Political Churn in Pakistan

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- Democracy has always been fragile in Pakistan, and popularly elected governments have been overthrown repeatedly by the military.
\n
- In this context, the recent conviction and sentencing of the former PM and leader of the ruling PML party “Nawaz Sharif”, is seen as politically motivated.
\n

\n\n

What is the political context in Pakistan?

\n\n

\n
- After repeated military coups and instability, it was only in 2013 that a transfer of power from one democratically elected government to another was realised.
\n
- The country is nearing a second such transfer, and general elections are scheduled for July 2018, but recent developments have cast serious doubts.
\n
- **The Case -** Nawaz Sharif was convicted and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for a corruption case.
\n
- The conviction disqualifies Nawaz Sharif from contesting the upcoming elections this year, and has caused a vacuum in his party and the overall polity.
\n
- The charges are indeed serious, but the case is largely perceived as politically motivated by Pakistan’s deep state that is seeking to curtail democracy.
\n

- **Suspicions -** Many politicians (including Mr. Sharif's critics), have voiced that the military and judiciary seem overzealous to convict Mr. Sherif.
  \n
- Mr. Sharif has been accusing the state agencies of directly colluding with opposition parties like Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.
  \n
- Further, Mr. Sharif has also stated that deep state actors (implying military and intelligence) are financing Imran's campaigns against him.
  \n

\n\n

What are the political implications?

\n\n

  \n
- Neutralising Mr. Sharif's political role in Pakistan's future clearly seems to be the main motive of this campaign, but the resultant implications look serious.
  \n
- To disrupt any neutral opinions from being voiced, media houses have been facing harassment, and journalists have been threatened.
  \n
- In line with the systematic campaign to eliminate secularist politicians who don't tow the military line, ANP leader Haroon was recently assassinated.
  \n
- While it is already too volatile for "free and fair elections", the atmosphere has been further vitiated by extremist factions entering mainstream politics.
  \n
- Notably, radical groups like "Allah-o-Akbar Tehreek" are being tolerated by the military, despite stern warnings from the international agencies.
  \n
- The elections will serve as one marker for the democratic process; the larger struggle in Pakistan for the deepening of democracy will continue.
  \n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n

