

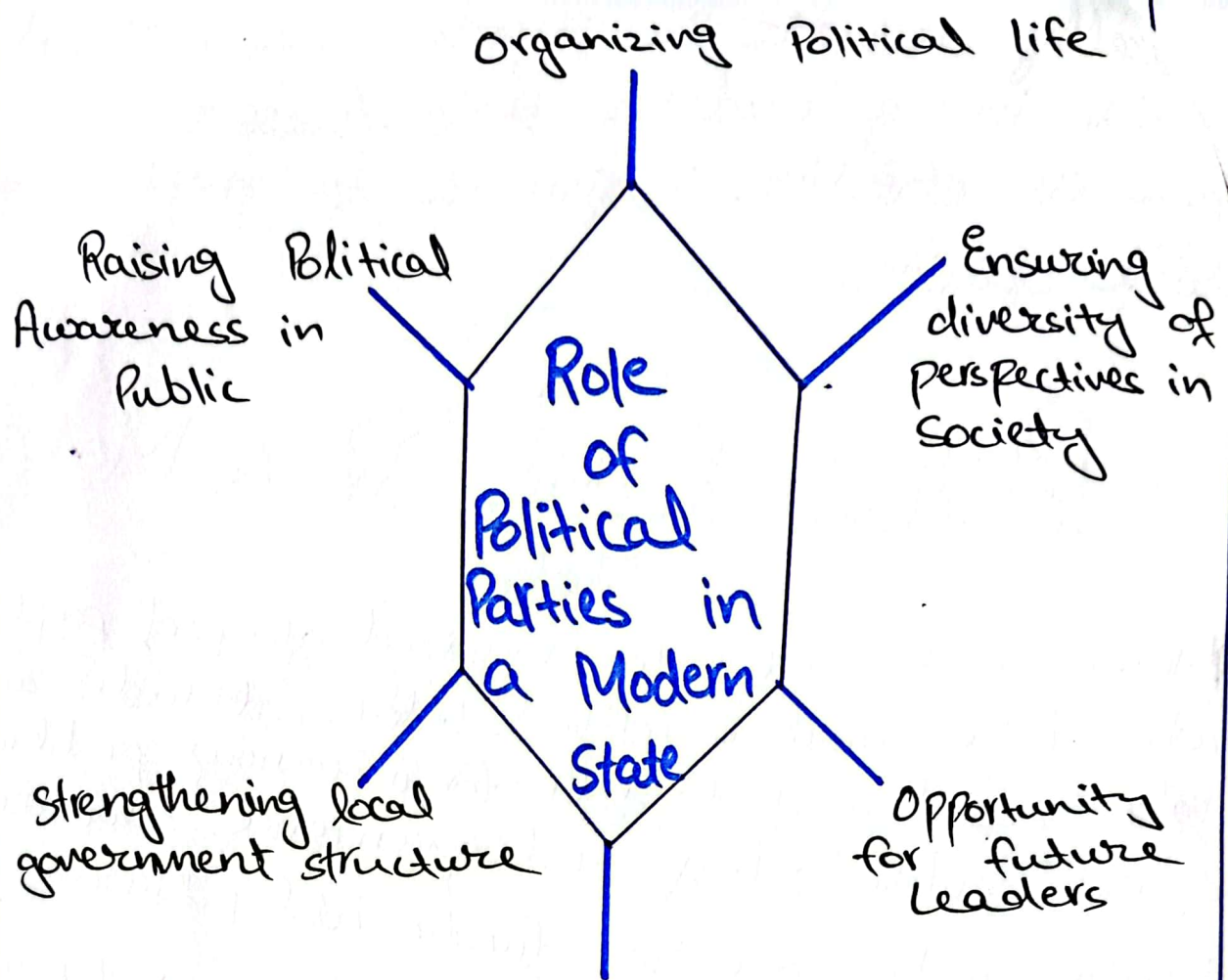
Q: Critically evaluate the importance of political parties in a modern state. Assess their role as effective instruments for mobilizing public opinion.

Political Parties In a Modern State

Political parties refer to organized groups of people who share similar political beliefs, attitudes and values; and work together for influencing public opinion, public policy and governance structure. Political parties are the fundamental pillars for organizing political life, strengthening democratic principles and improved public service delivery. They are the instruments for mobilizing public opinion. However, Pakistan faces numerous issues due to ineffectiveness in the role of political parties. These issues can be resolved by effective solutions.

1- Elucidating the Importance of Political Parties in a Modern State

Political parties are vital for organizing political life, strengthening local governance, ensuring accountability of state institutions and improved public service delivery.



Ensuring Accountability of State Institutions

Figure: Role of Political Parties in Modern State

i- Organizing Political Life

Political parties are important for organizing political life in a modern state. According to Larry Diamond, "Political parties are the heart of modern democracy and the key institutions for managing political conflicts" (Larry Diamond - *Developing Democracy*).

ii- Raising Political Awareness in Public

Political parties are integral for raising political awareness in public. These parties make people

aware of their political rights. They educate public about the consequences of parochial political culture and the importance of civic political culture.

iii. Ensuring the Diversity of Perspectives in Society

Political parties are integral for ensuring diversity of perspectives in society. According to Friedrich Hayek, "Variety is the spice of governance and beauty of political system lies in its ability to adapt with each canton as a unique brush stroke on the canvas of national governance (Friedrich Hayek, Road to Serfdom, 2016).

iv. Strengthening Local Government Structure

Political parties encourage citizens or individuals to participate in democratic process and political decision-making. An effective role of these parties strengthen local governance structure. According to Benjamin Barber:

"Political Parties are the engines that drive local democracy."

Benjamin Barber, Strong Democracy

v. Opportunity for Future Leaders

Political parties create opportunities for individuals to learn about the dynamics of governance and politics; and then ascend to the higher tiers of politics. For instance, it is the strong democratic system of Türkiye that its local government structure is so strong that a person who was newspaper seller started his political career as **Mayor** of Istanbul and is currently the President of state named as **Tayyip Erdoğan**. This reflects political parties create opportunities for future leaders by strengthening local government structure.

vi. Ensuring Accountability of State Institutions

When political parties effectively play their role, they make people well-aware of the ideologies of famous Enlightenment Philosophers like John Locke. The citizens focus on Locke's concept which contends that "It is people who are actual source of power, and the government derives its power from the people of state, and people have right to overthrow the government when it fails to fulfill its duties." This awareness promotes accountability, transparency and meritocracy in state institutions.

i- Devolution of Power to Grass-Root Levels

Political Parties are important for devolving power to grass-root levels. These parties prevent consolidation of power within the hands of single political party or authoritative leader. This decentralization is a key of strong democracy in modern state.

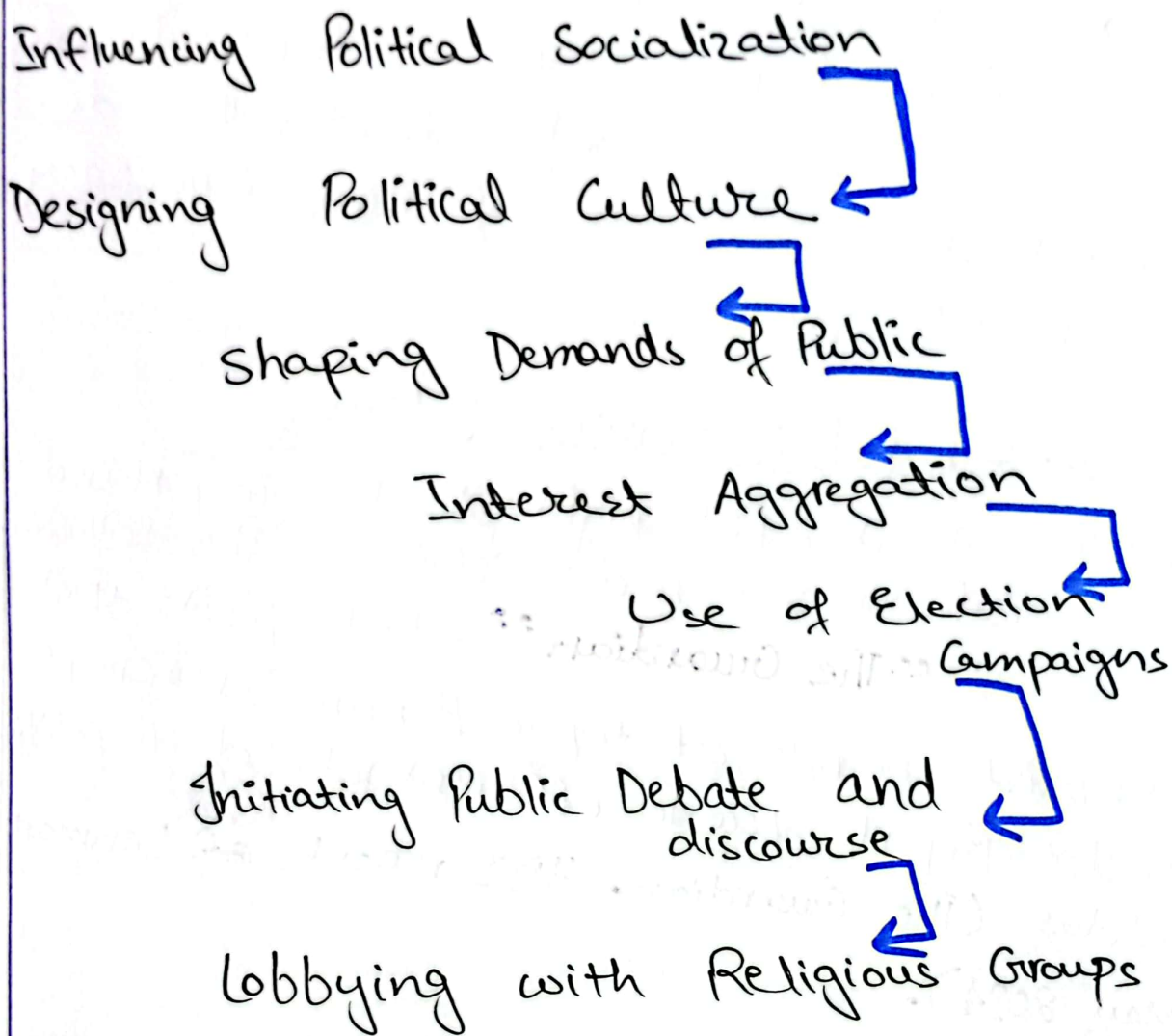
viii- Improved Public Service Delivery

Another aspect which highlights the importance of political parties in modern state is the following report of "The Guardian" which posits that Denmark stands at top in Human Development Index Report due to efficient role of its political parties (The Guardian, HDI report ^{and} of Denmark, May 2024).

2- Political Parties As Instruments of Mobilizing Public Opinion

Public opinion is defined as an aggregate of individual opinions regarding issues that confront the state. Political parties shape public opinion by influencing political socialization, designing political culture, shaping the demands of public, interest aggregation etc

Ways Through Which Political Parties Mobilize Public Opinion



i- Influencing Political Socialization

Political socialization is defined as the process of political learning of individuals through which they gain political beliefs, values and attitudes. ~~is called as polit~~ Political Parties shape public opinion by influencing this process of political learning through media, election campaigns etc.

Designing Political Culture

Political culture is the set of beliefs and attitudes which shape how individuals view governance and politics. Political parties shape public opinion by designing this political culture. For instance, it is the parochial political culture of Pakistan due to which public opinion is oriented around personality cults (Dr. Ishrat Hussain, *Governing the Ungovernable*, 2018).

iii- Shaping Demands of Public

Political parties act as instruments of mobilizing public opinion because they shape the demands of public. These parties shape the demands of citizens of state by communicating their ideologies, policies to local communities through local meetings. This grass-root mobilization shapes public opinion.

iv- Interest Aggregation

Political parties incorporate the demands of public within their manifestos. These parties tend to advance the interests of its followers. This plays a key role in galvanizing the process of political learning, thereby influencing public opinion.

v- Use of Election Campaigns

Political parties shape public opinion by encouraging their demands through election campaigns and voter drives. These campaigns influence the ideas and views ^{of public} on politics, governance and other issues which confront the state.

vi- Initiating Public Debate and Discourse

Political parties motivate citizens to actively participate in political process by creating various platforms for political debate and discourse. Through media appearances, advertisements and social media platforms political parties shape public discourse.

vii- Lobbying with Religious Groups

Political parties shape public opinion by integrating religious ideologies in their manifestos for capturing attention of a large number of audience. By lobbying with religious groups, political parties shape public opinion because ^{these} religions ^{groups} directly influences the political learning of individuals of state.

3. Issues Faced By Pakistan due to Ineffectiveness in the Role of Political Parties

Pakistan has been facing political polarization, political partisanship, surge in ethnic and religious conflicts, economic instability, national unity crises and threat to writ of state due to ineffectiveness in the role of political parties.

According to World Bank, Pakistan's 62 million people are living below poverty line due to governance issues caused by political polarization after May 2022 (Poor Governance in Pakistan, 2023).

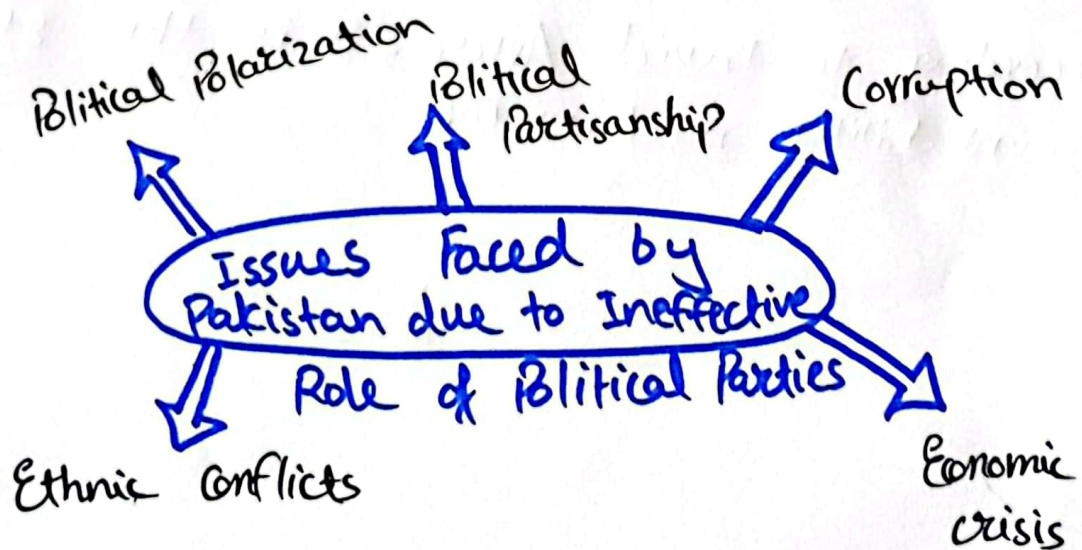
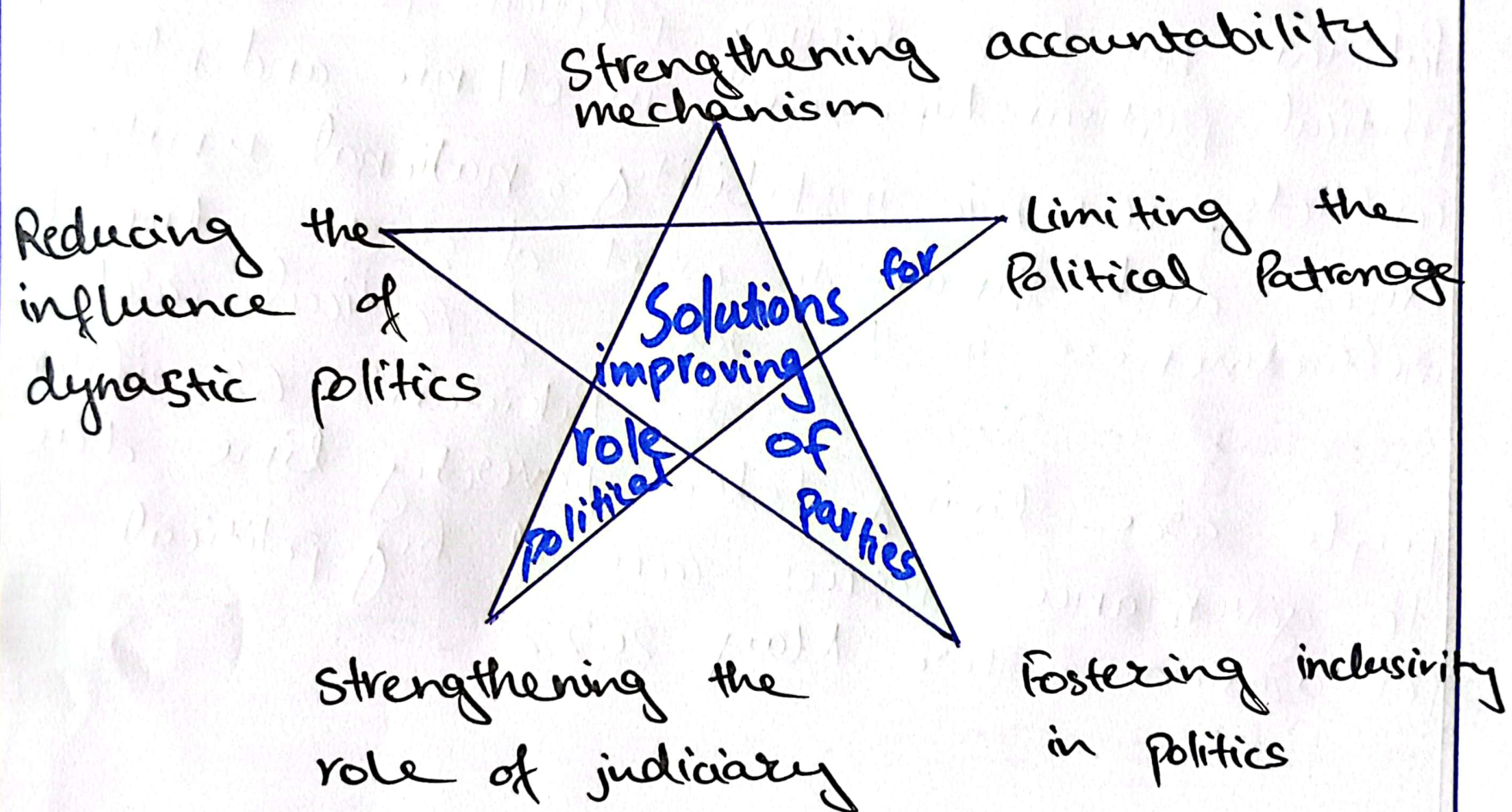


Figure : Issues faced by Pakistan due to Ineffectiveness in the Role of Political Parties

4. Solutions for Improving the Role of Political Parties in Pakistan

Following are the solutions for improving the role of political parties in Pakistan.



Conclusion

Political Parties are integral for ensuring accountability, transparency and meritocracy in state institutions.

They play a vital role in mobilizing public opinion.

However, their role is not without drawbacks like political polarization, increased dependency on personality cults and social unrest.

The effectiveness in the role of political parties can be ensured by strengthening accountability mechanisms.