

Question:

Political Polarization has become a defining feature of Pakistan's democracy. Critically evaluate its root causes and impact on institutional stability and propose a practical roadmap for national consensus.

Answer:

Introduction:

“Polarization is the enemy of progress, it tears apart the social fabric and paralyzes the functioning of democracy.”

- (Barack Obama, 2010)

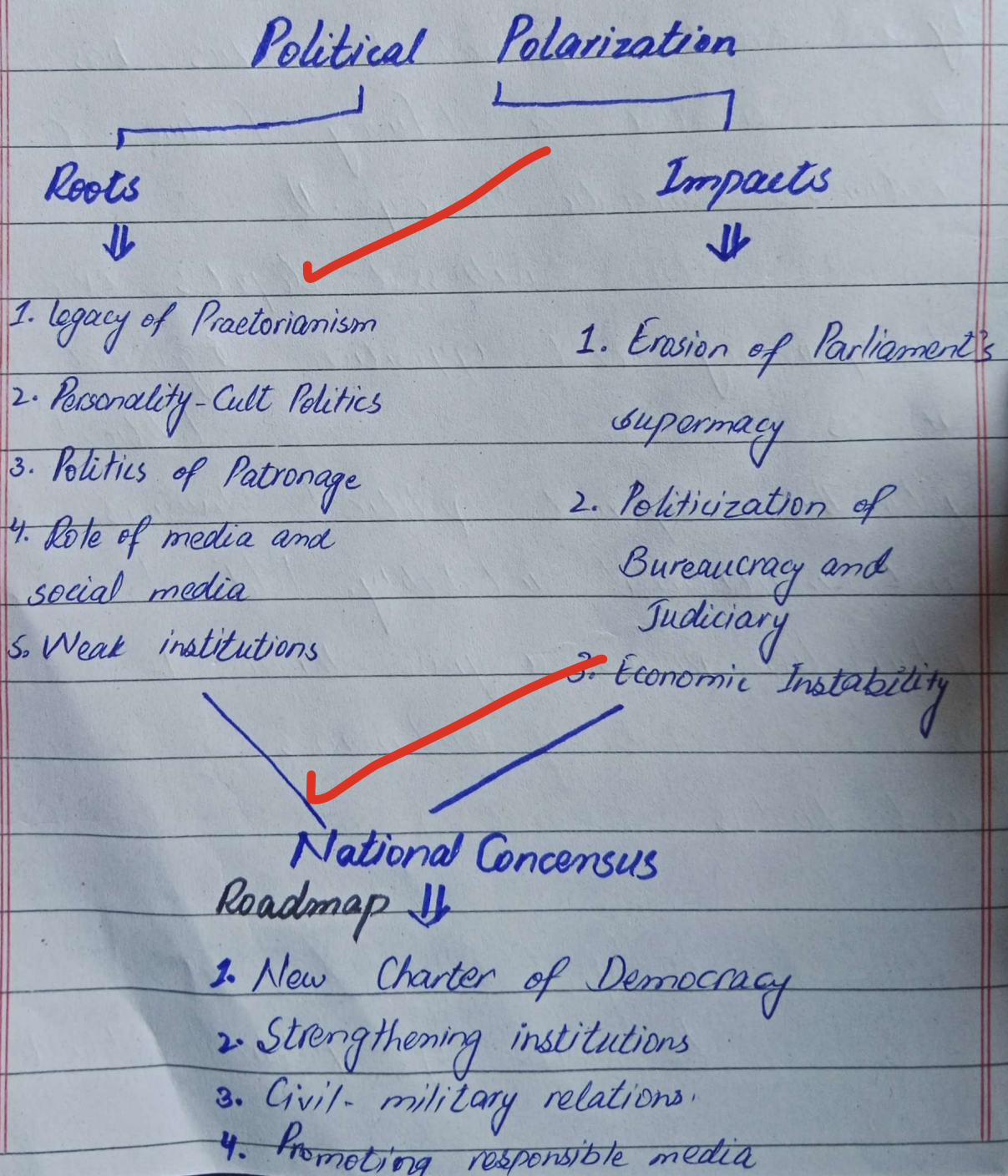
Pakistan's political journey has been marred by political polarization. In recent years, it has been intensified, transforming from a difference of opinion to toxic chaos of ~~mutual~~ delegitimization and intolerance. This environment, characterized by a zero-sum approach to politics, has been created a defining feature of nation's democratic landscape. The 2024 general elections witnessed disputes over transparency and ~~opposition~~ regarded it as "death of democracy". Political ~~polar~~ This deepened political divisions and institutional instability. Political polarization poses a grave threat to institutions stability, undermines governance and hinders economic progress.

The Anatomy of Divided Nation

The roots of political polarization

are complex and multifaceted, stemming from ~~historical legacies~~, structural flaws and ~~actions~~ of political actors.

Flow Chart:



1. Root Causes of Political Polarization

1.1. Legacy of Praetorianism:

The repeated interventions of military have created a political landscape. This has prevented the natural evolution of democratic norms and institutions. Political parties have often been coopted or victimized by the establishment often leading to a culture of mistrust and seeking non-democratic means to acquire or retain power.

⇒ In May 2025, the promotion of General Asim Munir to Field Marshal has showed the influence of armed forces in political outcomes and renewed debate on civil-military relation.

"The military has been the most significant political

keep the description of a single argument brief.

force in Pakistan, shaping the
country's ^{democratic} trajectory more than
any other institution.

-(Stephen P. Cohen)

1.2. Personality Cult - Politics:

Major political parties are built around charismatic leaders and their families rather than ~~with~~ strong ideologies or policy platforms. This personalization of politics has intensified the rivalries where opponent is viewed as ~~personal~~ personal enmity. The supporters of these parties have cult-like devotion, making compromise and dialogue nearly impossible.

⇒ Following the 2023 protests, numerous opposition leaders were tried and convicted, with sentences reaching to ~~ten~~ ten years. This event underscored the tendency to frame political struggles in personal terms rather than

through institution mechanism.

“Dynastic and personalized politics in Pakistan have prevented the development of issue-based debates, entrenching polarization in Pakistan.”

1.3. Politics of Patronage and Corruption:

A system reliant on patronage fosters a zero-sum mentality. The control of the state viewed as an opportunity to distribute resources to one's own constituents and allies making the loss of power and existential threat. Allegations of corruptions are used as weapons to attack opponent, further poisoning the political atmosphere.

⇒ Transparency International's 2023 Corruption Perception Index ranked

Pakistan 133 of 180. In 2024-25, renewed corruption cases against opposition leaders illustrated how accountability processes coincide with political rivalries.

1.4. Role of media and social media:

The proliferation of 24/7 news channels and unregulated space of social media have become echo chambers of partisan narratives. Sensationalism, misinformation and hate speech are rampant, amplifying divisions and creating a climate of extreme hostility.

“Instead of bridging divides, Pakistani media often act as a political party itself, feeding polarization rather than informing the public.”

- (Hamid Mir)

1.5. Weak institutions:

Key institutions are meant to be neutral arbiters, but ~~as~~ these institutions like ECP and Judiciary often embroiled in controversy, their impartiality questioned ~~by~~ political actors. This erodes public trust in democratic process itself.

"When court loses credibility,
public loses faith in democracy
itself."

- (Chief Justice Gazi Fae)

The 26th Constitutional Amendment of 2025 restored military trials of civilians, reversing an earlier Supreme court decision. The development highlighted the ongoing challenges to judicial independence and institutional credibility.

2. Impacts of Political Polarization:

2.1. Erosion of Parliament's supremacy:

Parliament, the forum for debate and legislation, has been rendered largely ineffective. Major policy decisions are often made outside the parliament.

~~Parliamentary~~ briefings by the military officials interpreted as a sign of civilian weakness. This demonstrated how legislative authority continue to be overshadowed.

2.2. Politicization of Bureaucracy and Judiciary:

When political polarization is at extreme, state institutions like Judiciary and Bureaucracy are often drawn into political battles. This compromises their neutrality and effectiveness, undermining

the rule of law.

2.3. Economic instability:

The lack of political consensus makes it impossible to formulate and implement ~~pro~~ economic policies. Each government tends to reverse the policies of its predecessor, creating an environment that deters investment and hinders sustainable growth.

• Pakistan's economy has been held hostage by political instability, undermining the long-term planning and investor's confidence.

- (Economist Ishrat Hussain)

3. Roadmap for National Consensus

3.1. A Charter of Democracy:

Political parties should rise above their partisan interests to negotiate "A Charter of Democracy". This should not be about power sharing but agreeing on the fundamental rules of game. This should include:

⇒ A commitment to the supremacy of parliament.

⇒ A national consensus to formulate economic policies regardless of who is in power.

⇒ A code of conduct for political discourse, to curb hate speech and personal attacks.

⇒ No interference of non-democratic forces in political affairs.

3.2. Strengthening Institutions:

⇒ Electoral Reforms: A consensus

must be reached to ensure that all future elections are fair, transparent without any intervention and results are accepted by all major parties. This should involve strengthening the credibility and capacity of ECP.

⇒ Empowering Parliament: The role of parliament must be strengthened to allow detailed, bipartisan scrutiny of legislation and government policies.

33. A National Consensus on Civil-

Military relations:

A structured and sustained dialogue is needed to forge a national consensus to ensure the constitutional role of armed forces. This is sensitive but essential step to ensure that military remains within its constitutional domains, allowing the democratic processes

to function without interference.

3.4. Promoting social media:

While respecting the freedom of speech, a regulatory framework must be developed in consultation with media stakeholders to erode hate speech and ~~misinformation~~. Media should be encouraged to promote issue-based debates rather than partisan shouting matches.

Conclusion:

Political polarization is the most prevailing internal issue of Pakistan. It is self-inflicted wound that impacts institutions, economy and democracy. This roadmap paves a way for Pakistan to restore its political stability and needs a willingness of all parties.

to reach a consensus that ensures Pakistan's progress.

“

Courageous people do not
fear forgiving, for the
sake of peace.”

— (Nelson Mandela)

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This highlights the need
for political reconciliation and dialogue
in Pakistan's current context.

good attempt. but the answer is lengthy and might affect your time management,
so, shorten it a bit.