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## **Exploitation and Governance in Pakistan: Institutional Failures and Reform Pathways**

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### **Abstract:**

The persistent challenges of governance in Pakistan through the lens of institutional failure and systemic exploitation. It explores how weak institutional frameworks, politicization of public offices, and lack of accountability have entrenched corruption and hindered democratic development. Drawing on case studies and historical analysis, the paper identifies key areas where exploitation both economic and political has thrived under ineffective governance structures. Special attention is given to how marginalized communities withstands the worst of these failures. The study also outlines viable reform pathways, emphasizing institutional restructuring, judicial independence, bureaucratic transparency, and civic engagement. Through the proposing evidence-based solutions, the paper aims to contribute to the discourse on sustainable governance reform in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Institutional Failure, Governance Reform, Political Exploitation, Corruption in Pakistan, Accountability Mechanisms

### **Introduction**

Governance lies at the heart of any functional state, determining the equitable distribution of resources, the enforcement of laws, and the protection of fundamental rights. In the case of Pakistan, governance has consistently been challenged by institutional weaknesses, political instability, systemic corruption, and deep-rooted exploitation. Since its inception in 1947, Pakistan has grappled with a governance structure that has often failed to deliver social justice and inclusive development. The state's institutions both civil and military have oscillated between control and dysfunction, resulting in cycles of authoritarianism, weakened democratic traditions, and policy paralysis. This paper explores the multifaceted nature of exploitation and governance in Pakistan, focusing particularly on institutional failures and proposing viable reform pathways to address these systemic issues. The governance crises in Pakistan is not just a matter of inefficient public administration; it is inherently linked with structural imbalances in power, elite capture, corruption, lack of accountability,



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and weak rule of law. These elements of dysfunction have allowed the exploitation of vulnerable populations, fostered social inequality, undermined trust in the state, and perpetuated underdevelopment. According to Transparency International (2023), Pakistan ranks 133 out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index, underscoring how corruption is entrenched in the institutional fabric. Furthermore, the World Bank (2022) highlights that weak governance and institutional inefficiency are primary constraints to economic growth and service delivery in Pakistan.

One of the core reasons for Pakistan's persistent governance crisis is the legacy of colonial administrative structures, which were designed to extract resources rather than serve citizens. These legacies were inherited with little modification at independence and have contributed to an enduring elitism in the state machinery. According to Cheema, Khawaja, and Qadir (2006), post-colonial institutions in Pakistan prioritized stability and control over accountability and inclusion, leading to a system that functions more to benefit entrenched elites than the broader public. This has resulted in a deep disconnect between the governed and the governing. Institutional failures are evident across various sectors of the state. The judiciary, while constitutionally independent, has often been accused of being politicized and complicit in legitimizing unconstitutional military takeovers (Newberg, 2002). The bureaucracy, another crucial arm of governance, suffers from inefficiency, patronage, and lack of meritocracy. Political institutions, rather than evolving into robust democratic entities, have often served as vehicles for patronage politics and elite consolidation. These institutional deficits contribute to a broader crisis of governance marked by poor public service delivery, weak rule of law, and widespread public disillusionment.

The asserts that resource allocation in Pakistan is often skewed in favor of politically influential regions and groups, further marginalizing historically underdeveloped areas such as Baluchistan, the tribal areas, and parts of southern Punjab. These inequalities exacerbate social unrest and lead to demands for greater provincial autonomy, which in turn strain national cohesion. Moreover, the civil-military imbalance in Pakistan has significantly contributed to the weakening of democratic institutions. The military's disproportionate role in policymaking, particularly in foreign affairs and internal security, has hindered the development of a transparent and accountable civilian governance system. Siddiqua (2007) argues that the military's involvement in economic and political domains has created a parallel power structure that often operates beyond civilian oversight. This dualism has created policy incoherence and blurred the lines of institutional responsibility.

The Reform pathways must therefore address not only the symptoms but also the



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structural causes of institutional failure. First, strengthening democratic institutions is essential. This involves ensuring free and fair elections, reforming political parties to become more democratic internally, and empowering parliamentary oversight mechanisms. Second, the judiciary and the bureaucracy must be reformed to enhance transparency, efficiency, and public accountability. This includes adopting merit-based recruitment systems, digital governance reforms, and robust mechanisms for redressing citizen grievances. Anti-corruption measures must also be prioritized. Although several anti-corruption agencies exist, such as the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), their effectiveness has been questioned due to political bias and lack of autonomy. Reforms should aim to ensure the independence and transparency of such institutions, along with legislative oversight. Additionally, public financial management must be improved to ensure that public funds are allocated efficiently and equitably.

Decentralization is another critical reform avenue. The 18th Amendment to the Constitution (2010) was a significant step toward devolving power to provinces. However, meaningful decentralization must go beyond mere fiscal transfers and include administrative and political empowerment of local governments. Strengthening local governance can lead to better service delivery, increased citizen participation, and reduced exploitation of marginalized communities (Shah, 2012), the civil society and media must be empowered as watchdogs and facilitators of democratic accountability. A vibrant civil society can advocate for transparency, mobilize public opinion, and hold institutions accountable. Similarly, an independent media can expose institutional failures and promote informed public discourse. However, recent trends of media censorship and shrinking civic space in Pakistan threaten these democratic safeguards.

The reform must be informed by a long-term vision grounded in equity, justice, and sustainability. This requires leadership committed to institutional integrity rather than political expediency. Pakistan's governance challenges are deeply entrenched, but they are not insurmountable. Countries with similar colonial legacies and institutional challenges—such as India, Indonesia, and Bangladesh have made significant strides through comprehensive institutional reforms. Pakistan can learn from these examples to craft a governance model that is accountable, inclusive, and resilient.

The exploitation in Pakistan is both a cause and consequence of weak governance and institutional failure. It reflects not only a failure of policies but also of systems that enable inequality, exclusion, and injustice. The solution lies in a multi-pronged reform agenda that addresses structural distortions, strengthens institutions, and builds trust between the state and its citizens. This paper proceeds to examine the historical and structural underpinnings of these institutional failures, evaluates key governance



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challenges in contemporary Pakistan, and proposes actionable reform strategies rooted in democratic values and institutional resilience.

### **Governance in Pakistan**

Governance refers to the processes, systems, and institutions through which authority is exercised in a country. It includes mechanisms of accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and rule of law that ensure public resources are used effectively for the welfare of citizens. In the case of Pakistan, governance has remained a persistent and complex challenge since its inception in 1947. The country has experienced alternating periods of military dictatorship and fragile civilian rule, resulting in the stagnation of democratic institutions, erosion of public trust, and chronic mismanagement of national resources. Pakistan's governance crisis is not simply a byproduct of political instability or economic hardship; rather, it reflects deep-seated institutional dysfunction, elite capture, and a failure to implement comprehensive reforms. Weak governance structures in Pakistan are characterized by centralized decision-making, bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, judicial inconsistency, and a lack of service delivery mechanisms at the grassroots level. These systemic weaknesses have undermined economic development, fueled regional disparities, and contributed to political unrest. The issue of governance, therefore, is fundamental to the country's long-term stability, prosperity, and democratic consolidation.

### **Historical Context of Governance in Pakistan**

The Governance challenges in Pakistan can be traced back to its colonial legacy and the hurried nature of its creation. The administrative structures inherited from British India were designed for control and extraction, not for citizen participation or inclusive development (Cheema, Khwaja, & Qadir, 2006). These colonial frameworks were largely retained without significant reforms, resulting in an overcentralized and elitist system that prioritized the interests of the bureaucracy and military over democratic representation. The early demise of democratic leadership, most notably the assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951, and the absence of a robust constitution until 1956 created a power vacuum. The military and bureaucracy stepped into this vacuum and have since played a dominant role in shaping Pakistan's governance trajectory. The first military coup in 1958 marked the beginning of a pattern where civilian governments were regularly undermined by military interventions, either directly through coups or indirectly through political engineering and judicial manipulation.

### **Contemporary Governance Challenges**

The present-day governance crisis in Pakistan manifests in multiple ways: poor service delivery, rampant corruption, weak rule of law, lack of institutional coordination, and



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limited citizen participation. These issues are further complicated by population growth, urbanization, internal security threats, and economic instability. One of the most pressing issues is the lack of transparency and accountability in public institutions. Corruption continues to plague the country's bureaucracy, police, judiciary, and political leadership. According to Transparency International (2023), Pakistan ranked 133 out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index, reflecting widespread distrust in the fairness and integrity of governance systems. Public service delivery remains inefficient and unequal. Whether it is education, health, water supply, or sanitation, access to quality services is often limited to urban elites, while rural and marginalized communities are neglected. This disparity not only reinforces socio-economic inequality but also fuels regional and ethnic tensions, especially in underdeveloped areas such as Baluchistan and parts of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Judicial inefficiency is another hallmark of Pakistan's governance woes. Courts are often slow, overburdened, and influenced by political pressure. A large backlog of cases and lack of access to legal recourse for the poor further weakens the rule of law. Although the judiciary has occasionally acted as a check on executive power, its record on maintaining independence and impartiality remains inconsistent (Newberg, 2002). Moreover, centralized federal control has created tensions among the provinces and undermined the spirit of federalism. While the 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010) devolved significant powers to the provinces, implementation has been sluggish and marred by a lack of coordination and political will (Shah, 2012).

### **Civil-Military Relations and Governance**

Perhaps the most significant obstacle to democratic governance in Pakistan is the enduring imbalance between civilian and military institutions. The military has ruled the country directly for more than three decades and continues to wield immense influence over foreign policy, internal security, and even economic decisions. This militarization of governance has eroded civilian supremacy and hindered the development of responsive, people-centered institutions. The military's involvement in economic enterprises—ranging from banking to real estate—creates stakes that conflict with transparent governance and democratic norms. Civilian governments often operate under the shadow of military influence, limiting their autonomy in policymaking and reform implementation. Until this civil-military imbalance is corrected, governance reforms will remain partial and vulnerable to reversal.

### **Prospects for Reform and Good Governance**

Despite the multitude of challenges, there are opportunities for improving governance in Pakistan. The path forward requires a multi-dimensional reform strategy aimed at institutional strengthening, decentralization, and citizen empowerment.



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- **Institutional Reforms:** Strengthening the capacity and independence of the judiciary, bureaucracy, election commission, and anti-corruption bodies is essential. Civil service reforms should prioritize merit, transparency, and performance-based evaluations to reduce patronage and inefficiency.
- **Political Accountability:** Electoral reforms, internal democracy within political parties, and enforcement of campaign finance laws can curb elite capture and foster greater public trust.
- **Decentralization and Local Governance:** Reviving and strengthening local government systems can bridge the gap between citizens and the state. Local governments are better positioned to identify and respond to community needs, ensuring more efficient and participatory governance.
- **Digital Governance:** Leveraging technology to promote e-governance can reduce corruption, improve service delivery, and enhance transparency. Initiatives such as digitized land records, online complaint systems, and open budget portals can foster citizen engagement.
- **Strengthening Civil Society and Media:** A robust civil society and independent media are crucial for holding power to account. These actors can promote awareness, monitor public institutions, and push for reforms.

The Governance in Pakistan stands at a critical juncture. The country faces a range of governance deficits from institutional failure and elite domination to civil-military imbalances and citizen disillusionment. However, these challenges also provide an opportunity for deep institutional reflection and meaningful reform. A more accountable, transparent, and participatory governance structure is not just essential for democracy—it is necessary for economic stability, national cohesion, and social justice. The task ahead is complex but not impossible. It requires political will, citizen activism, and a commitment to building institutions that serve all segments of society, not just the privileged few.

### **Institutional Failures in Pakistan: Roots, Realities, and the Road Ahead**

The Strong institutions are the backbone of any effective governance system, ensuring law enforcement, justice, economic regulation, and public service delivery. In Pakistan, however, the persistent failure of key institutions has emerged as one of the most critical impediments to democratic development, socio-economic progress, and national integration. From the executive and judiciary to the legislature, bureaucracy, and law enforcement, institutional decay has resulted in policy inconsistency, widespread corruption, lack of accountability, and eroded public trust. Institutional failures in Pakistan are not isolated events but part of a systemic and historical pattern rooted in



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colonial legacies, political instability, elite dominance, and the recurring interference of unelected forces in democratic processes.

### **Colonial Legacy and Weak Foundations**

The foundations of Pakistan's institutional weaknesses lie in its inherited colonial administrative structure. The British colonial state in India was designed to maintain control and extract resources rather than foster citizen participation or public welfare. After independence in 1947, Pakistan retained much of this framework without significant transformation. As Cheema, Khawaja, and Qadir (2006) argue, these institutions continued to operate in a top-down, authoritarian manner, with little emphasis on democratic accountability or public service. The early dissolution of democratic governments and the lack of a functioning constitution in the formative years of the country set the stage for institutional dysfunction. The military and civil bureaucracy, both products of colonial design, quickly filled the power vacuum, often sidelining elected representatives. This early power imbalance created a precedent for military and bureaucratic overreach—an issue that continues to plague Pakistan's institutional development to this day.

### **Civil-Military Imbalance and Institutional Paralysis**

One of the most glaring institutional failures in Pakistan is the lack of civilian supremacy over the military. Since 1958, the military has directly ruled the country for over three decades and continues to exert influence over internal security, foreign policy, and even domestic politics. This imbalance has weakened civilian institutions such as the parliament, prime minister's office, and the civilian bureaucracy, which often operate under the shadow of military pressure (Siddiqi, 2007). The result is a dysfunctional democratic process where elected governments are undermined, policymaking is inconsistent, and public accountability is minimal. Furthermore, the military's involvement in economic ventures—from real estate to manufacturing—creates conflicts of interest and distorts market dynamics. Instead of focusing on defense and security, the military has expanded into sectors that are traditionally the domain of civilian governance, weakening institutional coherence and effectiveness.

### **Judicial Inconsistencies and Selective Accountability**

The judiciary, as a guardian of constitutionalism and rule of law, has also struggled with institutional credibility in Pakistan. While it is constitutionally independent, the judiciary has a history of validating military takeovers through the "doctrine of necessity" and failing to hold powerful actors accountable (Newberg, 2002). This has led to a justice system perceived as biased, politicized, and inaccessible to the ordinary citizen. The backlog of cases, delays in delivering judgments, and lack of access to affordable legal aid further erode the judiciary's effectiveness. According to the Law and



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Justice Commission of Pakistan (2022), there were over 2 million pending cases across the country's courts. The slow pace of justice delivery undermines the rule of law and allows perpetrators of corruption and abuse of power to evade accountability.

### **Bureaucratic Inefficiency and Political Interference**

Pakistan's civil bureaucracy was once regarded as one of the most competent in South Asia. However, over time, it has suffered from declining meritocracy, political interference, and outdated procedures. The lack of performance-based promotions, the prevalence of "sifarish" (personal influence), and frequent transfers of bureaucrats disrupt policy continuity and breed inefficiency. The administrative reforms have largely failed due to resistance from within the bureaucracy and lack of political will. Bureaucrats are often more loyal to political patrons than to public service, resulting in poor implementation of policies, mismanagement of funds, and weakened institutional integrity. Moreover, the absence of modern training, digital infrastructure, and inter-departmental coordination further hampers the functioning of the civil service.

### **Corruption and Institutional Decay**

Corruption is both a symptom and a cause of institutional failure in Pakistan. It pervades nearly every sector from law enforcement and education to tax collection and healthcare. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB), meant to serve as the country's premier anti-corruption agency, has often been accused of being selective and politically motivated in its investigations (Transparency International, 2023). This undermines public confidence and reduces the credibility of anti-corruption efforts. The lack of effective internal accountability mechanisms within institutions creates an environment where rent-seeking behavior goes unchecked. As a result, public trust in state institutions has steadily declined, with many citizens turning to informal networks, private providers, or religious organizations to meet basic needs by passing the state altogether.

### **Legislative Dysfunction and Democratic Deficits**

The legislature, meant to be the central institution of democratic governance, often fails to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities. Parliamentary sessions are irregular, poorly attended, and often lack substantive debate. Laws are passed without adequate scrutiny, and parliamentary committees remain under-resourced and ineffective. Political polarization, floor crossing, and the dominance of personality cults over ideology further weaken the legislative process. Moreover, the frequent use of presidential ordinances to bypass parliamentary debate undermines the legislature's role and reflects executive overreach. As a result, important national issues such as education reform, taxation, and environmental policy remain unresolved due to legislative inaction.



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### **Institutional Failure and Public Disillusionment**

The cumulative impact of these institutional failures is a growing disillusionment with the state. Many Pakistanis, particularly the youth and rural populations, feel disconnected from the political process and distrustful of public institutions. This lack of trust manifests in low voter turnout, apathy toward civic engagement, and the rise of extremist narratives that exploit institutional weaknesses. In marginalized regions like Baluchistan, southern Punjab, and the tribal areas, state institutions are often perceived as extractive, discriminatory, or absent altogether. This has fueled separatist movements, ethnic tensions, and cycles of violence, further weakening national unity and social cohesion.

### **Pathways to Institutional Reform**

Addressing institutional failure in Pakistan requires a multifaceted reform agenda grounded in political will, public participation, and long-term planning. Key recommendations include:

- **Civil Service Reform:** Introduce performance-based evaluations, modern training, and digital governance tools. Reduce political interference through tenure protection and merit-based recruitment.
- **Judicial Reforms:** Enhance judicial capacity, reduce case backlogs, and ensure transparent appointments through judicial commissions. Improve access to legal aid and promote alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **Strengthening Accountability:** Reform anti-corruption bodies to ensure autonomy, impartiality, and transparency. Create whistleblower protections and open data platforms for public scrutiny.
- **Legislative Empowerment:** Invest in parliamentary research and oversight mechanisms. Encourage public consultation in lawmaking and improve inter-party cooperation.
- **Civil-Military Balance:** Establish constitutional checks that ensure military accountability to civilian leadership. Promote national security policymaking through parliament rather than military forums.
- **Decentralization:** Strengthen local governments and fiscal federalism to make institutions more responsive and accessible to citizens at the grassroots level.

### **Reform Pathways**

The face of persistent institutional failures, Pakistan stands at a crossroads. The challenges of weak rule of law, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, political interference, and civil-military imbalance have severely eroded public trust and hindered national progress. Yet, within this crisis lies an opportunity to reimagine the



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state's institutional framework and governance mechanisms. The need for reform is not just an administrative imperative but also a constitutional and moral necessity to ensure justice, equity, and inclusive development.

The strategic reform pathways for Pakistan to rebuild institutional integrity, foster accountable governance, and promote citizen-centric development. These pathways span key domains—civil service, judiciary, legislature, accountability mechanisms, civil-military relations, and local governance and are anchored in principles of transparency, decentralization, meritocracy, and democratic resilience

### Civil Service Reform: Professionalizing Public Administration

The backbone of governance, Pakistan's civil bureaucracy, must be transformed from a status-driven relic of colonial administration into a meritocratic, service-oriented, and digitally proficient institution.

- **Merit-Based Recruitment and Promotions:** Replace quota-driven and patronage-based hiring with a transparent, competitive examination and performance evaluation system (Ahmed, 2017). Senior postings should be linked to demonstrated competence, not political loyalty.
- **Capacity Building:** Introduce continuous training programs with a focus on digital governance, project management, citizen engagement, and policy design.
- **Tenure Security:** Ensure that civil servants are not arbitrarily transferred or dismissed, allowing them to focus on long-term institutional goals rather than short-term political agendas.
- **E-Governance:** Expand e-governance initiatives to reduce red tape, streamline services, and enhance public access to government data and functions.

### Judicial Reform: Ensuring Rule of Law and Equal Access to Justice

Pakistan's judiciary must transition from an institution marred by delays and political bias to one that guarantees timely, impartial justice to all citizens.

- **Case Management Systems:** Introduce digital docketing and case-tracking systems to address the massive backlog of over 2 million pending cases (Law & Justice Commission of Pakistan, 2022).
- **Judicial Appointments Reform:** Ensure independence and transparency in judicial appointments through a reformed Judicial Commission comprising judges, bar representatives, and independent experts (Newberg, 2002).
- **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR):** Expand ADR mechanisms like arbitration, mediation, and conciliation, especially for civil and commercial disputes.
- **Legal Aid Services:** Establish publicly funded legal aid bodies to help vulnerable and marginalized citizens, particularly women, laborers, and rural populations.



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- **Performance-Based Accountability:** Develop internal judicial evaluation frameworks to ensure judges uphold ethical and professional standards.

### **Strengthening Parliamentary and Legislative Oversight**

Pakistan's legislature must play a more assertive role in lawmaking, budget approval, and policy oversight.

- **Enhanced Parliamentary Committees:** Empower and resource parliamentary committees to oversee ministries, scrutinize bills, and evaluate public spending.
- **Legislative Research Support:** Establish parliamentary research wings equipped with data analysts, legal experts, and policy researchers to support evidence-based legislation.
- **Budget Transparency:** Introduce participatory budgeting processes and require government departments to submit periodic spending reports to Parliament.
- **Reduce Ordinance Abuse:** Limit the executive's power to issue presidential ordinances and strengthen the legislative calendar to ensure regular and effective parliamentary sittings.

### **Reviving Local Government and Deepening Decentralization**

Decentralization is crucial for responsive governance, service delivery, and inclusive development. However, local governments in Pakistan have often been neglected or dissolved due to political expediency.

- **Constitutional Protection of Local Governments:** Amend the Constitution to guarantee regular local government elections and prevent provincial governments from arbitrarily suspending them (Shah, 2012).
- **Fiscal Decentralization:** Allocate a fixed percentage of national and provincial revenues to local governments with discretion over spending.
- **Capacity Building:** Train local officials in planning, budgeting, and public participation mechanisms to ensure efficient resource use.
- **Community Participation:** Institutionalize participatory decision-making by forming citizen committees, especially in areas like education, health, and water management.

### **Reforming Anti-Corruption Frameworks**

Corruption erodes public trust, distorts markets, and undermines the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Pakistan's anti-corruption bodies, such as the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), often face criticism for politicization and lack of independence.

- **Independent Oversight Bodies:** Reconstitute NAB and similar agencies to operate under independent oversight panels comprising judges, civil society members, and legal experts.
- **Whistleblower Protection Laws:** Enact and implement strong whistleblower protection legislation to encourage reporting of corruption without fear of retribution.



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- **Asset Disclosure and Verification:** Mandate public officials to submit and publish regular asset declarations, with verification by an independent body.
- **Open Government Data:** Promote transparency by digitizing public procurement records, development budgets, and departmental performance indicators.

### Civil-Military Relations and Constitutional Supremacy

For any reform to be sustainable, the civil-military power imbalance must be addressed. Civilian institutions must be empowered to exercise authority in line with constitutional mandates.

- **Parliamentary Oversight of Defense Spending:** Make military budgets subject to parliamentary debate and audit by the Auditor General.
- **Restrict Military's Economic Role:** Gradually transfer military-owned businesses and welfare foundations to civilian regulation and taxation frameworks (Siddiq, 2007).
- **Doctrine of Civilian Supremacy:** Educate civil servants, military officers, and legislators on democratic constitutionalism and the principle of civilian oversight.
- **National Security Council with Civilian Majority:** Establish an institutional platform for civil-military dialogue under parliamentary supervision.

### Empowering Civil Society and Media

An active civil society and free press are essential watchdogs for governance and accountability.

- **Legal Protection for Journalists:** Enforce laws protecting media personnel from harassment, censorship, and violence.
- **Support for Think Tanks and NGOs:** Facilitate the growth of independent policy think tanks, advocacy groups, and NGOs through transparent registration and funding mechanisms.
- **Right to Information (RTI):** Strengthen the implementation of RTI laws and mandate all government departments to publish regular performance and audit reports.

### Electoral Reform and Political Accountability

To ensure representative governance, electoral processes must be transparent, inclusive, and fair.

- **Strengthen the Election Commission:** Ensure its financial, legal, and operational independence through constitutional guarantees and parliamentary support.
- **Campaign Finance Regulations:** Enforce limits on campaign spending and disclose all political party funding sources.
- **Internal Party Democracy:** Mandate transparent intra-party elections and adherence to democratic constitutions within political parties.



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- **Prevent Electoral Rigging:** Deploy electronic voting and biometric verification where feasible and improve coordination between election observers and the judiciary.

The Reforming Pakistan's institutional landscape is a national imperative. The country's future stability, economic growth, and democratic development depend on the strength and resilience of its public institutions. While the road to reform is complex and politically challenging, it is not insurmountable. With sustained political will, public support, and strategic planning, Pakistan can rebuild trust in its institutions and construct a governance system grounded in accountability, equity, and justice. These reform pathways—across the civil service, judiciary, legislature, anti-corruption frameworks, civil-military relations, local governance, and electoral systems—represent a holistic blueprint for transformation. Institutional renewal is not a one-time fix but an ongoing process that must be nurtured through vigilance, commitment, and public participation. By choosing reform over inertia, Pakistan can chart a path toward a stronger, more inclusive democratic future.

### **Suggestions for Future**

The main Suggestions to improve governance and overcome institutional failures in Pakistan:

- **Institutionalize Civil Service Reforms**  
To reduce bureaucratic inefficiency and political interference, Pakistan must implement merit-based recruitment, performance-linked promotions, and secure tenure policies. This can restore professionalism, ensure policy continuity, and enhance public service delivery.
- **Ensure Judicial Independence and Access to Justice**  
Establish transparent judicial appointments, reduce case backlogs through digital case management systems, and expand legal aid programs. These reforms will strengthen rule of law and rebuild public trust in the justice system.
- **Strengthen Anti-Corruption Mechanisms**  
Reform institutions like the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to function autonomously and without political bias. Implement strong whistleblower protection laws and require asset disclosures for all public officials to enhance transparency and deter corruption.
- **Revive and Empower Local Governments**  
Guarantee constitutional protection for local government systems and devolve administrative, fiscal, and political authority to the grassroots. Strengthened local governance promotes inclusive development and makes the state more accountable to citizens.



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- Rebalance Civil-Military Relations

Ensure civilian supremacy through parliamentary oversight of defense budgets and limit the military's involvement in economic and political affairs. A clearly defined constitutional separation of powers is essential for democratic consolidation.

### Conclusion

Pakistan's persistent governance crisis is rooted in deep institutional failures that span across its political, judicial, bureaucratic, and accountability structures. From colonial-era administrative legacies to the recurring civil-military imbalance and elite capture of state institutions, the trajectory of governance in Pakistan has been characterized by exclusion, inefficiency, and a deficit of democratic accountability. These failures have not only hampered policy effectiveness and economic progress but have also contributed to widespread exploitation, social fragmentation, and the erosion of public trust in the state. The consequences of weak institutions are visible in nearly every sector—from a politicized judiciary and an inefficient bureaucracy to stalled reforms and dysfunctional public service delivery. Moreover, selective accountability, legislative apathy, and the absence of empowered local governments have further undermined the foundations of a responsive and inclusive governance framework. The cumulative impact of these challenges is a growing disconnect between the state and its citizens, particularly in marginalized regions and among vulnerable populations. Yet, this grim picture also presents an opportunity: the recognition of institutional failure is the first step toward institutional reform. By investing in comprehensive reforms—merit-based civil service restructuring, judicial independence, anti-corruption safeguards, fiscal decentralization, and strengthened legislative oversight—Pakistan can begin to reverse its governance decay. Empowering local governments, rebalancing civil-military relations, and leveraging digital technologies for transparency are not only desirable but also necessary for sustainable development and national cohesion.

Ultimately, governance reform in Pakistan must be grounded in the principles of justice, accountability, and participation. It requires visionary leadership, sustained political will, and an engaged civil society. Only through building resilient, inclusive, and democratic institutions can Pakistan hope to move beyond exploitation and institutional paralysis toward a more equitable and prosperous future for all its citizens.

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