

(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 instability remains an elusive concept in Pakistan. There are various factors which have contributed to the fractured nature of Pakistan's polity; early death of Quaid-e-Azam, delay in making of constitution of Pakistan, military coups, ethnic and provincial fragmentation, feudalism and dynastic politics, dysfunctional institutions, challenges in conducting free and fair elections and socio-economic disparities. These factors can be overcome by taking some measure; reforming civil-military relations, constitutional reforms, electoral reforms, political party reforms and finally socio-economic reform can foster political stability in the Pakistan.

**Factors which have contributed to the fractured nature of Pakistan's Polity.**

There are various factors which have contributed to political instability which are discussed below.

(a) An Early death of Quaid-e-Azam:

Leadership plays a very important role in progress and development of any nation, after the death of Quaid-e-Azam, there was no alternative who could fill gap of his absence in politics. Crisis of leadership in politics contributed to political fragility.

(b) Delay in making of constitution of Pakistan:

Pakistan became a sovereign state on 14 August 1947, so it needed a sovereign constitution as well. Due to various factors, Pakistan has framed its 1st constitution in 1956. Delay in making of constitution of Pakistan and its various factors which have further added fuel to fire.

(c) Military coups throughout the history of Pakistan:

Pakistan has witnessed several military coups and period of martial-law throughout the

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course of history of Pakistan. The military wields 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.

(d) Ethnic and provincial fragmentation:

Pakistan is composed of diverse ethnic groups, including Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns and Balochs. These groups often feel marginalised by the central government, especially due to Punjab dominance in the political and military landscape. Moreover, Center and provinces tussle over the distribution of resources exacerbated political instability in the country.

e) Dynastic Politics and Feudalism:

Dynastic politics and Feudalism are the bullet in the chest of democracy. In dynastic politics, few people take decision on the behalf all members of party. There is no democracy within mainstream political parties. For example, all higher position of executive are taken by few people in the incumbent government.

Moreover, feudalism is also hindrance in the way of democratization. The women who are selected for constituent assemblies on women quota, they are from electable families. Dynastic politics and feudalism made political instability more illusive in the country.

(F) Dysfunctional institution:

Pakistan 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 election. These weaknesses eroded public trust in the democratic process.

Electoral Challenges in conducting free and fair elections in the country:

Pakistan has faced challenges in conducting free and fair elections. Electoral fraud, votes manipulation and allegation of rigging have mased electoral process. Opposition cites incumbent government - "form-47 government" these issues have raised concerns

about the legitimacy and transparency of the electoral system, undermining confidence in democratic institutions.

Socio-economic factors undermine democratic system.

Pakistan's socio-economic landscape characterized by widespread poverty. In 2023, World Bank cited nearly 40 per cent of population has fallen below the poverty line. Income equality and regional disparities pose challenges to democratization process.

Socio-economic grievances often fuel political unrest and ethnic tension which can destabilize the political stability.

Despite of these factors which have contributed to political dilemmas, it is a high time to take some measures to correct things.

Potential reforms to the constitutional and political structure that could fosters political stability:

The reforms in constitution and political structure are imperative to foster political stability in the country.

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C1) Constitutional reforms:

(i) Introducing a two-term Premiership into the constitution could pave the way for political stability:

Introducing a two-term premiership into Pakistan's constitution could help to promote political stability by limiting the time any leader can hold power. This would prevent leaders from becoming too dominant, encouraging fresh leadership and reducing long-term political manipulation.

(ii) Strengthening Federalism and Devolution of Power:

Article 140 allows devolution of political, administrative and financial responsibility to elected local bodies. Strengthening this article through reforms could ensure more power is decentralized. This lead to reduce conflict between the provinces and the federation. Overall impact of these reform may increase political stability.

(2) Electoral reforms;

(1) Article 218(3)

charges the Election Commission of Pakistan with the duty to conduct free and fair elections

The political stability hinges on the legitimacy of election.

Moreover, reforms to make this institution more autonomous can improve electoral accountability and transparency after post-election.

(ii) Introducing of a Electronic Voting Machine:

Introducing of a electronic voting machine can prevent the casting of a bogus vote. Political leaders accuse each for mandate theft that frequently lead to political instability. Therefore introducing of a EVM can act as a hallmark against mandate theft. This may foster stability in the country.

(3) Reforms in Political Structure:

(i) Introducing a Proportional Representation:

The proportional Representation which is popular in many European countries

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ensures inclusive representation of minority and smaller parties. When smaller parties represent at national level, their grievances automatically heard at national level. This may foster stability and prevent large parties to implement their decision.

(ii) Intra-party election:

Intra-party election is necessary to elect the leader from that party. This can prevent dynastic politics and allows emerge new leader with fresh ideas. Moreover, ECPI has to ensure the legitimacy of intra-party election. Jamāl-e-Islami has set an example to pursue it. This could foster stability in the country.

4. Maintaining a Balance Between Civilian and Military Institution:

Pakistan had experienced three martial laws. Military had significant influence on political landscape. Military leaders had several time abrogated and suspended constitution. That fueled political fragmentation. However, Article 243 established the authority



authority of the federal government over the armed forces. This article need to be reform, with transparent mechanisms for military accountability to Parliament. This may reduce civil-military tensions that often disrupt political stability.

Conclusion:

The evolution of democratic system has always remained dilemma in Pakistan due to various factors, even after passing more than seven decade of its existence, the democracy could not get its roots. Nevertheless, it gets flourish, if serious constitutional, electoral and political structures reforms are taken into consideration. These reforms may lead to political stability in the country.