

The PMLN Government, Political Uncertainty and Pakistan's Complex Challenges: A Short Analysis

Pakistan faces complex challenges, internal and external with no easy solutions in sight. Meanwhile, Pakistan is facing an economic crisis because of massive corruption, bad planning, bad governance, and even political instability.

Like elsewhere, Pakistan was also challenged by the Covid-19 lockdowns that has also severely affected the country's economy. Meanwhile, political uncertainty is taking a toll of the country's economy, as the PMLN government is not ready to take bold decisions to stabilize the economy.

Pakistan faces a complex internal challenge: weakened political leadership, poor overall performance of state institutions, poor public services, massive poverty, burgeoning population, rampant urbanization, continuing military control of Pakistan's foreign and security policy framework, bad governance, impact of continuing conflicts with India, Afghanistan war situation, increased militancy, and endemic corruption allegations. Pakistan continues to suffer from an ineffective and inefficient bureaucracy and most importantly a political will to see a comprehensive agenda of reforms through to competition. Notwithstanding its pious declarations, the current Sharif Coalition government simply does not have the will to implement the reform agenda. Given the precarious nature of Pakistan's economy, the Sharif coalition government has no choice but to adhere to IMF conditionalities, no matter how tough. Other lenders are watching to see whether the Pakistan government does so, as promised. The sooner the better. Just saying.

Pakistan's economic crisis demands bold actions by the Sharif Government. All lenders are looking up to the future IMF signal to assist the country. Therefore, Pakistan must adhere to the IMF conditionalities, sooner than later. Populist measures, though understandable, will not work

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Notwithstanding Imran Khan's outlandish political rhetoric, he should be allowed to continue with it. The Opposition march on Islamabad at month's end will be a great nuisance but certainly not wreck the Sharif Government. Maturity requires that the Opposition blasts, though without merit, be tolerated only because Pakistan is a democracy, though a fragile one. The Sharif coalition government is bent on overreaction to Imran Khan's protest politics. Such action an overreaction by the Sharif Government will create more chaos and anarchy in the country. Tolerance must be shown and let politics play out without state intervention. Wisdom must prevail. Why no action? The Sharif government must only focus on delivering good governance. It does not have to be obsessed with Imran Khan, as it will be bad for the government, and the country. Pakistan deserves better.

Imran Khan has launched a popular campaign against the incumbent government and the US. He blames the US of toppling his government in April 2022 with the connivance of then Opposition parties, the PMLN, PPP and JUIF. Politics of extremes and sheer despair in Pakistan needs to be contained. Entering

post-Truth age, if nation had not already done it. This is not politics as usual somehow. Need to calm down a bit. Exaggerations are being made all around. Need to sit back and introspect. Pakistan faces very serious governance challenges, and the new Shanaz Sharif coalition government must focus on them. The attention should be on delivery alone and not Imran Khan. The people expect relief and soon enough as they suffer from inflation and other economic issues. There is no time for general elections in Pakistan in near future. They will be held at end of 2023, as required by law. Sharif coalition govt is expected to take bold decisions to stabilize economy and thereby strengthen country. Govt is not prepared to do it. Too bad for Pakistan.

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The Sharif coalition govt is not at all ready to take bold decisions to stabilize the economy. The paralysis in decision-making is hurting Pakistan. A rainbow coalition is in power that makes it even more difficult. Did they really expect smooth sailing once in power? Action needed. As of May 18, 2022, the Pakistan government had taken no action to meet IMF demands to revoke the very costly energy subsidies. It had failed to swallow the bitter pill. Meanwhile, the economic situation worsened.

Pakistan is a mess. The country is facing an acute image problem. Today Pakistan was misunderstood and was therefore being unfairly treated by the U.S. and other Western powers for its perceived connections to global terrorism. It was more complicated now. However, there is a need for a foremost reappraisal of Pakistan's domestic and foreign policies. Pakistan should strengthen its system of democracy because it was very deficient in countless ways and not functioning at all. The political paralysis was a result of these systematic faults. Islamic fundamentalist, poor governance, absence of democratic norms, intolerance in society, and inertia was the principal cause of the situation. Lack of political will to reform both state and society may be the single biggest reason for the mess. Examine the deeper problem of bolstering the deficient, undemocratic decision-making structures. Due to the disinterest towards institutionalized decision-making by Pakistan's rulers it was hardly surprising that policy and decision-making of national importance remained personalized and incoherent. It was this very flaw that prevented the Government of Pakistan from conducting a true national strategy. Until and unless there was an

institutional decision-making process Pakistan would continue to have lack of intellectual content the country would always be faced with the crisis. Pakistan faced much larger challenges because of this poor policymaking. The country's past was haunting it now. Reckless decisions like the infamous U-turn of General Musharraf after 9/11 where Pakistan became an ally of the U.S. without weighing the full consequences of this abrupt departure of foreign policy. The Army's alleged support of Jihadist entities like the Jaish-e-Mohammad, Haqqani network, and Quetta Shura. The main reason for this was the personalist nature of rule in Pakistan. The civilian leaders do not follow democratic norms of decision-making. This empowered the Army even more and provided further leverage to it to influence Pakistan's decision-making. Neither the Cabinet nor the Parliament are fulfilling their given roles assigned to them. Even the Judiciary is very deficient, especially at the lower levels. The Parliament does not properly fulfill its legislative and oversight Pakistan, as was the norm in the system of democracy. The Cabinet does not deliberate as was needed for proper administration of the state institutions. The notion of national security was primary driver of Pakistan's national interest that had given significant leverage to the military. The military itself had a deficient national security paradigm and a very narrow focus of the regional situation, let alone the global one. It was obsessed with its enmity with India, the historic rival. This does not condone Indian actions in any way. The point was that the military as an institution was necessarily focused on fighting wars and winning them and not working for peace. The U.S. and other Western powers continued to consider Pakistan through Indian or Afghan lens. The erroneous view of Pakistan, in which security remained the paramount national interest for the U.S. and other powers, had exaggerated increased Pakistan's domestic political problems. India was now employing territory in Afghanistan for deploying TTP and other dissident elements against Pakistan. In clear contrast, to the criticism of Pakistan's support of some Jihadist entities who had external focus, there was not any disapproval by U.S. and other Western powers regarding India's its brutal repression of the Kashmiri independence movement and its policies towards Pakistan. Indian interference in Pakistan's internal affairs and support of Baluch insurgents, MQM and TTP was well documented but remained ignored by the U.S. and other Western powers. On the contrary, there were powerful voices in the U.S. that were producing legislation punishing Pakistan. The reason for this biased approach was obvious. The U.S. had tilted towards India in incredibly significant manner because of perceived commercial gains and other economic interests. The two countries had grown remarkably close in the last few years or so. The U.S. now considered India as a strategic partner and the nefarious role of India in destabilizing Pakistan was conveniently ignored. The TTP and these anti-Pakistan groups based in Afghanistan and operating from Afghanistan's territory were not targeting the U.S. nor other Western powers. Hence, a blind eye to their nefarious activities. To expect Pakistan to turn direction at once was simply expecting too much. This was not going to happen any time soon. However, a peace deal between India and Pakistan and a solution to the Kashmir dispute can turn things around in the desired direction. Here the U.S. can play a key role.

Undoubtedly, Pakistan's current policy of permanent Indian enmity and conflict was going nowhere. Pakistan was a security state because of this approach. The Pakistan military was adamant in confronting and was still supporting some jihadist elements like the LeT, HQN, and Quetta Shura for its own purposes. A change in direction was required now. Given the complexity of the regional situation, more robust diplomacy was urgently to get Pakistan out of the current morass and crisis. However, the Nawaz government was not up to the task and was failing to protect Pakistan's vital national interests. Plus, it faced an immense image problem because of the Panama Papers case pending in the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The country was expected to improve on the economic front thanks to CPEC initiative but the sheer negligence of the ruling establishment to tackle the issue of social justice and enlightened Islam will draw it back from reaching its true potential. The anarchy unleashed by Islamic fundamentalist must be

checked in Pakistan before it engulfs the whole region in further chaos. Much depends on timely action taken by the ruling establishment of Pakistan to get its own act together to achieve the true prospects of economic development presented to the country by the CPEC initiative. Bad governance is still the norm in Pakistan and not the exception. Desperately needed reform measures still await the nation. The nation is poorer because of its poor leadership, both military and civilian. It is hoped that a turnaround yet happen as a new civilian leadership replaces the current lot. Pakistan has enormous potential in its youth but lacks leadership to make full use of the potential. The leadership is bickering among itself, complacent and corrupt. Too bad for the country. There was also a bright side to the country's dismal picture, however. Pakistan can indeed have a great future and be on the road of success and sustainable peace. Pakistanis are the most resilient nation. Pakistan's can indeed position itself in the region as a massive trade corridor that will catapult this country to economic prosperity and a symbol of geostrategic integration. Pakistan as the regional trade, industrial, and economic hub will be in a position of strength and the world will endeavor to improve relations with Pakistan. Pakistan believes in cooperation, instead of competition. Pakistan is carving out a trajectory of progress for the region by way of economics, which the world needs to recognize and acknowledge. Pakistan faced an existential crisis of a daunting magnitude. The primary threat was from within the country.

The time was to go back to the liberal message of Islam and propagate the Sufi version of it where the principle of Sulh-i Kul or peace with all must become the new societal paradigm of governance and mutual conduct of communal affairs. The message of peace and tolerance in the liberal version of Islam must be adopted by both state and society in Pakistan. Given the sorry situation in Pakistan, there was little choice in the matter. It was time to act. Bold measures were needed and enlightened leadership at the helm of affairs in the country.

Much depends on the future leadership of the country not only at the governmental level but also at the societal level, especially the intellectual level. It was hoped that Pakistan would indeed make the best of the excellent opportunity made available by the CPEC project and turn around the country towards a path of economic development, prosperity for all, peace, and national security. Thus, the CPEC could help address an urgent political and economic predicament of Pakistan as well. The CPEC could have a regional impact that will promote connectivity in it and beyond. CPEC would make the country a manufacturing and commerce hub. It could improve infrastructure in the entire region. Given the trust deficit between Afghanistan and Pakistan, China should take the lead and play a "leadership" role. CPEC and BRI could become a vehicle of cooperation and friendship between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

India was adamantly opposed to the CPEC initiative and had been very openly expressed its concern to China several times. India shall continue its protestations to China that CPEC goes through Gilgit-Baltistan region claimed by it. It was amazing that India had not protested the building of the Karakoram highway in the 1960s that also was going through the same territory. Meanwhile, Pakistan was apprehensive of rising Indian influence in Afghanistan that could threaten CPEC. Also, Iranian-Pakistani relations have been tensed for quite some time, but lately there has been a sharp rise in hostility between the two neighboring countries. Experts say that Islamabad's alleged support to Sunni militant groups, most of which operate freely inside Pakistan, was one of the reasons behind the deteriorating ties. Iran was not the only country in the region that was unhappy with Islamabad's handling of Sunni militants;

The growing tensions between with all three neighbors is not only straining Pakistan's precarious politics and the civil-military equilibrium harmony but also hindering its economic development. In the past, the daunting failure of Pakistan's governments to stop Pakistan-based militant groups from launching attacks against its neighbors was hurting political and economic ties. Later, a rethink of Pakistan's foreign policy was made, and the attacks were stopped. The PTI government has successfully reappraised the country's

policy framework. Pakistan desires peace in the region that is desperately needed for its stability, progress, and economic development. However, it is hampered from achieving its desired goals by a corrupted political system and a weak leadership. Bold leadership is missing in the country. The Army that still is in charge in foreign and security policymaking is still myopic in its views and is obsessed with the enmity of India. Thus, Pakistan was moving closer to China and Russia as its mortal enemy — India — moved remarkably close to the U.S. For the military establishment in Pakistan, it was a zero-sum game. Pakistan must make efforts for peace with its neighbors but is challenged to do so by its own weak leadership at the helm of state affairs.

Today, it is an imperative that the PTI government immediately ensures compliance of FATF demands. Pakistan needs to gain the trust of the international community to ensure a good deal with the IMF, and other international financial institutions. The country needs foreign help to stabilize its economy and therefore must take quick action in this area. Plus, it is in Pakistan's national interest to eradicate the menace of money laundering and terrorist financing quickly. Much is now expected from the PTI government. Despite India's continuing persecution of Kashmiri Muslims in IOJK, Pakistan must try its best to improve relations with India. India is a neighbor with an exceedingly long tense border with Pakistan. Peace with India will decrease the tensions in South Asia and provide Pakistan with access to the growing Indian market. It is time for a new beginning. Indeed, a new era can begin in Pakistan. For that to happen bold policy measures and out-of-the-box thinking is now urgently required. Pakistan should focus on the development of its human resources, sustainable economy and the eradication of poverty that can only happen if bold policy decisions are taken now. However, given the military dominance of Pakistan's politics today such a development is ridiculously hard to imagine. Pakistani leadership can only fail at its peril. The people hope for change, and it is now time to deliver. It is an imperative to set the right direction. There is still hope in Pakistan.

Undoubtedly, Pakistan's current policy of permanent Indian enmity and conflict was going nowhere. Pakistan was a security state because of this approach. The Pakistan military was adamant in confronting India and was still supporting some jihadist elements like the LeT, HQN, and Quetta Shura for its own purposes. A change in direction was required now. Given the complexity of the regional situation, more robust diplomacy was urgently to get Pakistan out of the current morass and crisis. The [PTI](#) government was not up to the task and had miserably failed to protect Pakistan's vital national interests.

He said, "we have repeatedly said that Afghan soil is being used against Pakistan, which needs to be stopped." He also said the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan has established sanctuaries in Afghanistan, which is a threat to Pakistan. Besides, there may be some groups that can target other countries as well, which is a matter of concern for the US too, he added.ⁱ

Pakistan's National Security Adviser (NSA) said Pakistan had other options if President Biden continues to ignore the country's leadership saying Washington's lack of effort in engaging Islamabad was strange. As the US has asked the South Asian country for help in halting the Taliban's progress amid the NATO troops withdrawal, Biden had yet to speak with Khan on the matter, he had complained. While NSA Yusuf had not elaborated on his options, Pakistan had turned to 'iron brother' China, which had invested billions in infrastructure projects as part of its Belt and Road Initiative. Earlier, the US State Department had also mentioned Pakistan as a key state in the Afghan peace process and it that would continue to have a critical role in the process.

Pakistan's NSA visited Washington, DC in August 2021 to address the key issues including Afghan peace. Meanwhile, the chief of Pakistan's intelligence agency Lieutenant-General Faiz Hameed was also in the US along with Pakistani officials.ⁱⁱ The NSA said Pakistan had a two-fold strategy: blocking

undesirable movement across the international border through fencing, and a dignified repatriation of Afghan refugees. “Anything to be decided by Afghanistan is their decision and any movement or event there has nothing to do with us,” he said. “Dignified repatriation of Afghan refugees is necessary, and Pakistan has given the most hospitable refuge to migrants. They have the right to return; an overwhelming majority of Afghan refugees are law abiding whereas certain elements take benefit of that to propagate against us,” he claimed.ⁱⁱⁱ

The NSA denied stressed that Pakistan will not accept a “forceful” takeover of Afghanistan, adding that Islamabad had consistently backed a negotiated political settlement for the war-torn state. Emphasizing that the only solution for lasting peace in Afghanistan was a “political one,” he said Islamabad had made it “absolutely clear” that it stood by the international community on desiring an end to the conflict in Afghanistan. He regretted that the harsh rhetoric emerging from the Afghan government against Pakistan in recent months was making it “practically impossible” to maintain good ties between the neighboring states. There was a “very conscious, deliberate effort by the Afghan government to scapegoat Pakistan,” he said, accusing Kabul of wanting to “shift the entire blame of its failures.” Yusuf urged the elected government in Kabul and the Taliban to develop consensus and arrive upon a peace settlement, noting that the rapid gains made by the insurgents amidst the U.S. withdrawing all its troops was a matter of concern. He advised Kabul to stop looking for a military victory in the conflict, adding that a broader range of Afghans should be included in future talks.^{iv}

Earlier, The Financial Times had published an interview with Yusuf in which he had said that peace in Afghanistan was in the interest of both Islamabad and Washington. Pakistan wants brotherly relations with all countries, he stressed, hailing the “friendship” between Beijing and Islamabad that had helped strengthen Pakistan’s economy. The NSA also said that Pakistan was not able to host any more Afghan refugees, adding that he did not agree that they should be allowed to enter any other country and should be kept in camps on their own soil. “We, under no circumstances, are prepared to see protracted instability that in the past has caused spillover into Pakistan,” he added. ^v

The Pakistan-US relationship is "moving in the right direction", National Security Adviser (NSA) Moeed Yusuf said in early August 2021. Yusuf, who tweeted about his recently concluded visit to the US, termed it a "constructive" one. The NSA also, said that he had continued his discussions, which began in Geneva, with his US counterpart Sullivan. Besides that, Yusuf engaged with Capitol Hill, think tanks, media, and Pakistani immigrants in the US. Moeed Yusuf visit to the US was meant to review progress on bilateral engagement. His visit was considered as part of high-level bilateral engagements between the two countries.^{vi}

Many people in Pakistan are considering a way out of the security situation and tension between Pakistan and India. Much earlier, there was a meeting between Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Indian business tycoon Sajjan Jindal. It was very low-key and secretive affair. Suba Chandran, in his article “Indo-Pak dialogue,” Daily Times, May 4, 2017, argued that:^{vii}

Today, Pakistan is facilitating the Afghan peace talks, which is much appreciated by the US. With General Bajwa came in power, there is a very slight hope of normalization of Pakistan’s ties with the US. The Army can indeed further reach out to the US through facilitation of the Afghan peace talks. The US, on its part, is willing to support Pakistan. An improvement of relations between Pakistan and the US are possible. The US would support a prosperous, stable, and secure Pakistan as that is in its national interest, as defined by the US itself. There can yet be a convergence of interests as the PTI government can negotiate a mutual win outcome. A track-II initiative can be sponsored by the US and there may be

eventual peace talks between Pakistan and India. Undoubtedly, with the resolution of the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, New Delhi would be conducive of joining CPEC.

The CPEC could have a profound regional impact that will promote connectivity in it and beyond. It could make the West Asian region a manufacturing and commerce hub by improving its infrastructure. Given the trust deficit between regional powers, especially Afghanistan and Pakistan, China should take the lead and play a leadership role. The CPEC could become a vehicle of cooperation and friendship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The CPEC was an important part of the greater BRI that was certainly a path-breaking global project and regional powers would be advised to join it immediately.

The CPEC project might yet prove to be the required catalyst of a meaningful rapprochement between Pakistan and its neighbors. It all depends on the current leadership in the two countries. Pakistan's regional isolation will hamper the CPEC initiative. Pakistan's internal contradictions can also thwart CPEC's effectiveness. The CPEC's success was dependent on Pakistan's internal stability and better relations with neighboring countries. For now, the civil-military leadership should find ways to end the undeclared state of war with three immediate neighbors.

Briefly, a pragmatic and political approach needs to be the focus now. A comprehensive strategy of counterterrorism was desperately needed which composed the military tools with that of other societal and political tools. The application of military tools employing force was easier and more immediate while the political approach was by its very nature tedious, slow, and baffling at times. But then, it was far more lasting and viable. It was an imperative that a complete rethink is done on the military's militants mainstreaming project now. Pakistan has suffered enough from Islamic militancy and cannot afford it anymore. Hopefully, the future governments will consider the matter much more seriously. It is not just the threat of Islamic radicalism that Pakistan faces. It is also challenged by nationalist forces.

Pakistan has also failed to make the necessary progress towards a modern and enlightened Islamic state. The country has constitution that reflects Islamic values, more than any other country. Therefore, all political parties must adhere to it. The state cannot, and should not, allow any violation of the constitution under guise of religion. Pakistan is threatened within from extremism. The Sharif government must tackle religious extremism now, as it is becoming a threat to the country's progress. PTI government does not seem to be on the correct path on this sensitive issue, however. Rule of law is paramount in any democracy but some of the Supreme Court's verdicts have not helped the cause.

Undoubtedly, previous governments were not up to the task and had failed to protect Pakistan's vital national interests. Plus, both faced an immense image problem because of corruption allegations pending in the courts of Pakistan. Soon, the leadership of both parties will face jail terms for their gross corruption and other misdeeds.

Undeniably, Pakistan had suffered from an acute image problem and must shed its image as a hotbed of international terrorism. It was only now that there was some evidence of a change of direction. Much more is needed to be done on this score, however. Pakistan desperately needs a change of direction. The previous civilian governments, both the PPP and the PMLN, had miserably failed to boldly act and change Pakistan from within. The PTI government was not that better, also. Pakistan does not have the luxury of time. The future governments coming will be facing a plethora of problems and would have to act immediately. The future of Pakistan depends on such prudent actions and some rethinking. A frank and open discussion on these issues must commence immediately. Remember, there are no sacred cows within Pakistan. Notwithstanding the opinion of the military brass, the Islamic republic of Pakistan is the only thing sacred for the citizens of the country and not it is military. Because of past failures, Pakistan is facing an existential crisis that emanates from several internal and external factors. In the end, both the

Nawaz and Zardari governments had been impaired because of massive corruption, incapacity and endless and unwarranted political bickering with the Pakistan military and Supreme Court. The morale of the people was at its lowest in history. India, arch foe of Pakistan, smelled blood and was going for the kill. It was accusing Pakistan of supporting terrorism and was bent on destroying its global image as a responsible military power. There are some serious challenges facing Pakistan by Islamic fundamentalism. It certainly does have a tiny lunatic fringe. Although specifying it to a particular region like KPK is not true, as such. More importantly, the role of madrassahs or seminaries as incubators of jihadists is exaggerated and a myth. Islamic radicalism is misunderstood in the West, especially in the US. Anti-Western sentiments are now very pronounced not only in Pakistan, but also all over the Muslim world. All segments of Muslim societies, including the educated classes, have turned against the West. The distrust between the two peoples is not just at the level of the governments, but at societal level also. Hence, the urgency to start a frank dialogue. Remember, Pakistanis are a proud nation. Notwithstanding all the problems, they demand respect and some space to resolve their problems. Eventually, the radicals, among the Muslims, will be defeated but not through military means alone.

If the global alliance does not cater to the roots of the Islamic fundamentalist phenomenon, then even with the defeat of IS the problem will not be solved. As explained elsewhere, a “mushrooming effect” takes place; another successor WILL be launched sooner than later. The near elimination of its parent organization al-Qaeda from the Af-Pak region did not end the story and it resurfaced in the shape and form of IS. Similarly, the demise of IS, will result in some other entity somewhere in the Islamic world. Therefore, it is prudent to wage a comprehensive global war on Islamic radicalism by employing both tools - military and softer ones. The emphasis in the long-term must be on the softer tools. That is but obvious.

Among other stark failures of the Muslim world, including Pakistan is the serious intellectual failure that had resulted in paralysis of both thought and action. Why this has occurred is due to glaring failure of leadership, especially national political leadership. With very few exceptions, the entire Muslim world, including Pakistan, is beset with brutal, corrupt, insincere, and very mediocre political leadership that has prevented the people to grow to their full potential as politically active citizens.

The incumbent Sharif coalition government faces enormous and complex challenges. It was being hoped that with the emergence of the Sharif coalition government the military’s power would be gradually reduced. However, the opposite has happened, which is unfortunate, to say the least. The hybrid political system is becoming problematic, to say the least. In the future, only a clean, efficient government that delivers required public services can keep the military in check. Such is the sharp reality of Pakistan’s troubled politics. It is hoped that the future governments will deliver and earn the trust of the people, and then be able to keep a lid on the military’s interventions.

Pakistan population was over 210 million.^{viii} The country’s population had now crossed 220 million. Pakistan faces a horrendous situation as the rapid population growth is fueling a massive rural to urban migration, strain on the cities, and a massive environmental degradation. People are suffering from poor environment, lack of social services and neglect of state institutions to respond to the situation in any coherent manner. Bad governance is the norm, not the exception in state institutions. The poverty gap is striking and is widening in many areas of the country. Pakistan is deficient in governance matters as public services are inadequate and there was immense poverty in the country. Today, Pakistan suffers from poor social indicators.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is extremely low in Pakistan. The HDI was devised and launched in 1990 and was a statistic that ranked countries into four tiers of human development based on indicators

like life expectancy, education, and per capita income. A higher lifespan, higher level of education and higher GDP per capita results in a country scoring higher HDI. Earlier, the 2016 Human Development Report, by the UN Development Program (UNDP) Pakistan had ranked at 147 among 188 countries. ix Today, Pakistan's HDI rank is 154 globally. x Pakistan ranks low on human development indicators because of severe neglect of public health and education. Pakistan is at number 110 in the Global Competitiveness Index. The country's rate of overall fixed investment as a percent of GDP averages around 14pc — exactly half the average for South Asia. FDI into Pakistan was the equivalent of 0.8pc of GDP in 2019, less than half the rate for India, which was 1.8pc of GDP. In terms of inflows, the country receives around \$3 billion in gross FDI annually, compared to \$50bn-plus for India.xi Pakistan's standing in the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index. Pakistan ranks at 130 out of 139 countries, behind Honduras, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Uganda, and Bolivia. Within South Asia, it ranks second from the bottom, just above Afghanistan. In the Worldwide Governance Indicators, the country was ranked in the 25th percentile on 'Rule of Law', meaning that Pakistan is lower than 75pc of the countries worldwide.xii Pakistan is in the 22nd percentile on 'Control of Corruption', meaning that the country is worse than 78pc of the countries worldwide. Pakistan is ranked on the 32nd percentile on 'Government Effectiveness', meaning that Pakistan was worse than 68pc of the countries globally. For 'Political Stability' and 'Absence of Violence,' Pakistan ranks in the fifth percentile, meaning that the country is worse than 95pc of the countries worldwide.xiii Undoubtedly, Pakistan suffers from serious and complex bad governance structural design. A lot of effort must be made to turn the tide in Pakistan. A just, secure, egalitarian, and clean Pakistan can be established. A liberal Pakistan can indeed be fashioned by the will of the people.

Going back to the Pakistan movement in the 1940s, one realizes the spirit of being Muslim and slogans of Muslim League. Islam had always been part of the Pakistani nation. Any understanding of Pakistan should place Islam as an integral part of the nation's development. However, Pakistan was far more liberal in the past, as compared to today. This is tragic, to say the least. The people still hope for a just, tolerant, and liberal Islamic Pakistan. The nation desperately needs across the board accountability now. The government must be obliged to haul up all the corrupt, regardless of background or profession. Meaning that all are under the accountability net, which included military and judiciary too. No sacred cows to be left in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. This is the pious wish of the people. Many had wished that PTI had followed a pragmatic policy, meaning that it would have kept in check the powerful military. Instead, the PTI let the military grow even more powerful in the last two years. It failed to focus on serving the people through real reforms, good governance, and clean government. Earning the trust of the people first is very essential. No other option is available. The supremacy of the civilian leadership over military must be established eventually, as it is the cardinal principle of democracy. Democracy is a process and is inherently tedious, and complex. Some analysts are expressing concerns that the military will continue to manipulate politics soon in the country. The test of the future political leadership is whether it would hold accountable powerful army chiefs such as General Musharraf and General Kayani, who are also deemed to be corrupt like Zardari and Nawaz Sharif. However, it is very doubtful that it can happen though. That is the whole point.

The PMLN was never a political party, but a vast patronage network spun over a period of 36 years or so. The mafia ruled Pakistan for over a quarter of a century and stands exposed now. The party has been discredited and will be in shambles very soon. The era has closed. It is hoped that the accountability of Nawaz Sharif and Zardari will happen soon and thereby change the direction of Pakistan. It remains to be seen whether this happens, though.

Why is religiosity in large parts of the Muslim world, including Pakistan, increasing but not the true practice? The cardinal principles of Islamic society: social justice, compassion and fair play are not being actualized today anywhere? The basic governing principles are being discarded. Question is why?

i Pakistan, US agree to continue with Afghan peace process: NSA

Pakistan Today, August 1, 2021, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2021/08/01/pakistan-us-agree-to-continue-with-afghan-peace-process-nsa/>, accessed August 1, 2021

ii Pakistan has other options if US ignores the country, says Pakistani NSA, Times of Islamabad, August 1, 2021

<https://timesofislamabad.com/04-Aug-2021/pakistan-has-other-options-if-us-ignores-the-country-says-pakistani-nsa>, accessed August 6, 2021

iii ibid

iv Pakistan Will Not Accept 'Forceful' Takeover of Afghanistan: Moeed Yusuf

by Newsweek Pakistan August 6, 2021

<https://www.newsweekpakistan.com/pakistan-will-not-accept-forceful-takeover-of-afghanistan-moeed-yusuf/>

v Pakistan Will Not Accept 'Forceful' Takeover of Afghanistan: Moeed Yusuf

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<https://www.newsweekpakistan.com/pakistan-will-not-accept-forceful-takeover-of-afghanistan-moeed-yusuf/>

vi Pak-US relationship 'moving in the right direction': Moeed Yusuf, The News,

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