

The evolution of democratic system has always remained a dilemma in Pakistan, even after passing more than seven decades of its existence the democracy could not get its roots. Discuss in detail

INTRODUCTION

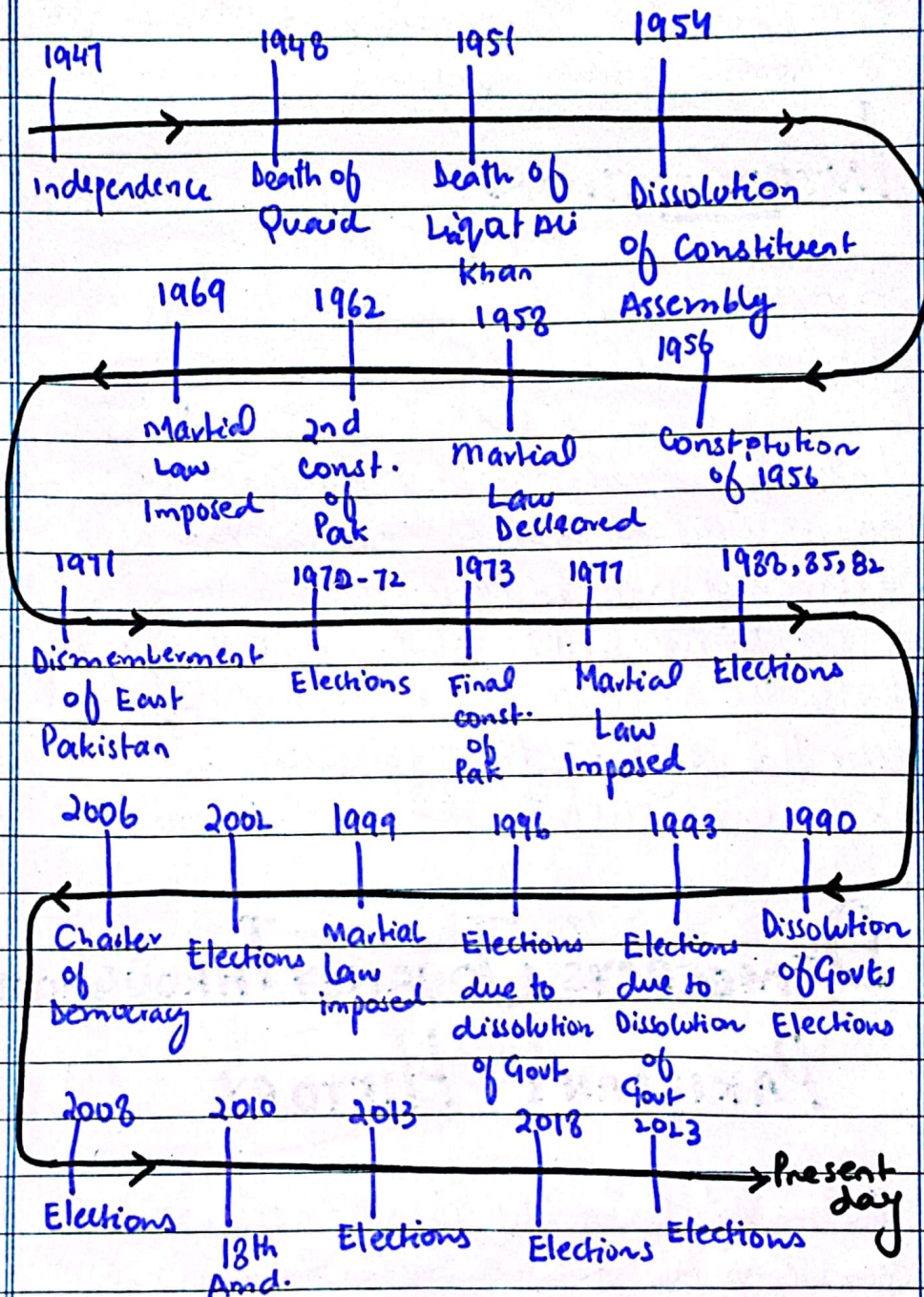
Pakistan's democracy has struggled to evolve due to a number of challenges. The country's political history is rife with political infighting, the lack of a grass-root base/participation, extra-constitutional measures taken by the bureaucracy and military are just to name a few. However, all is not lost and the steps forward needed to take the country forward are already in the constitution and agreements such as the Charter of Democracy.

DEMOCRACY'S JOURNEY THROUGHOUT PAKISTAN'S HISTORY

The nation of a 241.46 million strong has seen eras of democracy that were plagued by political instability and eras of dictatorial rule where democracy was non-existent. As illustrated by the graph, an attempt is made to elucidate the

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The democratic evolutionary process of Pakistan.



The nation suffered a huge loss of leadership when the two stalwarts of the Pakistan movement were died in the initial years of

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The country. The lack of a constitution and political instability grew in the following years leading up to the dissolution of the constituent assembly of the Pakistan and two years after the constitution was ^{passed} ~~placed~~ democracy was stopped in its tracks when General Iskander Mirza imposed a martial law and dissolved the assembly. He was eventually himself replaced by his handpicked man, Ayub Khan, who brought in a new constitution and held elections in 1962. Those were widely rejected and by the political parties. In 1969, Ayub Khan was replaced by Yahya Khan who ^{the} oversaw the 1970s elections, but failure to secede power led to the dismemberment of East Pakistan. Until 1977, the virtues of democracy and its fruit were well perceived by the nation in the form '73 constitution. However, from then on onward the nation took a step in evolution of democratic norms and in the 90's especially from 1990 - 1999 governments came and went.

In the 2000's, democracy reigned supreme and the evolution of it has started slowly to bear. The journey of Pakistan's democracy is no less filled with trials and hardships. However, today it is slowly evolving and strengthening its roots.

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HURDLES TO DEMOCRACY'S EVOLUTION IN PAKISTAN

Lack of local level participation

Local governments are the best way to ensure a true representative democracy. However, in democratic eras, local governments and their provisions have been rolled back. In an article of the BBC, it said

'Dictatorial Regimes have done more for local government than democratically elected ones.' - (BBC)

Local governments are the nurseries for leaderships for political parties. Without them leadership can never be nurtured.

Lack of Intra-Party democracy

Political parties have used a dynastic model to transfer power within themselves. The lack of democracy within the political parties is evident due to the hereditary hierarchies within the party. This disenfranchises

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the lower tiers of the party. As they know they will never get a shot at the leadership positions.

Bar on Student Unions and Politics

Just as local governments provide the community a voice in politics, Student Unions provide the educated lot a say in the political process. Prominent leaders of today's political parties found their roots in student unions. ^{The} case of Bangladesh can be presented as how the students organized and ousted the government of Sheikh Hasina.

Extra Constitutional Misadventures

Extra constitutional misadventures undertaken by the military and ruling corridors of power are also a reason for the dismal performance of democracy in the country. Long periods have left political institutions undeveloped as compared to fellow institutions of the state. Furthermore, these measures got legal ascendancy from the judiciary. The usage of the doctrine of Necessity to provide legal cover to these measures is more than evident.

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Political infighting / Leg-pulling amongst Parties

Democratic evolution can never be guaranteed unless and until infighting between the rival parties is stopped. The 90's of Pakistan were marked with infighting between the governments of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto. Today, this is even more visible as rival political parties fight within themselves to secure power or other petty interests. The ultimate loser of this tug-of-war is democracy.

Charter of Democracy never fully implemented

The charter of democracy was never fully implemented by the political parties. A revolutionary document aimed at fixing the wrongs and promoting a new form of parliamentary democratic norms. However, due to the non-binding nature of the document it ^{is} was never fully realized.

The charter laid out the principles for future political norms of the country and stopped the parties from making backchannel deals with the powers that be i.e. the military.

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WAY FORWARD FOR REALIZING THE TRUE POTENTIAL OF DEMOCRACY

Implementation of the Charter of Democracy in true letter and spirit

This charter paved the way for the establishment of true democratic norms in the country. However due to its non-binding nature the signatories were not compelled to uphold the charter. Now more than ever it is need to revise the charter and bring ^{it} ~~a~~ ^{one} whose binding nature will compel stakeholders to uphold it in full letter and spirit.

Local Governments to be empowered in every Province

As argued previously, local governments are the way to ensure participation and governance. Through empowered local governments federating units can ensure efficient governance and political parties can ensure the community's representation and participation.

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Similarly, it will act as a misery for the future leadership of the political party.

Revival of Student Unions

Students Unions will allow adequate representation of educated people in the political sphere. The revival should be done in a way that does not lead to violence being propagated by them. A code of conduct and efficient regulatory mechanisms need to be envisaged before their revival.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of democracy is dependent on an educated and informed nation, Political parties who foster democratic norms within themselves and communities who actively participate in the democratic process. Only then a vibrant and healthy democratic institution can be raised.