

Democratic Unrest in Pakistan:

Causes and Consequences

Outline

- Introduction

1) **Thesis Statement:** Pakistan is facing democratic unrest due to a number of political, social, economic, technological and organizational factors leading to increasing protests, hatred, brain drain and to the worst terrorist activities. However, sincere govt. efforts can help to overcome it.

Causes of Democratic Unrest in Pakistan

1.1. Political Causes

- a) Selective representation opportunities
- b) Conflicts among political parties

2. Economic Factor

- a) Democracy fails when people are hungry
- b) Unequal resource distribution leads to unrest
- c)

2.3. Social Dimension

- a) Illiteracy the push factor of democratic unrest
- b) Ban on free speech leads to unrest
- c) Lack of social justice: education, health and other facilities

2.4. Technological Factor

- a) Technology in the hands of illiterate people; an ingredient to democratic unrest
- b) Age of fake news and propaganda - a tool for evil minds
- c) Cyber space - an open place to trigger unrest by enemy countries

2.5. Environmental Causes

- a) Sense of deprivation ^{grows} due to environmental vulnerabilities
- b) Insecure environment - a cause of democratic unrest

2.6. Organizational Factor

- a) Growing role of non-democratic institutions
- b) Malfunctioning of democratic institutions
- c)

3. Consequences of Democratic Unrest in Pakistan

3.1. Political Domain

- 3.1.1 a) Alienation of the masses due to selective representation.

- b) Growing unrest due to political conflicts

3.2 Economic Dimension

- a) No stable democratic process can prevail in poverty
- b) Democratic unrest due to unequal resource distribution leads to separatist movements

3.3 Social Consequences

- a) Protests culture
- b) Brain drain

3.4 Other Consequences

- a) Rise of anti-state activities
- b) Increase in terrorism incidents
- c) Hatred against state institutions

4. Way Forward

- a) Inclusive and participatory government
- b) Ensuring accountability and transparency
- c) Removing economic grievances
- d) Take every step to remove illiteracy
- e) Set rules for technological use

5. Conclusion

THE ESSAY

Democracy is a form of government which is of the people, for the people and by the people. This definition of democracy by Abraham Lincoln clearly indicates the key factors of democratic government and the absence and alienation of the people leads to the democratic unrest. Democratic index of Pakistan that is 124th out of 165 with six points slash from the previous year clearly depicts the fall of democracy in Pakistan. Pakistan is one of the worst performer on democracy. There are a number of factors leading to the democratic unrest which are selective representative opportunities, impatient attitude of political parties, growing poverty and economic disparities. Illiteracy, lack of social justice and ban on free speech are adding fuel to the fire. Then, technology in the hands of illiterate people, fake news and propgands warfare are there to fuel the unrest. Climatic factors foster a

sense of deprivation among the masses. Moreover, the growing involvement of non-democratic forces gives rise to non-democratic culture. Consequently, alienation of people is growing and a culture of violent protests is on the rise. Poor people are only loyal to their feeding masters. Thus, the rise of anti-state activities including terrorism is on the top. Only some wise steps by the government like participation, accountability, transparency and equal opportunities for all can help to overcome the democratic unrest. In short, Pakistan is facing democratic unrest due to a number of political, social, economic and technological factors, which are leading to protests, hatred, brain drain and to the worst terrorist activities. However, sincere govt. efforts can help to overcome it.

To begin with the causes of democratic unrest in Pakistan, political causes can be considered at first. Among political causes the most important factor is the selective representation opportunities in politics. The whole history of Pakistan is mired with the dynastic political parties and

the feudal lords. No common man could ever reach to the highest political office. Only the people with money and strong kinship background made their way to the politics. In this way, true representation of people is not possible. With the passage of time, this deprivation leads to unrest.

Moreover, the conflicts among political parties leads to democratic unrest. In other countries, political differences is considered to be the beauty of democracy. However, in Pakistan the differences among political parties often take the form of personal revenge. The whole **Bhutto family** is the example of political victimization. The **character assassination of Fatima Jinnah** is also an example of political difference of the worst kind. All these difference among political parties have a trickle down effect on the workers below. The clashes during election campaigns often result in the permanent enmity. All this leads to the democratic unrest.

Economy is also a major factor behind the democratic unrest. When economy is

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in crisis then it is hard to rule democratically. Poverty and hunger cause unrest among masses. The only narrative that succeeds in a country like Pakistan is "**Roti, Kapra, Makaan**" and the people have nothing to do with other democratic practices. So, the economic crisis only leads to non-democratic culture and unrest.

In addition to this, there comes the unequal resource distribution. Unequal resource distribution is a killer of the democratic spirit. From people to provinces, no one can compromise on unequal resource distribution. In Pakistan, this sense of unequal distribution is already prevailing among the provinces with Punjab being the target. In such condition the events like the **killing of passengers and workers of Punjab in Balochistan** take place. So the unequal distribution of resources is at the heart of democratic unrest.

~~The~~ add more, the social cause of democratic unrest includes the illiteracy.

Democracy is often considered to be the worst form of govt. for illiterate people as it is the govt. of the majority. When most of the people will be illiterate then the govt. will also be of illiterate people and nothing good can be expected by them. Illiterate people are the biggest tool of the political parties who use them for their political gain and the narrative their leaders want to incorporate will be adopted by their illiterate followers without much research. In this way, odd demands can spread and can cause unrest. **For example,** the demand by Tehreek Labaik Pakistan to use Nuclear Weapons against India or Israel or the expulsion and burning of France embassy was pushed by public. Hence, illiteracy can cause massive unrest.

In addition to social factors, there comes the ban on free speech by the government. Free speech is an essential element and a check on govt. democratic government but in Pakistan, mostly the opponents are silenced by the incumbent govt.

PECA act cut the wings of media,

and a ban on free speech was imposed. In this way, people find alternative ways to speak and some approach the international platforms to speak out loud. This causes more harm than free speech as the state is blamed on international level. In such a way, the suppressed voice cause more unrest and becomes hard to handle.

Moreover, Lack of social justice like health, education and other facilities also cause unrest. According to recent budget report the allocation for education is 0.8% and that of health is 0.34% too less than the international standards of 4-6% of GDP. When the people don't get the basic facilities then why they would follow the democratic norms of the state. The constitution of Pakistan **Article 23(A)** guarantees the "free and compulsory education to every child from age 5 to 16 years." But ~~the~~ and the ~~ca~~ right to clean and healthy environment" through article 9(A) but the difference in practice and reality makes the people alienated and the unrest grows.

Moreover, the technological factors behind the unrest are that the current age is the age of technology. The technology in the hands of illiterate people can trigger massive unrest among the public. They blindly use technology without thinking of its consequences.

Information Technology and the social media are the biggest platforms to trigger unrest. Even tik tok videos by little girls and boys can cause serious consequences.

Recently, the ^{Indian} flag hoisting by a Pakistani Singer Talha Anjum in an event widely circulated on social media has also caused unrest. Similarly, any event of blasphemy around the world is widely shared by the illiterate masses and causes unrest.

To add more, fake news and propaganda warfare is a latent tool to cause unrest. Fake news are a biggest threat to democracy. The modern AI tools can prove even more lethal because of deep fakes. Any fake news against any religious or political personality can trigger unrest of the worst kind.

To add more, the cyber space is an open place for the enemy countries to cause democratic unrest. DisinfoLab.eu report has shown that many Indian ~~the~~ accounts in different countries were posting the anti-state narratives about Pakistan. All this has caused an unbearable damage to the democratic institutions of Pakistan. People are more close to technology than to the state, so any news or propaganda directly triggers unrest.

Moreover, the environmental factors also play a great role in democratic unrest. Whenever there is a natural calamity in an area, they feel marginalised and put state responsible for all the hell that caused upon them especially the less developed areas when they got destroyed by some environmental factor, a deep unrest grows against the state.

To add further, insecure environment is a biggest threat to democratic environment. Insecurity in any form, whether environmental or due to terrorist activities can cause

unrest. The terrorists organizations always find st such loop holes in the security and fuel the anti-state sentiments.

In addition to this, the growing role of non-democratic institutions like bureaucracy and military into political affairs also raise a democratic unrest.

Throughout the history of Pakistan, ^{from Ghulam Muhammad to Pervez Musharraf} the role of bureaucracy and military remained controversial and autocratic type. Now again, their interference in democratic affairs is raising concerns among the democratic circles and causing unrest.

Moreover the malfunctioning of democratic institutions like parliament, courts and accountability course ~~are~~ ^{are} raising concerns about their role. The selective justice and the accountability of a few is a matter of serious concern. Cases in the courts remain delayed even the persons died in jails despite being innocent. One glaring example is of Zulfikar Bhutto which the courts recently declaring Bhutto to be wrongly accused. Such and more are the incidents

which depict the corrupt practices of institutions and raise democratic unrest.

To talk about the consequences of democratic unrest, the political consequence of it is the alienation of masses. People no longer feel the need of democratic institutions. Their participation in the democratic process like elections becomes less as depicted by the figure 48% as per Gallup Survey of the elections of 2024. So, the alienation of the public is a consequence of democratic unrest.

Moreover, the democratic unrest gives rise to political conflicts. The steps taken by one government are not acceptable to the opposition and they try to hinder the projects. Similar behavior is seen when the opposition forms govt. and this process continues. For example, the policies of PTI were not acceptable to PMLN and PPP and now their policies are not acceptable to PTI. The growing political conflicts are a result of non-democratic culture.

The economic consequence of democratic unrest results in poverty when people are not ready to work with the govt. and only accuse govt. of the main cause of poverty. Similarly, the unequal distribution of economic resources causing democratic unrest leads to separatist movement. The Baloch Separatist Movement is a consequence of democratic unrest due to alienation of Baloch community from their resources.

To add further, the social consequence of democratic unrest is the growing culture of violent protests. People use violent tactics to win their right. Recent example of AJK protests; a rights movement by the people of AJK also turned violent. The democratic unrest led them to win their rights through the massive scale protest and they won. Similarly, when democratic unrest grows, the smart and educated minds cannot stay in that environment. As people in Germany like Einstein moved to USA due to democratic unrest and helped USA to make atomic bomb and win the war against Germany and its allies. Similar is happening in Pakistan too. All the

able brains are leaving the country to have some peace place to grow.

Similarly, some other consequence of democratic unrest is the rise of anti-state activities. Terrorist incidents are increasing day-by-day due to unrest and the enemy countries are using these terrorists to exploit the state.

Kalbhoshan Thadar is a living example of the terrorist induced activities. As

per **Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad** the terrorist activities

across border are growing due to the political and democratic unrest in those areas. These terrorist activities not only attack on the security personnels but also use their influence to spread hatred against state institutions. Such and more are the consequences of democratic unrest in Pakistan.

A way forward to the democratic unrest can be the inclusive and participatory govt as mentioned in **World Bank Good Governance indicators**. Ensuring accountability and transparency in every

department will help in good governance and promotion of democracy. Economic grievances which is the core of democratic unrest should be removed in the best possible way. Similarly, a literate nation would prove to be more democratic and more helpful in ensuring democratic practices. Technology the new domain of ensuring democracy should not be ignored and the rules should be implemented to curb fake news and propaganda.

In a nutshell, even the worst form of democratic government is still better than autocracy. There are problems in democracy like political, social, economic and technological factors behind the democratic unrest which alienates the citizens from the state and result into separatist movements, terrorist activities and brain drain but small steps by the govt. in the right direction can help settle the unrest.