CSS - 2024

Political Stability remains an elusive concept in Pakistan. Explore the factors contributing to the fractured nature of Pakistan's polity and discuss potential reforms to the constitutional and political structure that could foster stability.

Introduction:

Political stability remains an elusive concept in Pakistan, characterized by frequent governmental changes, military coups, and enduring socio-economic challenges since its inception in 1947. The nation's political volatility is driven by historical legacies, power struggles among political elites, and pervasive issues such as corruption, terrorism, and economic disparity. The military's significant influence further complicates the political landscape, often undermining democratic processes. Addressing these complex factors is crucial for envisioning a stable and prosperous future for Pakistan.

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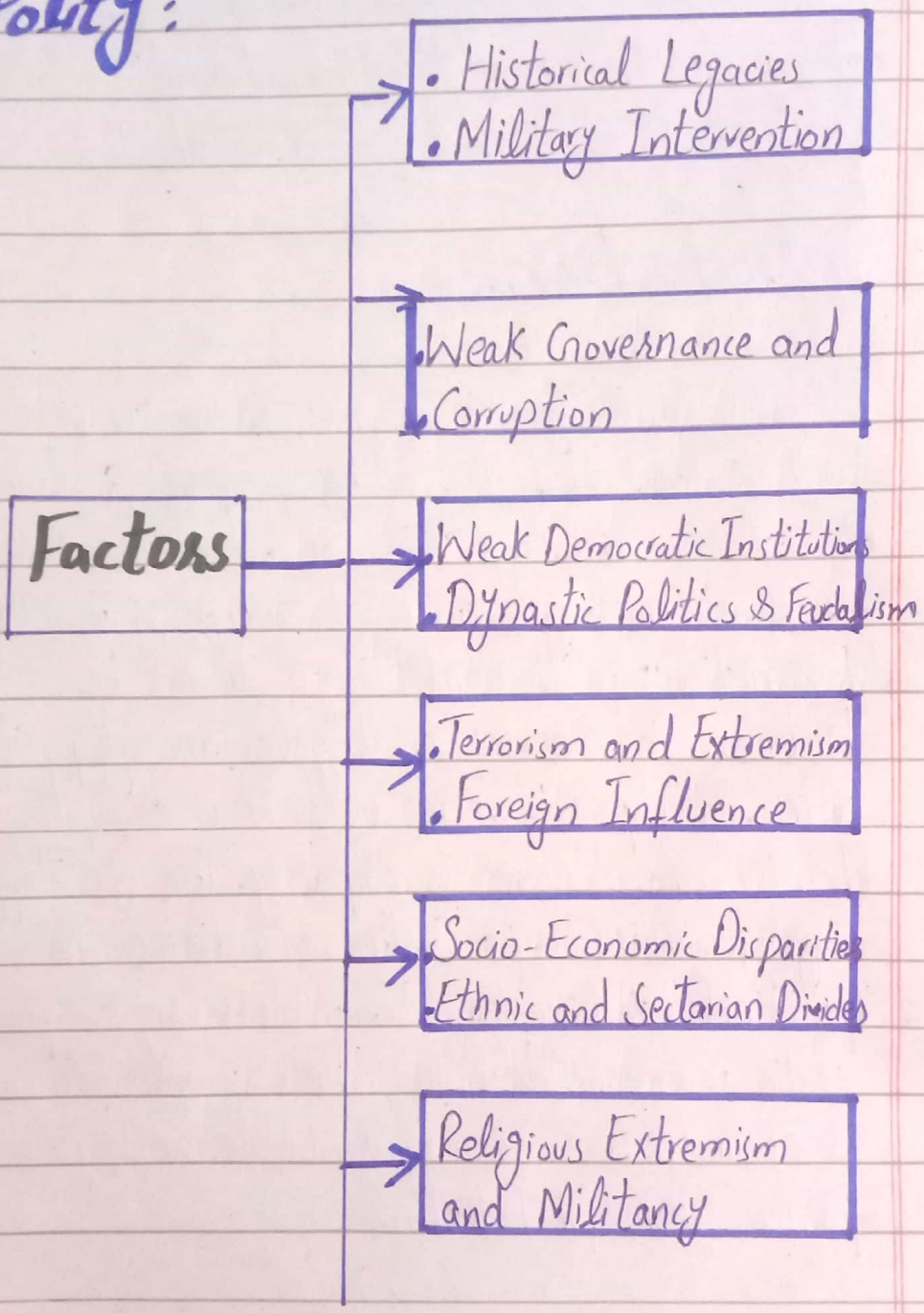
2. Factors Contributing to the Fractured Nature of Pakistan's Polity:



i) Historical Legacies:-

The violent partition of British India in 1947 led to massive population displacements and communal violence, leaving deep scars in the collective memory of the region. This tumultuous beginning influenced Pakistan's security policies and its adversarial relationship with India, exemplified by conflicts such as the wars in 1947, 1965, and 1971, and ongoing tensions in Kashmir. Moreover, Early political instability, highlighted by the assasination of Pakistan's first PM Liaquat Ali Khan, in 1951, set a precedent for political volatility that continued with frequent changes in government.

ii) Military Intervention:-

Pakistan has experienced several military coups, with the first occurring in 1958 under General Ayub Khan, followed by General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977, and General Pervez Musharraf in 1999. These coups disrupted democratic processes and entrenched military dominance in politics. Even during periods of civilian rule, the military has maintained significant influence over key areas such as foreign policy

and internal security, as evidenced by its role in shaping Pakistan's approach to Afghanistan and India.

iii) Weak Governance and Corruption:-

Weak governance, inefficiency, and rampant corruption have undermined public trust in political institutions and fueld disillusionment with the democratic process. Corruption scandals and governance failures have exacerbated socio-economic inequalities and eroded confidence in the political establishment. In the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index, Pakistan ranked 133 out of 180 countries. Moreover, High profile corruption cases, such as Panama Papers Scandal involving former Prime Minister, highlight how corruption erodes public trust and undermines governance.

iv) Weak Democratic Institutions:-

Political parties in Pakistan are often centered around charismatic leaders rather

than strong institutional structures, leading to factionalism and instability. For example, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has long been associated with the Bhutto family, while the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) revolves around the Sharif family. This personality-driven politics undermines institutional development and contributes to fragile political landscapes.

v) Dynastic Politics and Feudalism:-

Dynastic politics and feudalism significantly contribute to political instability in Pakistan. The concentration of power within political families and the dominance of large land-owners undermine democratic processes, entrench corruption and stifle political competition. These practices perpetuate social and economic inequalities, leading to public disillusionment and a lack of effective governance.

vi) Terrorism and Extremism:-

Terrorism and extremism significantly contribute to Pakistan's fractured polity. In 2024, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has intensified its attacks, including a significant assault on a police station in Dera Ismail Khan, KPK, which resulted in the deaths of ten security personnel. According to the article of "The Diplomat," 2023 recorded a 69% increase in terror attacks, killing 974 people and wounding 1351. Another major incident involved TTP's coordinated attacks on military and civilian targets, exacerbating the security situation across the country. These attacks destablize the nation, divert critical resources, and heighten public fear, thereby undermining political stability and governance.

vii) Foreign Influence:-

Foreign influence is a significant factor in Pakistan's instability, exacerbating existing tensions and creating new challenges. Various international actors exploit Pakistan's geopolitical vulnerabilities through hybrid warfare, which includes misinformation

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campaigns, economic manipulation, and fostering ethnic and sectarian divides. According to the article, "The Impact of Political Instability on Pakistan's Internal Security" (**The Diplomat**), India have been accused of supporting insurgent groups to destabilize Pakistan, while Afghanistan's Taliban regime provides sanctuary to the TTP, facilitating their cross-border attacks. Strengthening internal unity and addressing economic disparities are crucial for Pakistan to counteract these external influences and foster political stability.

viii) **Socio-Economic Disparities:-**

Socio economic disparities significantly contribute to political instability in Pakistan. High levels of poverty, limited access to quality education, and inadequate healthcare services have exacerbated social inequalities, fueling discontent and unrest. **The 2023/2024 Human Development Index Report**, places Pakistan in the 'low' human development category with a

Human Development Index value of 0.540 and global ranking of 164 out of 193 countries.

ix) Ethnic and Sectarian Divides:-

Ethnic conflicts, such as those in Balochistan and Kpk, often arise from grievances related to political marginalization and economic deprivation. Similarly, Sectarian violence, particularly between Sunni and Shia communities, has escalated, with 2024 witnessing multiple attacks that deepened these divides. **According to the CSIS Article: "Pakistan: Violence Vs Stability"**, In Karachi, a key economic engine of Pakistan, ethno-sectarian violence has risen to new levels with the real danger of a slide back into the communal violence of the early 1990s. Such a reversal would be catastrophic for stability, whilst providing fodder for the sectarian and ethnic drivers of conflict in Pakistan.

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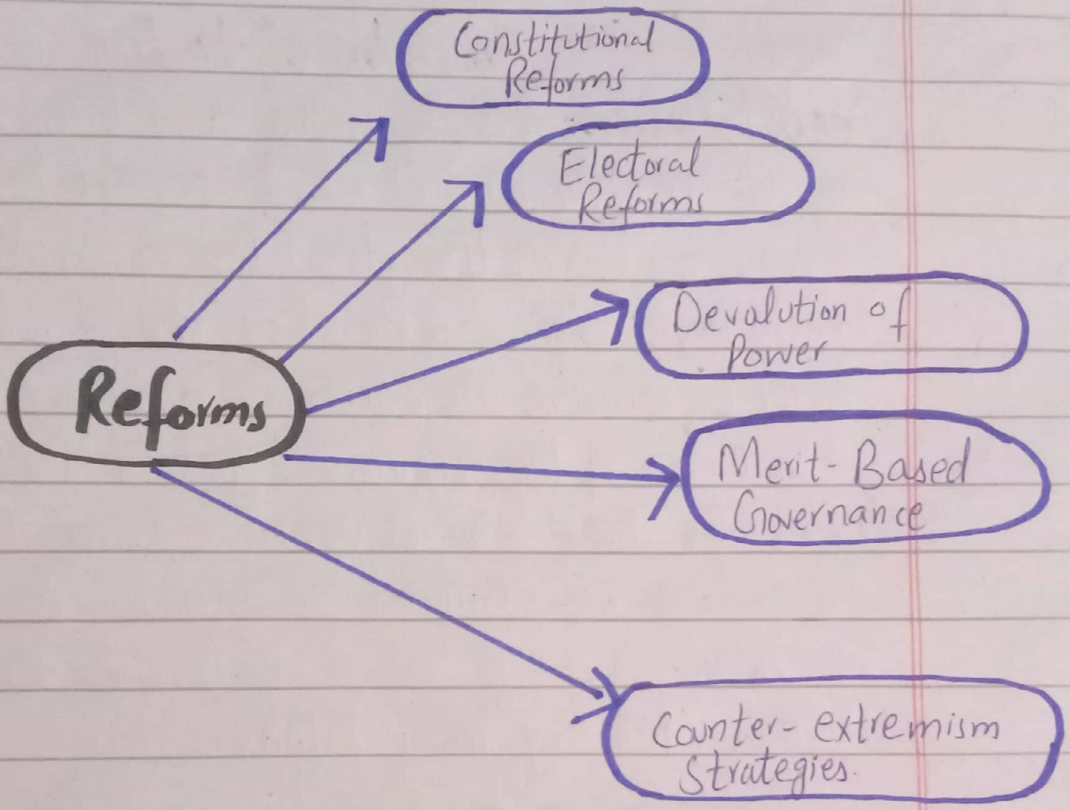
3. Potential Reforms for Political Stability:-



1) Constitutional Reforms:-

Strengthening the constitutional framework to ensure the supremacy of civilian institutions over the military is essential for promoting political stability. Moreover, Amendments to ensure the ~~Strengthening~~ judiciary's independence from executive and legislative branches

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are crucial. This includes secure tenure for judges and transparent judicial appointments. Furthermore, establishing a robust mechanism for judicial accountability to address corruption and inefficiency within the judiciary. e.g **18th Amendment to the constitution:** This significant amendment, passed in 2010, brought about several key reforms, including the devolution of powers to the provinces, the removal of the presidents power to dissolve the parliament, and the restructuring of the concurrent legislative list to clarify the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments. So, we need such type of amendments for Political stability in Pakistan.

2) Electoral Reforms:-

Electoral reforms are essential for political stability as they ensure fair representation and public trust in the democratic process. Implementing proportional representation, enhancing electoral transparency, and establishing independent electoral comissions can mitigate fraud and disenfranchisement. **According**

to the Dawn News Article: "Need for electoral reforms in Pakistan": Key proposals for electoral reforms include introducing electronic voting machines to reduce rigging, implementing biometric verification to ensure voter authenticity, and enabling overseas Pakistanis to vote. Additionally, there are discussions about adopting a "None of the Above" (NOTA) option on ballots to allow voters to reject all candidates if they feel none are suitable. These measures aim to strengthen the electoral process, ensure transparency, and foster greater public trust in the democratic system.

3) Devolution of Power:-

For future political stability, Pakistan might consider several devolution of power reforms. According to the article: "Analysis: Limits of devolution" **(Dawn News)**, Enhancing the authority and autonomy of local governments, ensuring equitable resource distribution among provinces, and potentially creating new provinces based on

administrative efficiency rather than ethnic lines, these steps are crucial for improving governance and ensuring political stability in Pakistan.

4) Merit-based Governance:-

To enhance political stability, Pakistan is focusing on implementing merit-based governance. This approach aims to reduce corruption and inefficiencies by ensuring that public sector appointments and promotions are based on qualifications and performance rather than political connections. According to the article, "Good Governance Vital to Democracy, such reforms crucial for addressing Pakistan's governance failures and fostering a competent administration capable of implementing effective policies.

5) Counter-Extremism Strategies:-

To enhance political stability, Pakistan plans to implement several counter-extremism and terrorism strategies. One significant measure is the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) drafting its first ever

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policy to canter violent extremism, focusing on monitoring law enforcement to prevent infiltration by extremist elements. We need more such type of measures to counter extremism and terrorism because it is very important for political stability in Pakistan.

4. Conclusion:

To achieve political stability in Pakistan, comprehensive reforms addressing dynastic politics, feudalism, terrorism, socioeconomic disparities and ethnic divides are essential. Moreover, strengthening democratic institutions, reducing military influence, ensuring judicial independence and foster a more inclusive and effective governance system are crucial steps. By implementing these reforms, Pakistan can work towards a more stable and prosperous political environment, ensuring long-term stability and development.

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