

PAKISTAN

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Country Analysis Report

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The country analysis report reflects recent developments in Pakistan and helps reflect on the political, security, economic, and social sectors' updates in the country. The country Analysis report is a monthly publication.

This month's issue discusses the ousting of former Premier Imran Khan and the developments followed by it in Islamabad, the depreciating value of the Pak rupee against the U.S dollar, Pakistan's commitment to ensure women's rights legislation, cholera outbreak, and the National Security Policy approach to achieve economic security.



Political Section

Pakistan's political arena is in turmoil, the tail of this mayhem started with the removal of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. It was the first time in the history of Pakistan that a Prime Minister was ousted from the parliament

through a [no-confidence motion](#) tabled by the united opposition including major political parties of Pakistan, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam F (JUIF), and others.

Soon after this major political development, a debate started among the people of Pakistan about whether Imran Khan was removed due to domestic reasons or due to foreign intervention. The matter of foreign conspiracy was also taken up in the National Security Committee of the country firstly by former Prime Minister Imran Khan and then by newly elected Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. After examining the contents of the communication, the National Security Committee (NSC) reaffirmed the decision of the last [NSC meeting](#). During the discussion, the participants were informed by the premier security agencies that they have completed the investigation and found no evidence of any conspiracy.

Imran Khan has blamed a foreign conspiracy that has encouraged his party leaders and supporters to not just adopt the narrative but also to push it. This narrative also seems to have worked for him since current Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif in his first speech as a Prime Minister was compelled to speak on the issue by announcing a parliamentary probe.

At present, former Prime Minister Imran Khan's popularity is growing by the day. Within a month of his ouster, the former Prime Minister has able to revive his support base to such an extent that it is now widely believed that if free and fair elections are conducted the Pakistan-Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) will emerge as the ultimate winner.

On the other hand, the present government is faced with a challenging situation. They are faced with a conundrum of whether to go for the immediate elections or stand firm on their ground and take tough decisions. By the looks of it, the coalition government will do everything to delay the election, knowing that Imran Khan has massive public support.

Minority Rights Section

Pakistan is struggling to improve the atmosphere of intolerance and systematic persecution meted out to its religious minorities unfortunately, the measures often taken are performative rather than problem-solving.



The Supreme Court, in its widely quoted landmark judgment about minority rights, directed the federal government to form a National Council for the minorities to monitor the practical realization of the rights and safeguards provided to the minorities under the constitution.

Similarly, a judge nullified the "free-will" marriage for a Hindu girl and confirmed that she was underage when she embarrassed Islam and married a Muslim Man. Christians are now able to register their marriages with an official marriage certificate as per the supreme court of Pakistan directed in its verdict.

The system of Pakistan gives a systematic structure for the safeguard of minorities and their rights, however, the lack of implementation and heightened intolerance pose a threat.

Pakistan needs to have an improved culture of intolerance, and institutionalization of minority rights to extend the help with true spirit.

Security and Rule of Law



It is safe to say the situation of rule of law in Pakistan is not ideal currently. Pakistan since its independence in 1947, is struggling to improve the rule of law situation. It is widely believed that the

[rich faces no checks](#) to contain their cruelty the poor have no avenues to seek justice in Pakistan. Every government has been trying to establish the rule of law and make justice accessible to the poor people.

After many twists and turns, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ruled on April 7 that former Prime Minister Imran Khan to dissolve parliament was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court also ordered the parliament to be reconvened on April 9 to proceed with the no-confidence vote.

Such a decision of the top Pakistani Court against the ruling of ex-speaker National Assembly, Qasim Suri is widely considered [Pakistan's victory](#) for its rule of law. The historical verdict of the Supreme Court marked the supremacy of the constitution stated united opposition at that time. After ousting from PM office, Imran Khan announced long march which resulted in an extensive crackdown against protestors in the country, such strong arm tactics only weaken the democratic process. Similarly, Imran Khan-led opposition insisted on culminating the long march in the red zone as it could have caused trouble to the general public.

Since security is one of the defining aspects of any rule of law and a fundamental function of the state. [National Security Policy](#) (NSP) in Pakistan has taken a comprehensive approach to security anchoring its drift in human security to achieve economic security. Keeping in view that economy and security are directly proportional to each other and to prioritize human security, the NSP makes specific references to the rule of law to be upheld for all citizens.



Economic

Pakistan is on the verge of a national emergency as the country is experiencing one of the worst economic crisis in recent history. While economic instability has accompanied Pakistan through all stages. the

impending economic crisis seems to be beyond the means of redemption. The rising external debts, growing current account deficit, surge in imports, the continuous depreciation in foreign exchange reserves, and ascending debt defaults have collectively put a significant strain on Pakistan's economy. Resultantly, the Pakistani rupee has [recorded](#) a historic low of 200 against a US dollar, in addition to the Gold prices hitting a historic high, sliding the country towards a potentially catastrophic economic crisis.

The situation is further compounded by the political uncertainty following the power transition in Islamabad as well as the deteriorating security situation in the country. According to a [report](#) by the Institute for Policy Reforms (IPR), the economic instability stemmed from flawed political choices and misplaced priorities of the government. For this reason, despite the primary condition set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for extending debt relief, the government has so far delayed ending subsidies on fuel which continues to cost the country's economy [\\$12 million](#) a day. While the government is in talks with the IMF for a bailout package, a failure in reaching an agreement could push the country towards a default, much similar to the one being experienced by Sri Lanka.

To offset the pressure on the country's economy, the federal government has imposed a ban on ['luxury' and 'non-essential'](#) items. According to the federal information minister, the ban will save around \$6 billion and may help deal with the ongoing economic turmoil which many believe may deepen in the coming days.

The Institute for Policy Reforms (IPR) report suggests the government set targets for fiscal and current account deficit and not just rely on indirect taxes but follow a robust plan with IMF for economic growth and correction of elite privilege. Additionally, the government should make the power sector financially sustainable, increase domestic sources of energy, direct external debt towards projects that promote exports and contribute to the overall GDP and ensure parliamentary review of the international agreements of economic nature. Pakistan's disconnect from regional trade is another reason that inhibits Islamabad from exploiting its full economic potential. Therefore, realizing the potential trade opportunities with neighbors including India is essential for a robust economic revival.

In midst of this economic turmoil, the common citizen has been pushed further with the [1.61%](#) increase of inflation in April, 2022. This only is not going to hinder the economic growth and reduce the purchasing power but will increase the disconnect between the citizens and their representatives.

Finally, given the role of the continuous disconnect between political and economic policy-making, a coordinated response by the political leadership is inevitable to avert the impending economic crisis and revival of the economy.

Social Sector (Health and Education)

The social sector in Pakistan is fraught with newfound challenges stemming mostly from the after-effects of the COVID-19 crisis. Despite a gradual decline in COVID-19 cases, the health sector's indicators are frightening with the outbreak of new diseases such as

Cholera. According to [news reports](#), a deadly Cholera outbreak has infected more than 2,000 people with six people dead in Central Pakistan. The outbreak is linked mostly to contaminated drinking water and the severe heatwave which has raised the temperature to a new height in most parts of the country.

While Cholera as a disease is not new and kills thousands of people each year worldwide, its severe outbreak amid a political and economic crisis amplifies its impacts on the social sector. Sherry Rehman, Pakistan's federal minister for Climate Change, [stated](#) that Pakistan is one of the water-stressed countries in the world and the top ten most vulnerable countries to climate change. The heat wave has been a deadly threat in the past as well and in 2015, a severe heat wave [killed](#) more than a thousand people in Pakistan's largest city, Karachi.

Similarly, the education sector is equally ignored. In a recent development, the United States through its USAID has partnered with the Pakistani government to launch a [\\$19 million program](#) to increase the higher education system and increase the employability of Pakistani graduates. The program will integrate the best practices in teaching, research, governance, and sustainability to support 15 public universities across Pakistan including five women universities. Domestically, the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan's central education body, has announced the [Textbook Writing Support Program \(TWSP\)](#) which will enhance the competitiveness in research and development by building a strong team of authors in the country. In a development of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) introduced this year by the previous PTI government, the Punjab Government has barred the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) from publishing books for grades 6 to 8 under the SNC. This could be an indication of the rolling back of the SNC for middle school by the incumbent government.

At present when the government is expected to announce the country's budget, the [Sindh Social Scientists Forum](#) has suggested the government allocate at least 10% of the federal budget and 20% of the provincial budget to the social sector.





Children and Women's Rights

The month of May presents several cases that represent a dismal picture of child rights in Pakistan. At the 5th International Global Conference to Eliminate Child Labor concluded on May 19th in Duran South Africa,

Ms. Amna Shabbir represented Pakistan where she stated that “the most important thing we’ve done in Pakistan is to stop normalizing child labor.” However, neither has child labor come to a decline nor is there a satisfactory advance against the violation of children’s rights in the country. There appeared numerous cases of exploitation including the prominent cases of religious conversion of minors especially girls in the Sindh province. Also, cases such as those of [Dua Zehra](#), a girl that was allegedly abducted and convinced of marriage showed weaknesses in the legal system that should help children protect against exploitation. Despite being a minor with an age below 18, the Lahore High Court could not ensure sending Dua back to her family.

Regarding women’s rights, the Women Development Department of the Government of Punjab conducted day’s sessions on ‘Gender Mainstreaming, Planning, and Development’ on May 11th and May 17th. The sessions highlighted the need to mainstream and empower women in national planning and budgeting to take full benefit of more than half of Pakistan’s population. Similar sessions and projects have become a norm across the country which is encouraging women’s empowerment. However, at the same time, the situation of women’s rights has also deteriorated further with several cases involving abductions, forced conversion of religion, rapes, and domestic and gender-based violence.

While the cases of women’s rights violations are long-prevailing in Pakistan society, the recent urge towards law-making is a good indication of protecting women’s rights. For instance, Justice Qazi Faez Isa has highlighted the need to deter [gender and sexual-based violence](#). While speaking at a conference on ‘Judicial Response to Cases and Gender-Based Violence’ organized by Federal Judicial Academy on May 14th in Islamabad, Justice Isa regretted that Islam is being presented in a way that gives the impression that women have an inferior role. He referred to different laws including the Hudood Ordinances of the Zia era which were used to unjustifiably raise fingers toward women even if she is subjected to rape. He explained that it took 27 years to rectify the wrongs of deleting sections 375 and 376 which are related to the offense of rape and its punishment from the Pakistani Penal Code (PPC), which were later reinstated through the Protection of Women Act in 2006. Justice Isa’s remarks are a reflection of the realization of the need to improve the country’s justice system and ensure the protection of women’s rights.

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