

Qno (2024) The democratization process in Pakistan is still weak and ambiguous. Do you consider dynastic politics and feudalism are the major hindrance on the way of establishing true system in Pakistan? Explain.

Introduction:

Pakistan has struggled with the evolution of its democratic system since its inception. Despite more than seven decades of existence, the democratization process in Pakistan is still weak and ambiguous. Democracy in Pakistan has been marked by continuous dilemma and has failed to establish firm roots. There are various factors which have created hindrance in the way of robust democratic system in Pakistan; military interventions, political instability, weak institutions, socio-economic factors and above all, dynastic politics and feudalism. Therefore it is the need of time to take measures, such as, reforms and to strengthen local bodies to evolve democratic system at grass roots level.

## Pakistan's democratization process at glance:

Pakistan adopted a democratic system of governance upon its independence in 1947. Pakistan framed its first constitution in 1956, that parliamentary democracy with a president as the head of state and a prime Minister as the head of government. Pakistan's democratic journey has been tumultuous, characterized by periods of military rule and political instability, dysfunctional institutions, Electoral challenges, socio-economic factors and so on.

### (a) Military Interventions:

Pakistan has witnessed several military coups period of Martial law, throughout its history. The military has wielded significant influence on political landscape, often interrupting democratic process and governance. For instance, coups in 1958, 1977 and 1999 had long lasting impact on democratic institutions.

### (b) Political Instability

The country has experienced frequent changes

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in government, with democratic transition often marred by instability. Political parties have struggled to maintain stability within their ranks, leading to internal power struggles and factionalism. This has hindered the development of strong and cohesive political system necessary for democratic development.

### (c) Dysfunctional Institutions:

Pakistan's democratic institutions have grappled with corruption, inefficiency and lack of accountability. The judiciary, bureaucracy and electoral bodies have faced criticism for their inability to deliver justice, provide efficient public services and conduct fair and transparent elections. These weaknesses have eroded public trust in the democratic system.

### (d) Electoral challenges in conducting free and fair elections in the country:

Pakistan has faced challenges in conducting free and fair elections. Electoral fraud, voter manipulation and allegations of rigging have marred the electoral process. Opposition

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cites incumbent government form-47 governments. These issues have raised concerns about the legitimacy and transparency of the electoral system, undermining confidence in democratic institutions.

(e) Socioeconomic factors undermines democratic system:

Pakistan's socioeconomic landscape characterized by widespread poverty. In 2023, World Bank cited, nearly 40 per cent of population has fallen below the poverty line. Income inequality and regional disparities pose challenges to democratization process. Socio-economic grievances often fuel political unrest and ethnic tensions, which can destabilize the democratic process and hinder inclusive governance.

(f) Ban on Student Politicians:

Educational institutions are nurseries from where politics start. These institutions have given birth to great political leaders.

**Benezix Bhutto, the First female Prime Minister of Pakistan, became**

involved in student politics during her time at the University of Oxford, where she was elected as the president of the Oxford Union in 1976. However in 1984, during General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime, student unions were banned and several universities<sup>still</sup> continue to impose restriction on student politics. It has also hindered evolution of democratic process.

(g) Ineffective local bodies hinders democratic process:

Furthermore, ineffective local bodies hinders democratic process. Most of the powers devolved from center to provinces. But provinces has not devolved their power to local bodies. Resulting lack of autonomy and limited financial autonomy, has created a hurdles in the way of participation in local bodies election.

(g) Dynastic politics and Feudalism is a stumbling block in way of "Democratization Process":

Above all, dynasties

politics and feudalism is characterized by dominance of dynastic politics of a few mainstream political parties. They strong foothold over their parties, they do not think of eligible for higher position except from their families. The set up of incumbent government is the glaring example of dynastic politics. The feudalism is also the bullet in the heart of democracy. The dynastic and feudalism do not thrive democracy in the Pakistan.

Despite of these hurdle in the way of a robust democratic process, it is a high time to take <sup>some</sup> measures to bring democracy on its track.

Solutions to Weak and Ambiguous democratization Process:

- (1) Reforms are needed to ensure Democratization process:

Election Commission of Pakistan has mandate to conduct election in the entire Pakistan. Therefore, it is the responsibility of election Commission of Pakistan to conduct free and fair election.

In this regard, electronic voting machine can serve this purpose. This can prevent the casting of a bogus vote.

(i) Reforms in the constitution and a two-term prime Minister:

It is the need of an hour to make amendments in the constitution - more than two-terms - a person should not be allowed to be a prime minister. This is the way to end the influence dynastic politics - Pakistan being an ally of USA can learn from USA's constitution, that does not allow anyone to be a president more than two-terms.

(ii) Powers must be devolved from provinces to local bodies. The administrative and financial power must be devolved to local bodies as provided in Article 32 and 140-A. This will strengthen local bodies and leading to participation of more people and eventually lead to thrive democracy at grassroot level.

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Conclusion:

Democratization <sup>process</sup> ↑ has been plagued by persistent challenges and dilemma, preventing it firmly from establishing its roots even after more than seven decades of existence.

The historical context of military interventions, political instability, weak institutions, socio economic factors, bans on student politics and dynastic politics and feudalism have contributed to fragile democracy. However, taking these hurdles into consideration by reforming in elections procedure and amendment in constitution and strengthening of local bodies can pave way to the consolidation of democracy in Pakistan.