechanisms and policies

should be introduced which work independently. This will ensure maximum human rights and social services. As a result, the public trust in state institutions will be revived. All the well-performing democratic countries have well-established accountability systems. Hence, they lie on top of democratic index. Therefore, Pakistan should follow similar footprints to accelerate democratization in the country.

Lastly, ensuring speedy justice can improve status of democracy in Pakistan. When citizens are provided speedy and timely justice, they tend to avoid creating turmoil and maintain peace in the society. So, the government should isolate judiciary from political interference and maintain its independence.

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All countries which lie top on democratic index, also lie top on law and justice index.

This indicates that judiciary and democracy are closely related. Therefore, steps should be taken to enhance productivity of judiciary and maintain its sovereignty to boost progress of democracy in the country.

To conclude, democracy in Pakistan is in transitional phase. A wide range of factors causes democratic unrest in the country. Elections are frequently manipulated, illiteracy is burgeoning, lawlessness is increasing. These manifestations clearly depict the poor performance of democracy.

Owing to democratic unrest, Pakistan is suffering a lot. Increasing public mistrust, and human rights violations, slowed economic growth, and entrenching extremism are some reflections of it.

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However, by taking pragmatic measures such as, ensuring transparent elections, improving literacy rate, and enhancing accountability ~~can be~~ can strengthen democracy in Pakistan. It is hoped, that Pakistan will get rid of democratic unrest very soon. As William Arnold says:

"I have never seen a right and a problem that defeated surprise and hope."