

FORUM:	The Advisory Panel
ISSUE:	Measures to Strengthen Democratic Governance and Reduce Political Instability in Pakistan
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Introduction

Since Pakistan's birth in 1949, its political system has always been in turmoil. Pakistan experienced three different constitutions and three dictators. The commonality between the regimes Pakistan has had in its short history is political instability and a lack of democracy, despite being envisioned as a democratic parliamentary republic. Constant changes in governing systems and leaders create problems for Pakistan, from economic instability to poor infrastructure and a lack of overall growth. This is an issue that needs to be addressed, especially considering Pakistan has the fifth-largest population in the world.

Background

In August 1949, two sovereign states emerged from Britain's Indian Empire: Pakistan and India. Despite these two countries having similar origins, the governing systems did not develop simultaneously. India was able to hold democratic elections after 5 years of the nation's birth, while it took Pakistan nine years to adopt its first constitution (Tudor). This constitution was soon undermined by a coup led by General Mohammed Ayub Khan, which launched Pakistan into a cycle of military dictatorships, effectively preventing Pakistan from having democratic governance and a stable political system.

Throughout Pakistan's history, a chain of military coups was launched, starting from 1951, with attempts being successful and others being unsuccessful. The first successful military coup was the 1953 Constitutional Coup d'état. This coup,



THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

*[Passed by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on the
29th February, 1956 and assented to by the
Governor-General]*

Figure 1 An image of Pakistan's Constitution



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however, is different from the others, as it was a constitutional coup led by Governor General Ghulam Mohammad. Results of this coup include the overthrow of Prime Minister Khawaja Nazimuddin, who was elected to the government in 1953, and the dismissal of Pakistan's first constituent assembly in 1954 (Pathania). Thus, this sets a precedent for coups and political instability in Pakistan, and it can be observed that one of Pakistan's only tastes of democracy was during the period between 1949 and 1953. The significance of the government was that it was the group that attempted to establish a constitution, leaving Pakistan with no democratic roots. After this, a series of coups played out in Pakistan. The following coups were all military coups that left Pakistan in military dictatorships. The 1971 Military Officers' revolt started this trend, which left Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as president. Bhutto passed a constitution through Pakistan's National Assembly, becoming the first to be framed by elected officials (Hunter). While this may seem good for establishing democracy, it left the people of Pakistan without fundamental human rights and allowed for torture (Amnesty International). As time progressed into 1977, Operation Fairplay happened and removed Bhutto from power; instead, it put Zia-ul-Haq in power. Despite promising "free and fair elections," Zia arrested his political opponents, dissolved any legislative body, and suspended the Constitution (Zunes). These events began Pakistan's constant political change and challenges in establishing a functional constitution. This leads to increased political instability and a lack of any base for democratic governance.



Figure 2 Zia-ul-Haq

Another factor that leads to Pakistan's political instability and lack of democracy is its extreme corruption. Pakistan is the "135 least corrupt nation out of 180 countries", according to Transparency International (Transparency International). Corruption in Pakistan has led to no Prime Minister completing a five-year-long Government term. This is only worsened by Pakistan's anti-corruption laws, which protect the political entity's interests rather than the public's interests. While the laws say that corruption is a crime that will have individuals face severe punishment, this is not in practice, as the anti-corruption agency of Pakistan is extremely weak. Leaders of governments often acquire hundreds of millions of dollars, wealth, and assets (European Foundation for South Asian Studies). Not only are the government leaders corrupt, but also the judicial system, police, public utilities, and military. This societal-wide corruption destroys any chance that Pakistan has in creating a democratic government, as



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corruption leaves Pakistan in a state of political anarchy and unlawful rule, which is all done to gain more power.

Furthermore, Pakistan is stranded in a socio-economic disaster. She has been suffering from poverty, unemployment, and poor infrastructure. Pakistan's economic challenges create a loop of problems with its political system. Her political instability has caused Pakistan to sink into an unseen economic crisis. The value of the Pakistani Rupee has been depreciating, and in a March 2025 study, Pakistan's rupee is valued at 249.2 per US dollar. (Desk). Additionally, the economic situation also presents a challenge to Pakistan in establishing an effective democracy. It is seen that to establish an effective democratic political system, capital and time are required; however, Pakistan does not have these conditions and thus will not be able to establish an effective democratic system ((Roy, Saira and Rehman).

All in all, Pakistan's history with coups, political instability, and its socio-economic disaster all contribute to Pakistan not having an effective democratic system. If these issues are not addressed, there will be no chance of creating strong democratic governance in Pakistan.

Problems Raised

Civil-Military Imbalance

Pakistan's military has always had a dominant position in all aspects of Pakistan, from the



Figure 3 Pakistan's military leaders and political leaders

political system to its relations with its people. The military of Pakistan has always been more dominant than civilian institutions and has proven itself to be a block in establishing democracy. With Ayub Khan's regime from 1958 to 1969, the military was far more dominant than the civilian side. This proved to be an essential pivot point in military and civilian balance. Ayub established himself as the military chief and the head of state, making him a military dictator.

During his rule, there was nothing from the civilian side to oppose Ayub's rule. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). This trend continued into modern Pakistan, with the power still being in the military despite having a civilian government. The power of the civilian government is only present on paper, while the military still has power. (Kaura). This gross imbalance of power leaves Pakistan stranded in a place where democracy does not exist and will probably not unless this power dynamic is shifted.

Weak governance & Corruption

Pakistan has been fighting a battle against corruption and weak governance; however, there is little effect. Good governance is defined as adding “a normative or evaluative attribute to the process of governing.” (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner). Pakistan’s political instability and a lack of a clear system of running the country force Pakistan to face problems of weak governance. Pakistan also faces corruption, where “leaders” of the country are becoming wealthy while a majority of the population still lives in poverty. The temptation of gain through corruption keeps these politicians in power, which only keeps Pakistan politically unstable and without strong governance.

Problems with the Justice System

A criminal justice system is a feature of any prosperous nation and is crucial in ensuring a functional and just society. Pakistan’s criminal justice system has been highly inefficient and utterly dysfunctional. The system in Pakistan connects several institutions, such as the police, prosecution, prisons, etc., much like any nation does; however, these institutions are ineffective. (Khan). This is caused by the political system of Pakistan being corrupt and lacking any strength in its governance.

Economic Crisis

Pakistan’s political instability has led to an all-out economic crisis with its consequences. Pakistan has been suffering from poverty, unemployment, lack of trust from the international community, failure of its currency, depleted economic resources, and poor infrastructure due to the financial crisis caused by political instability. The value of the Pakistani rupee has plummeted and is currently at 249.9 rupees per USD. Additionally, Pakistan is constantly receiving loans due to this economic crisis. It has a \$7 billion bailout package from the International Monetary Fund and an accumulated \$26.6 billion debt to China. Furthermore, no foreign investor is willing to invest in Pakistan due to a lack of confidence that their investment will be paid back, which worsens Pakistan’s economic crisis.

International Actions

EU Pressure



The EU, or European Union, has put pressure on Pakistan to help with its weak governance and



Figure 4 Pakistani official meeting with an EU official discussing the GSP+ program

political instability. Pakistan is part of the Generalized Scheme of Preference Plus (GSP+) program, which incentivizes developing countries to develop with good governance by cutting import duties to zero on two-thirds of exports. As part of this agreement, countries being supported must abide by 27 international conventions ranging from human rights to, most importantly, good governance. (EU).

The benefits of this program will help Pakistan with its governance problems and force it to change.

IMF Loans

This may seem like an action to help alleviate Pakistan's economic crisis, but it will also help Pakistan's political problems. In the many loans from the IMF to Pakistan, there have always been terms that aim to help Pakistan become self-sufficient. In the most recent IMF bailout package for Pakistan, the IMF stipulated 11 new conditions, including requiring parliamentary budget approval and decreasing military spending. (ET Online). This will help increase Pakistan's democratic governance as it forces Pakistan's civil sector to contribute more to decision-making regarding Pakistan's future. The decrease of Pakistan's military budget will also help address the civil-military imbalance as it prevents the military from having more financial power, increasing its influence.

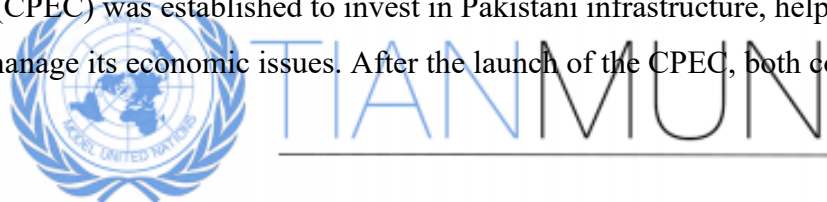
Key Players

Pakistan's Government

Pakistan's government is the primary focus of this issue. This can be attributed to Pakistan's inability to establish a stable rule system, which has always been in political turmoil. The government of Pakistan is also refusing to address other factors feeding this vicious cycle, such as its problematic economy. Pakistan's government and legislative systems are the causes of the lack of governance and political instability, as it continues to suffer from rampant corruption and has a judicial system that acts as a highly inefficient system.

China

China and Pakistan's relationship has been a crucial one for Pakistan. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was established to invest in Pakistani infrastructure, help Pakistan grow economically, and manage its economic issues. After the launch of the CPEC, both countries formed a



joint committee to help Pakistan develop in all ways. This committee is led by China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and Pakistan's Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives (MPDS). This will help Pakistan's economy and allow it to develop a structure within its planning systems and government. (Zhang and Malik).

Possible Solutions

Foreign Pressure

Foreign bodies can apply pressure on Pakistan through terms and conditions. This can be done similarly to what the EU did with the GSP+ program. Foreign bodies looking to help Pakistan could set strict standards and conditions. Additionally, due to the corruption within Pakistan and its inefficient systems, the foreign body can conduct its own studies and reports to analyze if Pakistan meets its conditions. This solution will only work if the incentive for Pakistan is great enough; otherwise, this pressure could do nothing. Furthermore, tariffs could be another form of pressure. Countries could increase trade tariffs, as with conditions for Pakistan, such as if Pakistan doesn't meet a standard, they will impose tariffs on it. Tariffs could cause Pakistan's economic problems to worsen, so the magnitude of punishment must be weighed.

Governance Reforms

Pakistan's problem is within its core; it does not have a functional government system. Throughout its history, Pakistan has never had a democracy centered constitution, and even if there were one, it would be quickly violated by the governing body. A large part of the issue is that there are problems with the elections, leaving Pakistan in an unjust state. Election observation missions can be embarked on to ensure the transparency and credibility of the electoral process. Additionally, if Pakistan were to host elections, they must be done with external supervision to prevent rigging and other governance issues that may arise from unfair elections. An example of successful external supervision would be the EU's observation in Nigeria in 2023. This mission allowed for the EU to identify areas in Nigeria's system that need to be adjusted, including real-time publication of results, access to electoral results, etc. These improvements are projected to benefit the problems with the elections and fairness in Nigeria. Pakistan's judicial and anti-corruption systems must also be reformed. This cannot be done by Pakistan herself instead for the best results a cohort of member states and external bodies should do it.



Glossary

Coup d'état

The overthrow by a government, usually carried out by the military, often leaves the country without democracy.

Corruption

The abuse of power for private gain can be done through bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, etc.

Good Governance

An effective, transparent, accountable, and equitable government of a country.

Electoral Integrity

The adherence to democratic principles in the electoral process guarantees fairness, transparency, inclusiveness, and freedom from manipulation.



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