

Define the political culture of Pakistan and mention its salient features.

Introduction: Pakistan's political culture has been marked by a number of ongoing challenges, such as authoritarianism, patronage-based politics, political polarization, lack of trust in institutions, dynastic politics, the influence of religious groups, political instability, and corruption. These challenges have hindered the country's progress and development and have prevented the establishment of a stable and effective democracy. Therefore, it is important to explore strategies that could be implemented to transform Pakistan's political culture and create a more inclusive, accountable and transparent political system.

Definitions: *The political culture of a country refers to the shared beliefs, values, and norms that shape the political behavior of its citizens and the functioning of its political system.*

According to political scientist Gabriel Almond, *political culture includes "the attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments that give order and meaning to a political process and that provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system."*

Another definition by political scientist **Samuel P. Huntington** states that *political culture is "the specific set of attitudes, beliefs, and values that give meaning to a political process and that provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in a political system."*

Salient Features:

Authoritarianism: The political culture of Pakistan has traditionally been characterized by authoritarianism, with a strong central government and a weak civil society. The military has played a dominant role in politics throughout the country's history, often intervening in political affairs and undermining democratic institutions.

- Example: The military has intervened in politics numerous times throughout Pakistan's history, including through direct coups d'etat in 1958, 1977, and 1999.

Patronage-based politics: Patronage-based politics is a common feature of Pakistani politics, in which politicians provide patronage and financial support to their supporters in exchange for political loyalty. This has led to a lack of accountability and transparency in government decision-making.

- Example: The practice of politicians providing patronage and financial support to their supporters is a common feature of Pakistani politics, with many politicians using their positions of power to provide jobs, contracts, and other benefits to their supporters.

Political polarization: Pakistan's political culture is marked by deep polarization along ethnic, religious, and regional lines. This has led to a lack of consensus on important political issues and a lack of cooperation between different political actors.

- Example: The deep political polarization in Pakistan has led to a lack of consensus on important issues such as national security, economic policy, and relations with neighboring countries.

Lack of trust in institutions: The political culture of Pakistan is characterized by a lack of trust in political institutions, particularly in the judiciary and the electoral system. This has led to a lack of faith in the democratic process and a lack of participation in elections.

- Example: The lack of trust in institutions is evident in the low voter turnout and lack of faith in the electoral process, as well as the frequent protests against perceived political injustices.

Dynastic politics: Many political families in Pakistan have dominated the political scene for multiple generations, passing on power and influence within their families. This has led to a lack of political competition and lack of opportunities for new political leaders to emerge.

- Example: The Bhutto family has been a major political force in Pakistan for decades, with both Benazir Bhutto and her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto having served as Prime Ministers, and her son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari currently leading the Pakistan Peoples Party.

Influence of religious groups: Religious groups have played a significant role in shaping the political culture of Pakistan, often exerting pressure on politicians and the government to implement policies that align with their religious beliefs.

- Example: The influence of religious groups can be seen in the pressure put on the government to pass laws such as the blasphemy laws, which have been criticized for being used to target religious minorities and for violating human rights.

Political instability: Pakistan has a history of political instability, with frequent changes in government and a lack of continuity in policy-making. This has led to a lack of stability and predictability in the country's political and economic environment.

- Example: Since its independence, Pakistan has had 18 Prime Ministers, with the average tenure of a Prime Minister being less than two years. This political instability has affected the country's economic growth and development.

Corruption: Corruption is pervasive in Pakistan's political culture and has been a major hindrance to the country's development. It undermines the rule of law, erodes public trust in government and negatively affects the economy and the delivery of public services.

- Example: Transparency International's 2020 report ranked Pakistan at 124th out of 180 countries in terms of corruption perception, indicating a high level of corruption in the country.
- According to CPI 2021, Pakistan with a score of 28 ranks at 140th place on the list, which is a downgrade from the last year's score of 31 which saw Pakistan ranked on 124th position on the CPI 2020. The last time Pakistan had a score of 28 was in 2013 when the country was ranked on 127th position on the CPI.

Highlight the current scenario of Pakistan political culture.

The current scenario of Pakistan's political culture is marked by a number of ongoing challenges and issues. Some of the key features of the current political culture in Pakistan include:

1. **Struggle for democracy:** Pakistan has a history of military interventions in politics and a lack of democratic institutions. In recent years, there has been a push for greater civilian control of government and the strengthening of democratic institutions. However, the military still holds significant power and influence in the country, and democratic transition has been slow.
2. **Political polarization:** Pakistan remains deeply polarized along ethnic, religious, and regional lines, with different political actors often competing for power rather than cooperating for the greater good of the country. This has led to a lack of consensus on important political issues, such as national security and economic policy.
3. **Lack of trust in institutions:** There is still a lack of trust in political institutions in Pakistan, particularly in the judiciary and the electoral system. This has led to a lack of faith in the democratic process and a lack of participation in elections.
4. **Corruption:** Corruption continues to be a major problem in Pakistan's political culture, with high-level corruption affecting the country's economic growth and development.
5. **Influence of religious groups:** Religious groups continue to exert significant influence in Pakistan's political culture, with many politicians catering to their demands in order to gain political support.
6. **Political Instability:** Pakistan's political instability remains a challenge, with frequent changes in government and a lack of continuity in policy-making. This has led to a lack of stability and predictability in the country's political and economic environment.

7. **Dynastic politics:** Dynastic politics is still prevalent in Pakistan with many political families continuing to dominate the political scene for multiple generations, passing on power and influence within their families. This has led to a lack of political competition and lack of opportunities for new political leaders to emerge.
8. **Economic crisis:** Pakistan's economy is facing a number of challenges, including high inflation, high levels of debt, and a large trade deficit. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these economic challenges, which has led to high unemployment and poverty rates. This has affected the political culture as well, with many citizens losing trust in government's ability to handle the crisis.

Examples of current scenario of Pakistan political culture.

1. Struggle for democracy:

- Pakistan has had a history of military interventions in politics, with the military having taken control of the government through coups in 1958, 1977, and 1999.
- In recent years, there has been a push for greater civilian control of government and the strengthening of democratic institutions. However, the military still holds significant power and influence in the country, as seen in the 2018 general elections where military was accused of influencing the outcome of the polls.

2. Political polarization:

- Pakistan remains deeply polarized along ethnic, religious, and regional lines. For example, political parties in Pakistan have been known to appeal to voters along ethnic and religious lines, rather than on issues of policy and governance.
- According to the 2020 report by the Pew Research Center, about two-thirds (68%) of Pakistanis say there is a lot of division between different religious groups in their country.

3. Lack of trust in institutions:

- There is still a lack of trust in political institutions in Pakistan, particularly in the judiciary and the electoral system. For example, in a 2019 survey by the International Republican Institute (IRI), only 20% of respondents said they had a lot of confidence in the electoral process.
- Similarly, a 2020 report by the World Economic Forum ranked Pakistan at 141 out of 190 countries in terms of judicial independence, indicating a lack of trust in the judiciary.

4. Corruption:

- Corruption continues to be a major problem in Pakistan's political culture, with high-level corruption affecting the country's economic growth and development.
- According to CPI 2021, Pakistan with a score of 28 ranks at 140th place on the list, which is a downgrade from the last year's score of 31 which saw Pakistan ranked on 124th position on the CPI 2020. The last time Pakistan had a score of 28 was in 2013 when the country was ranked on 127th position on the CPI.

5. Influence of religious groups:

- Religious groups continue to exert significant influence in Pakistan's political culture, with many politicians catering to their demands in order to gain political support.
- For example, the government of Pakistan has been criticized for passing laws such as the blasphemy laws, which have been used to target religious minorities and have been criticized for violating human rights.

6. Political Instability:

- Pakistan's political instability remains a challenge, with frequent changes in government and a lack of continuity in policy-making.
- Since its independence, *Pakistan has had 18 Prime Ministers, with the average tenure of a Prime Minister being less than two years.*

7. Dynastic politics:

- Dynastic politics is still prevalent in Pakistan with many political families continuing to dominate the political scene for multiple generations, passing on power and influence within their families.
- For example, The Bhutto family has been a major political force in Pakistan for decades, with both Benazir Bhutto and her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto having served as Prime Ministers, and her son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari currently leading the Pakistan Peoples Party.

8. Economic crisis:

- Pakistan's economy is facing a number of challenges, including high inflation, high levels of debt, and a large trade deficit.
- According to the World Bank, Pakistan's GDP growth rate was -0.4% in 2020 and is projected to be 1.5% in 2021, indicating a negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's economy. The World Bank has projected Pakistan's GDP growth rate at **4 percent** for 2022-23.

Strategies to transform this rotten political culture of Pakistan, with examples of other nations.

Here are a few strategies that could be implemented to transform the political culture of Pakistan:

- 1. Strengthening democratic institutions:** One of the key strategies for transforming Pakistan's political culture would be to strengthen democratic institutions such as the judiciary, the electoral commission, and the parliament. This could be done by increasing their autonomy, transparency, and accountability, to create a more level playing field for political actors and to increase public trust in these institutions.
 - Example: *In South Korea, the judiciary and the electoral commission were reformed in the 1990s to increase their independence and transparency, which helped to consolidate democracy in the country.*
- 2. Encouraging political participation:** Another strategy would be to increase public participation in the political process, by promoting voter education, civic engagement and encouraging citizens to participate in elections. This could help to increase public trust in the electoral process and to create a more inclusive political culture.
 - Example: *In Chile, a comprehensive voter education program was introduced in the 1990s, which helped to increase voter turnout and to create a more informed and engaged electorate.*
- 3. Combating corruption:** Combating corruption is another important strategy for transforming Pakistan's political culture. This can be done by implementing measures such as transparency in government procurement, public financial management and creating a strong and independent anti-corruption agency.
 - Example: *In Singapore, a strong anti-corruption agency was created in the 1970s, which helped to reduce corruption and to create a more transparent and efficient government.*
- 4. Promoting national unity:** Promoting national unity and reducing political polarization is another important
- 5. Promoting transparency and accountability in political financing:** Political financing is a major source of corruption and lack of accountability in politics. To promote transparency and accountability in political financing, the government can introduce regulations on campaign financing and disclosure of political donations.
 - Example: *In Canada, the laws on political financing are quite strict and transparent, with regulations in place for disclosure of political donations and limits on campaign spending.*
- 6. Encouraging grassroots political participation:** To promote a more inclusive political culture, it is important to encourage political participation at the grassroots level. This can be done by supporting the development of civil society organizations, promoting citizen engagement in local government, and encouraging community-based decision-making.
 - Example: *In India, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, aimed at decentralizing government and promoting grassroots political participation, by mandating the creation of local*

government bodies such as panchayats and municipalities.

7. **Promoting media freedom and freedom of expression:** A free and independent press plays an important role in promoting transparency and accountability in politics. To promote media freedom, the government can create a legal framework to protect freedom of expression, and independent regulatory bodies to ensure that media outlets operate freely and ethically.
 - Example: *In Norway, the media is considered to be among the freest in the world*, with strong legal protections for freedom of expression and a high level of journalistic independence.
8. **Encouraging youth political participation:** Youth participation in politics is crucial for the future of democracy. Encouraging youth political participation through civic education, supporting youth-led organizations, and creating opportunities for young people to participate in political decision-making can be a way to engage young people in the political process.
 - Example: *In Brazil, the "Youth Statute" was passed in 1990*, which aimed at encouraging youth political participation by creating opportunities for young people to participate in political decision-making and by promoting civic education.

Conclusion: Transforming Pakistan's political culture will require a multi-faceted approach that addresses the various challenges that the country faces. Strategies such as strengthening democratic institutions, encouraging political participation, combating corruption, promoting national unity, transparency and accountability in political financing, encouraging grassroots political participation, promoting media freedom and freedom of expression, and encouraging youth political participation can help to create a more inclusive, accountable and transparent political system in Pakistan. However, it will take time, effort, and political will to implement these strategies and to achieve the desired changes.