**Failing democracy in Pakistan**

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Around the globe, developed nations have devised viable policies and strengthened their political structure in support of the smooth functioning of democracy. At the time of independence, Pakistan inherited administrative departments marred by lack of resources, suffered constraint of efficient officials to govern its affairs, and continued practicing centuries-old British governing system ingrained through the adoption of an interim legal framework in the shape of the Government of India Act 1935.

Despite the tumultuous journey, the constituent assembly managed to give Pakistan its first constitution, promulgated in 1956 to equip the country with its first legal framework, though inspired by the Government of India Act 1935. It provided a constitutional commitment of a parliamentary form of government and equipped citizens with fundamental rights such as the freedom of speech, assembly, and basic human rights that formed the basis of democracy. The most important feature of the constitution was the separation of powers to ensure the conflict-free functioning of the provincial and federal institutions, which was an initial step towards a sustainable democracy.

[Pakistan reports 1,649 COVID-19 cases in single day](https://nation.com.pk/10-Jan-2022/pakistan-reports-1-649-covid-19-cases-in-single-day)

In between the infamous military rules, the democratic regimes, though inconsistent, continued their effort to rebound the country on a democratic track by providing it with another constitution in 1962 based on the presidential model. However, that was abrogated as well in 1969. Pakistan’s history is tainted by dictatorial rules, massive corruption and leaders’ myopic attitude towards national interest and the strengthening of state institutions was never on their agenda list. In 1973, Pakistan got its last constitution which is still in practice; with a few major amendments it was suspended in 1988, and later in 1999 until 2008, when the country was handed back to a democratic regime through transparent elections.

Throughout the tumultuous journey of being under the totalitarian regimes, the constitution was abrogated multiple times and national, provincial assemblies were dissolved, the power of the federal executive was seized, and bureaucracy functioned with limited power under the direct control of the military establishment. Pakistan was run in the absence of legislatures for years, without any effective policy formulation that could have taken place in the crucial years of the country, when it required discussion and legislation on matters determining the future of Pakistan, and its forthcoming generations.

[19 killed, including 9 children, in New York apartment fire](https://nation.com.pk/10-Jan-2022/19-killed-including-9-children-in-new-york-apartment-fire)

Besides the Government of India Act 1935, Pakistan inherited penal laws and its procedural code from the British legal system; along with Sharia laws this has in effect formed a hybrid legal system within the country. The confused state of laws, and uncertainty for the common man to ask for redressal has delayed justice.

Democracy Index’s global ranking in 2020 landed Pakistan at the 105th position among 165 independent nations, and was still considered a “Hybrid Regime”, out of the four types of regimes: “full democracy”, “flawed democracy”, “hybrid regime” or “authoritarian regime.” Countries falling in the hybrid category are those where transparent elections reportedly have substantial irregularities.

Factors of the hybrid regime include misgovernance issues, unchecked corruption and massive looting in government institutions. Additionally, Pakistan’s constitution under Article 25-A commits to provide free education to children in pursuit of raising the literacy rate. An educated population is a foremost criterion in achieving the status of a full democracy within a country, because it helps nurture a person’s cognitive mind to think and decide rationally.

[Murree Incident: Zardari slammed federal govt over death of citizens](https://nation.com.pk/09-Jan-2022/murree-incident-zardari-slammed-federal-govt-over-death-of-citizens)

For Pakistan to be a sustainable democracy, there are several steps it needs to follow. Often, free, and transparent elections are demanded to hand over power to those who can efficiently and smoothly run a country. Nonetheless, in Pakistan, the political participation of all stakeholders and creating an environment of inclusiveness is required, which promotes a sense of participation among the minorities and marginalised groups, often ignored in the country’s decision-making process.

Military and civil institutions should both have a good working relationship based on cooperation, harmony and most importantly, the concept of separation of powers must be understood and implemented. Institution building is yet another feature of a viable democracy in developed nations, ensuring a corruption-free society by checks and balances, and formulating robust policies in favour of the rule of law to remove key impediments, causing a governance crisis.

Pakistan has struggled hard since its earlier days to achieve political stability to withstand internal and external threats. However, there is still a long way to go for a country marred by massive corruption, misgovernance issues, unending political warring and civil-military rifts, until the country’s leadership come forward to work towards a common goal of achieving a viable democracy for the country.