

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.

1) Introduction:-

Political stability is a concept that has never really materialized in Pakistan.

"For 60 years, Pakistani leaders have departed power in handcuffs or coffins, expelled by military coups, rigged votes and lurid assassinations."

—Declan Walsh in The Nine Lives of Pakistan, 2020.

The reasons for political stability are various including absence of grassroots democracy, political infighting, lack of awareness and interference of institutions into matters beyond their jurisdiction. The solution to this problem lies in reforms like electoral reforms, intra-party democracy, education and ensuring a balance between civil-military relations.

2) Factors contributing to fractured nature of Pakistan's polity:-

The following factors have been the ~~cause~~ reason why political stability remains elusive in Pakistan:-

a) Dynastic Politics

This means that there is lack of internal democracy and families rule political parties. The lack of party reforms has prevented the fruits of democracy from reaching the common man.

"The pir families remain of immense political importance in much of Pakistan." — Anatol Lieven in his book Pakistan: A hard Country

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b) Frequent Military Interventions

The political process has often been punctuated with military intervention in Pakistan. The military has often found loopholes or excuses to intervene without facing much resistance. Regarding the coup of 1999, Hasan Askar says:-

"The imposition of martial law was not contested by any civilian group and the military had no problem assuming and consolidating power."

c) Weak Institutions • Marred With Corruption

The institutions of Pakistan that have been entrusted with crucial duties like

the election commission and anti-graft body have been marred with corruption.

d) Political Infighting

This is one of the reasons why unconstitutional forces find space to intervene in the first place. Commenting on the chaos that this infighting created, Hamid Khan in Constitutional and Political History writes: - "After 7 years of political instability (1951-58), the military regime put the country on the path of stability."

e) Socioeconomic Instability

Socioeconomic factors often lead to political unrest and riots that destabilize the elected government and provide an excuse for non-democratic entities to interfere.

f) Restrictions on Media and Civil Society Groups

Media is often dubbed as the fourth pillar of the state and is crucial for supporting democracy. Civil society groups also provide a check and balance system. Both of these elements have often faced restrictions during various military and civilian regimes.

g) Role of Judiciary in Supporting Unconstitutional Steps

At some instances, the judiciary has provided cover to undemocratic blunders.

of those in power. Maulvi Tameez ud Din case where the court provided legal cover to the dissolution of 1st constituent assembly is one case.

h) Lack of Public Awareness

Lack of public awareness about the principles of democracy and the idea of holding representative accountable is yet another hurdle. Here people often vote based on caste or clan affiliations or simply sell their votes.

i) Rigged Elections

In Pakistan, the transparency of electoral process is also questionable. The impartiality of electoral body is also contested. According to HRCP (2025), even the latest national elections were marred with issues like post-poll result delays and internet blockage.

3) Potential Reforms that can Foster Stability:-

Although the political stability in Pakistan is difficult to maintain, yet the following steps can help the country move in the forward direction:

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a) Electoral Reforms

This is by far the most important step for achieving political stability. Depoliticizing the Election Commission will help. Moreover, making the electoral process smooth and efficient through the inclusion

Technology is also crucial.

b) Intra Party Democracy

This step is crucial to ensure that the power does not accumulate in the hands of elites. Currently only a few parties hold intra party elections, others do so only symbolically. Pakistan needs to implement intra party democracy in the real sense.

c) Implementing Democracy at Grassroot level

The local government system in Pakistan has largely remained weak and has faced resistance from politicians at national and provincial level. What the country needs is an effective local government system where the local wield power over their resources and expenses.

d) Political Awareness and Education of the Masses

This is necessary to help the people understand the real power of democracy. Without this, the fruits of democracy will not reach the public.

"Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy is therefore education."

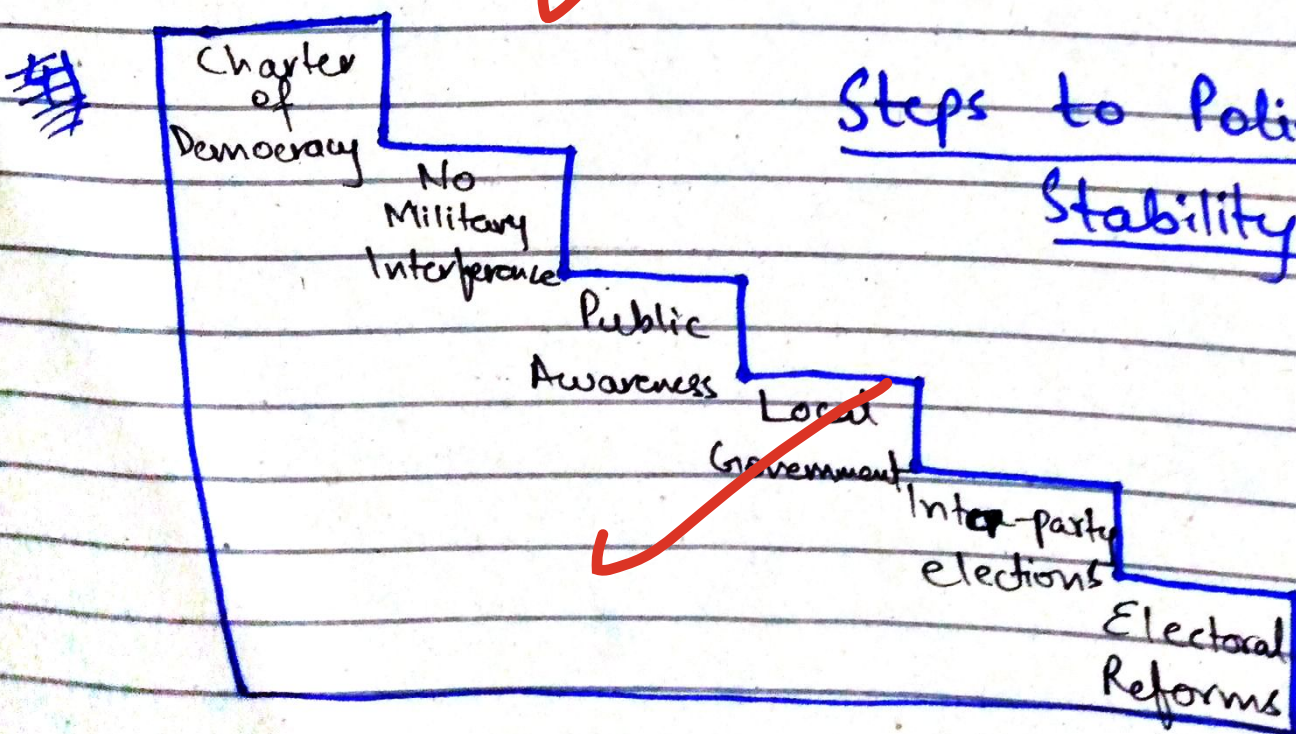
— FDR

e) Decision of Military Topbrass to Not Interfere in Politics

It is also crucial for the military topbrass ~~now~~ to not interfere with matters outside of their duties. Reciprocally, the civilian governments should also avoid interfering in the internal affairs of military administration.

f) Agreeing on a New Charter of Democracy

Drawing on the success of previous Charter of Democracy, the major political powers should also come up with a new Charter that prioritizes people centric politics instead of party-centric politics.



Steps to Political Stability

4) Conclusion :-

In the last 8 decades, Pakistan has failed to develop strong roots of democracy and political stability. Issues like military intervention, institutional weakness and social issues have prevented it from doing so. However, with necessary reforms (both constitutional and political), Pakistan can achieve political stability. This change will be slow but is certainly possible.

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