Question 2

Political instability in Pakistan is threatening the very existence of State. Discuss

The State of Pakistan and the haunting genie of Political instability

Since its creation in 1947, Pakistan has beem been haunted the genie of political instability. The landlords and elite of All India Muslim League were successful in blowing the soul of to Pakistan in the territory we live in today but the political instability that followed has shaken the very existence of state. Unfortunately within the 7 decades of birth of Pakistan, all the four elements of our statehood have been assaulted by internal political challenges.

The Factional Politics of 1947 and the first ten years of Pakistan

The political instability of today was also founded on the 14th August 1947 when Muslim League was presented the question of what next? The elite and landlords who put up the case of separate homeland were supported by the common men and but the creation of Pakistan and the sudden demise of Quaid and Azam, the hope of a bright future was lost. The assassination of Liaqat Ali Khan was the final blow to hopes of stability.

Further blows to the future of Pakistan were the the creation of **All Pakistan Awami Muslim League Party** in 1949, **Jinnah Muslim League** and **Republican Party** in 1951. While the emergence of political parties is a testamount to healthy and inclusive political situation of a country and the soul of democracy yet the situation in which these parties were created in the early years of Pakistan point out the deficiencies and weakness of Muslim league. Within the first years of Pakistan around four new political parties were created and two key leaders lost. Within the next five years from 1951 to 1956, the politics of constitution had begun further showcasing the divide the between Islamic and Secular voices, deprived East Pakistan as evidenced by winning of United Front in 1954 provincial elections and the case of Khwaja Nazimuddin.

In brief, the genie of political instability was present since the first day of Pakistan and since then has been draining the state and its people. The several ways in which political instability has hampered progress and come to threaten the existence of Pakistan is as follows:

1) Economic Inequality and deprivation

The prevalence of political instability in the country has led to economic instability. The political turmoil of the initial years prevented any progress towards economic development and paralyzed the country for years to come. The **elite capture** of political and economic institutions propagated a vicious cycle of extractive institutions as explained by Acemoglu in his famous book: **Why Nations Fail?** As per the **UNDP report of 2021,**

the feudal lords own 23% of the irrigated arable land in the country. Similarly **WEF** reports that the wealthy 1% of Pakistan have access to 24% of the country wealth. The economic plight can be evidenced by the recent 24th IMF bail out package last year. The slowing down of BRI with China since 2013, lack of FDI and Pakistan being the only Asian country ranked 'authoritarian' in 2023 democratic index all have been the results of political instability in the country.

2) Fragile Security and Border skirmishes

Pakistan fought its first war in 1948 and then a series of border skirmishes and wars with India. At the same time, the western neighbor vetoed membership to the UN and eyed the Pashtun regions of the country. Both the India and Afghanistan factors were exacerbated by the political instability within the country. Indian **PM Nehru** had remarked that 'I do not change clothes as much as Pakistan changes its political leadership.' The internal issues were the major reason Pakistan lost its eastern wing now called Bangladesh. The conflicting interests of political players, vested aims and local view led to disagreements and exacerbated the security issues of country.

3) Societal polarization and violence

The political instability of Pakistan has polarized the society and exacerbated the deep divisions between haves and have nots as well as Islamic and secular groups. The anti Ahmadiya

riots in Lahore, sectarian divide of **Shia and Sunni** as well as the poor situation of minorities be it from forced conversions in Sindh to **religious Blasphemy** cases and from burning down of Christian houses in 2023 to mob attack on a Sri lankan worker in Sialkot all can be traced back to the instability of political leadership. The distracted leadership in their own tug of war ignored the actualization of the very ideas that Pakistan was created. The fissures and animosities developed since the discussion on 1949 **Objectives Resolution** started are deeply embedded today. According to many scholars, a little more understanding behavior & compromise in the beginning years could have consolidated the people rather than dividing them.

4) Provincial Animosity

The language issue with East Bengal led to a major obstacle in nation building and eventually lost of East Pakistan. The critique on centralization of power by **Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy** of East Pakistan and Sindhi nationalist **G.M Syed** were just two of the many silenced voices for provincial autonomy. The ignorance of **Balochistan** and dissolution of Atzlluah Mengal government also sowed the seeds of provincial animosity. Even today, this animosity has only increased as evidenced by the recent killings of South Punjab laborers and travellers in Balochistan. The political elite of the early years did not create an optimum environment for all provinces and hence even today the provinces stand fragmented and unequal in development.

5) Institutional imbalance and hostility

The very beginning of institutional imbalance in Pakistan started when the **Constituent Assembly** of Pakistan was dissolved. The political agendas of individual took precedence over the very core and important institution. What followed next was the hostile imbalance among all institutions of Pakistan. The use and abuse of **Doctrine of Necessity** by judiciary, suspension and abeyance of constitutions, political invitations to military for power, coups and tug of war between the three branches of government. Had it not been for political instability, the present of Pakistan would have been very different.

6) Human Development and governance

Pakistan's political instability is from 1947 to the turn of century and today created security and economic hurdles at the cost of human development. The very famous **Dr. Mehboobul Haque** who coined the term of human security once said = "What the people of Pakistan want? Development and or Democracy? Prompt came the response : if democracy brings development then democracy; if it does not they want development." Pakistan is doing very poor in various human development indexes according to global reports. Pakistan ranks 133rd on **Corruption Index** according to Transparency International. According to the **Global Peace Index 2024** it ranked 140 out of the 163 countries and was placed in the low category. Such poor performance on the global indicators is the evidence of poor stability.
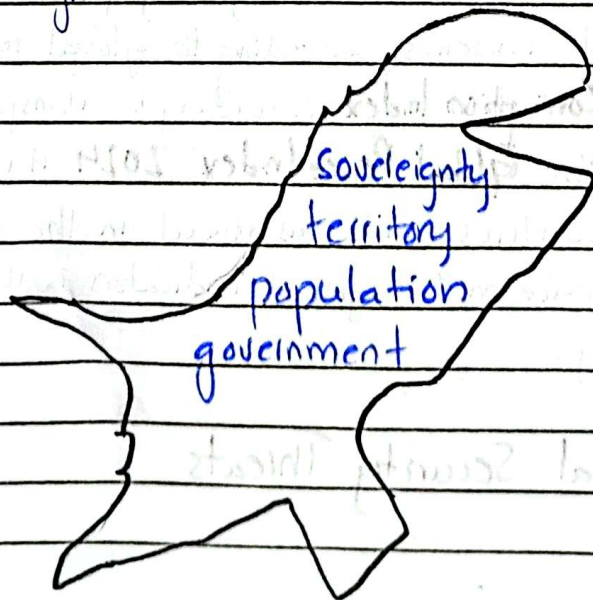
7) Non Traditional Security Threats

While Pakistan was battling the internal tug of war and wars on the eastern border & threats from the Western side it could not effectively focus on the shifting nature of threat spectrum. Today Pakistan is a victim of the 5th generational warfare and Cyber attacks. The **Pegasus software** issue of 2021 and the **EU DisinfoLab** are just two of the many cyber threats facing the country. Moreover, the **2022 floods** of Pakistan and severe food and water shortages along with smog issue have sti lowered progress on the economic scale.

Way Forward towards political Stability

While the history of Pakistan is grappled with political instability and its spill over to various other domains from economic backwardness to violence, there is still hope in the future. The democratic transitions of governments since 2008, successful military operations and modernization to keep threats at bay and inclusion of non traditional security dynamics in National Security strategy is a step in the right direction.

Sovereignty
territory
population
government

A four pronged strategy to strengthen the existence of state is needed: By virtue of the term, a state comprises of four elements: sovereignty, territory, population and government.

1) Sovereignty

Pakistan has been focusing its security framework due to the eastern and western threats. Pakistan has fought wars to protect its external sovereignty from other states and present itself an independent country. With respect to its internal sovereignty, it was grappled with various challenges from minorities to provinces to and this will continue to happen until a sound and sustainable political set up is created. There is need for a reconceptualization of political socialization and culture and move towards a sensetet sensible issue based discussion rather than negative rhetoric and Vitrol as per Maleeha Lodhi.

2) Territory

Pakistan lost its territory in 1971 and after that it has developed a strong tendency and potential to protect its territory. The doctrine of **strategic depth** has been re-centered towards South and an ally on north has alleviated some burden for the country. Pakistan has maintained a strong stance on **Kashmir** in successive governments and voiced concerns over foreign elements in Baluchistan and **Surgical Strikes.**

3) Population

While Pakistan is facing a decline in the population quality human resource due to education disparities, poor lifestyle and brain drain, a positive factor is the rise in the urban middle class which now constitutes around 50 Mn and 27% of total population. With proper focus on social development, the population can be made a valuable asset.

4) Government

Lastly, the fourth pillar is the government. It is the engine of the State and the major issue of Pakistani State. The lack of proper separation of powers, interference of the three branches in each other affairs has paralyzed the state. But with the latest 26th amendment, an effort has been made to delineate the functions of the three branches of the government.

Conclusion

The major discontent among the muslims of the sub-continent was ignited when their demand of separate electorate for a true and representative government was not fulfilled. It led to a path for creation of a state that allows them to practice Islam, live by freedom and prosper. However the weak foundations of Muslim league created space for a long race and tug of power which led to politi musical chairs politics till 2008. Till now, the lack of political stability is threatening the existence of state.