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COUNTRY ANALYSIS REPORT

INTERNATIONAL DAY TO PROTECT EDUCATION FROM ATTACK

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Executive Summary

Pakistan entered September 2026 with some macroeconomic stability but continued political, institutional, security, and social pressures. Fiscal and external indicators have improved; however, these gains remain fragile. Public debt is still high, investment and exports remain weak, the tax burden is unevenly distributed, and limited human-capital investment continues to constrain long-term productivity. The broader challenge is therefore shifting from short-term stabilisation towards sustained economic and institutional transformation.

Politically, greater opposition coordination, visible tensions within the governing coalition and renewed debates over provincial autonomy, constitutional arrangements and political inclusion have made the environment more fluid. These developments have not yet produced a major realignment, but they indicate growing political bargaining and continued uncertainty around major institutional decisions.

Security remains a major concern, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, where militant groups are demonstrating increasingly sophisticated capabilities. The associated risks extend into education: Pakistan was classified as heavily affected by attacks on education, with at least 44 school attacks recorded during 2024-25, compared with eight during 2022-23. The impact is particularly severe for girls and communities where educational access is already limited.

Across the social, humanitarian and climate landscape, a common governance challenge is evident: policies and legal frameworks often exist, but implementation and institutional capacity remain weak. Hospital safety failures, youth employment pressures, policing complaints, child labour, digital-rights concerns and recurring urban flooding all demonstrate the costs of weak enforcement, local governance and public-service delivery. Meanwhile, Pakistan is pursuing a more diversified foreign policy, balancing stronger engagement with China, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Iran while maintaining relations with the United States. Overall, the country's central challenge is increasingly one of implementation, converting policy commitments, economic stabilisation and diplomatic engagement into stronger institutions, improved public services and greater resilience for citizens.

International Day to Protect Education from Attack

On 16 December 2014, militants entered the Army Public School in Peshawar and killed 147 people, including 132 schoolchildren. But more than a decade after that atrocity, attacks on education have not disappeared. They have changed in scale, geography and form. Some schools are deliberately bombed; girls' schools are threatened or destroyed; children are caught in explosions on their way to class; schools become entangled in electoral or armed violence; teachers are abducted; and universities themselves become sites of confrontation.

This makes the theme of the 2026 International Day to Protect Education from Attack, "Can Education Survive Attack? The Resilience of Human Communities", particularly relevant to Pakistan. Globally, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack recorded 8,566 attacks on education and cases of military use during 2024 and 2025, more than 40 per cent higher than in the preceding two years. Pakistan is classified in its latest assessment as "heavily affected."

GCPEA identified at least 44 attacks on schools in Pakistan during 2024-25, compared with eight identified during 2022-23. That is more than a fivefold increase.

There are also three deeper implications. First, these attacks are not geographically or socially neutral: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is disproportionately affected, meaning children in already insecure areas face an additional barrier to education. Second, the fact that 16 of the 44 attacks targeted girls' schools suggests that education-related violence can reinforce existing gender inequalities; where girls already face distance, mobility, cultural, or security barriers, destroying or threatening a girls' school can push them out of education altogether. Third, the threat extends beyond school buildings. The separate attacks on students, teachers and education personnel, as well as incidents involving universities, show that the wider education system is being affected.

Yet understanding the Pakistani problem requires going beyond the number of attacks. Not every incident involving a school has the same cause. Some are explicitly directed against education, particularly girls' education. Others occur because a school has temporarily acquired another public function, such as serving as a polling station. Still others arise because schools and children are caught within a wider theatre of militancy, counterterrorism operations, drones, mortars and explosive remnants. Treating all of these simply as "terrorism against schools" risks producing an equally simplistic policy response.

The 2024 general election illustrates this complexity. GCPEA found that violence associated with schools being used as polling stations contributed to the increase in attacks that year. On 6 February, for example, a grenade was thrown at a government school in Quetta that was scheduled to serve as a polling station. The lesson is not that schools should withdraw from civic life altogether, but that authorities need to understand how using educational infrastructure for political, electoral or security purposes can alter its risk profile. A school cannot simultaneously be treated as an inviolable civilian learning space and casually exposed to the risks surrounding other state functions.

A different pattern emerges in the attacks on girls' education. In May 2024, explosives badly damaged the only girls' school in Shawa in North Waziristan, where around 150 girls were enrolled. The attackers reportedly assaulted the guard before detonating explosives. The school had received threats before the attack. A few days later, another girls' high school was badly damaged in South Waziristan. Other girls' schools were subsequently targeted in North Waziristan. These are not merely attacks on concrete structures. In places where a single school may represent the only socially and geographically viable route to education for hundreds of girls, destroying that building can effectively remove education from an entire community.

When the Taliban gained control over parts of Swat after 2007, more than 900 girls' schools were forced to close, more than 120,000 girls stopped attending school, and approximately 8,000 female teachers were driven from their jobs, according to Human Rights Watch. Crucially, some girls did not return even after militants were pushed out. That experience reveals the real multiplier effect of an attack on education; the real challenge lies in rebuilding parental confidence, restoring a female teaching workforce, or convincing an adolescent girl to return after several years outside the classroom. A Human Rights Watch report states: A Taliban commander claiming the attack on Bacha Khan University in KP in January 2016 said, “We will continue to attack schools, colleges, and universities across Pakistan as these are the foundations that produce apostates.”

Violence is striking an education system that already has extraordinarily little room to absorb further disruption. UNICEF currently estimates that around 25 million Pakistani children aged five to sixteen are out of school. Its 2025 annual report estimates that 13.4 million are girls and 11.9 million are boys, while roughly two-thirds of out-of-school children have never entered a classroom at all. Balochistan has the country's gravest proportional exclusion, with nearly 69 per cent of school-age children out of school, while the figure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is about 34 per cent.

The overlap between educational exclusion and insecurity is therefore particularly damaging. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, where access to education is already weakest, are also the centre of Pakistan's renewed security crisis. The Pak Institute for Peace Studies recorded 699 terrorist attacks across Pakistan in 2025, 34 per cent more than in 2024, with the increase driven primarily by KP and Balochistan. In the second quarter of 2026, those two provinces accounted for almost 96 per cent of violence-linked fatalities recorded by the Centre for Research and Security Studies.

The result can be a vicious cycle. Areas with weak educational access are exposed to greater insecurity; insecurity makes operating schools more difficult; families become more reluctant to send children, particularly girls, long distances to school; teachers become harder to recruit and retain; and the resulting educational isolation deepens the social and economic disadvantages from which instability itself can draw strength. Militancy does not have to destroy every school to affect education. It only has to make attendance uncertain enough that families begin calculating whether the journey is worth the risk.

There is another uncomfortable dimension to this debate. Pakistan's Constitution does not merely describe education as desirable. Article 25A makes free and compulsory education for every child aged five to sixteen a state responsibility. Yet the Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25 reported public education expenditure equivalent to only 0.8 percent of GDP during July-March FY2025. Low investment does not cause militant attacks, but it makes the system less RESILIENT. A well-resourced system can rapidly relocate students, rebuild damaged facilities, provide transport and psychosocial support, replace teaching materials, deploy additional teachers and establish temporary learning centres. An already overstretched system is far more likely to allow a temporary closure to become a prolonged interruption.
Protection thus must include district-level threat mapping; confidential reporting mechanisms for schools receiving threats; protocols for rapidly shifting children to alternative learning spaces; safe transport arrangements; psychosocial assistance after attacks; accelerated reconstruction; protection for teachers; and public tracking of whether affected students actually return to education. The data also need to distinguish between deliberate attacks on education, collateral harm, electoral violence, military use and attacks specifically motivated by hostility to girls' schooling. Without that distinction, authorities cannot know which preventive measure addresses which threat.

Ultimately, the most important measure of Pakistan's response should not be how quickly officials condemn an attack, or even how quickly a damaged building is reconstructed. It should be whether the children who studied there are still learning six months later.

A child's access to education should not depend on whether he or she happens to grow up in a peaceful district. On 9 September, that should be Pakistan's central commitment: no attack should be allowed to become a child's last day in school.

Political Updates

Pakistan's political environment became more fluid during August 2026, with signs of greater parliamentary activity, opposition coordination and tension within the governing coalition. These developments do not yet amount to a major political realignment, but they show that the political space is no longer as static as it appeared earlier in the year.

A notable development has been the effort to consolidate the opposition. The JUI-F and parties associated with the Tehreek Tahaffuz-e-Ayin Pakistan agreed in principle to develop a joint parliamentary front, with Maulana Fazlur Rehman arguing that opposition parties could play a more effective role if they acted collectively. The emerging opposition agenda includes political prisoners, constitutional protections, provincial autonomy, electoral reform and the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The importance of this development lies less in whether the opposition becomes a permanent alliance and more in its potential to make Parliament a more contested political arena.

At the same time, relations between the PML-N and PPP have shown visible strain. The PPP temporarily blocked government legislation in the National Assembly and has increased contact with opposition parties. Its concerns include electoral disputes, coalition agreements and, most importantly, the growing debate over the creation of new provinces. The PPP remains particularly sensitive to any proposal that could divide Sindh or weaken the provincial autonomy secured through the 18th Constitutional Amendment. This creates an important constraint for the federal government because major constitutional changes require parliamentary support that the PML-N cannot easily secure without the PPP.

The debate on new provinces has therefore become part of a wider argument about Pakistan's federal structure. Supporters present smaller administrative units as a possible response to weak governance and poor service delivery. Critics argue that the deeper problem is not the size of provinces but incomplete devolution. This argument has gained further weight from the Senate's Functional Committee on Devolution, which has questioned the continued federal control of several subjects transferred or constitutionally linked to the provinces after the 18th Amendment. The debate is therefore increasingly about where authority should sit within the state: at the federal level, provincial level or with empowered local governments. Any attempt to redraw provincial boundaries without broad political and provincial agreement could deepen existing tensions rather than resolve governance problems.

The treatment of former prime minister Imran Khan has also remained central to the political environment. In August, the Supreme Court ordered that he receive hospital treatment, greater access to his family and examination by his personal physician. PTI presented the decision as recognition of his constitutional and medical rights, while parts of the government questioned aspects of the order. The government subsequently took him to PIMS rather than Shifa International Hospital, citing security concerns, before returning him to Adiala Jail after doctors declared him medically fit.

Source: Tribune

The episode generated speculation about a possible easing of political tensions, but there is still insufficient evidence to conclude that a broader settlement with PTI is underway. What is clearer is that Imran Khan's imprisonment continues to shape relations between the government, opposition and judiciary. The controversy over Imran Khan's treatment also raised questions of consistency in the treatment of political prisoners. Past cases show that senior political figures, including Nawaz Sharif, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Pervez Musharraf, Sharjeel Memon and Dr Asim Hussain, were granted treatment outside prison, including at private hospitals in some instances, which has strengthened arguments that access to appropriate medical care should be applied as a legal and humanitarian standard rather than treated as a political concession.

Balochistan is also moving higher on the political agenda. The government has publicly called for a wider political dialogue, while opposition parties have increasingly argued that security operations alone cannot address instability in Balochistan and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The central challenge remains credibility: previous political and development packages for Balochistan were only partially implemented. Any new dialogue will therefore be judged not by announcements but by whether political participation expands, previous commitments are implemented, and grievances over representation, resources and rights are addressed.

Overall, the current period is marked by political bargaining rather than political settlement. Parliament has become more active, opposition parties are coordinating more closely, and divisions within the ruling coalition have become more visible. At the same time, disputes over federalism, political inclusion, constitutional change and security remain unresolved. The immediate political risk is therefore continued uncertainty in which major institutional and constitutional decisions are debated without sufficient consensus.

Economic Updates

Pakistan's economic indicators in 2026 are undeniably less alarming than they were three years ago. The consolidated fiscal deficit fell to around 2.6% of GDP in FY2026, and the primary surplus reached roughly 2.9%. Public debt has declined from about 75% of GDP in FY2023 to around 68%, while interest expenditure fell sharply as interest rates came down. Central government debt excluding IMF liabilities nevertheless stood at Rs81.9 trillion by May 2026, of which Rs58.1 trillion was domestic and Rs23.8 trillion external. The broader debt stock has crossed Rs100 trillion. The improvement therefore lies mainly in the rate of accumulation and the cost and composition of debt, rather than in any large reduction in what the state owes. Average domestic debt maturities have lengthened, some liabilities have been retired early, and the external share of public debt has declined. These changes reduce immediate refinancing pressure, but Pakistan remains well above the debt-reduction path envisaged under the Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation framework, which seeks to bring the ratio towards 50% of GDP by FY2033.

More important is how the fiscal correction has been achieved. Lower interest rates did much of the work. Federal development expenditure fell by about 13%, subsidies by more than 20%, while spending on defence and the running of government continued to grow. The petroleum levy alone generated around Rs1.6 trillion. Pakistan has therefore tightened the fiscal accounts partly by suppressing development and transferring more of the adjustment onto consumers and the documented economy. The new trader scheme exposes the political economy behind this imbalance. Retailers with annual sales of up to Rs200 million are being offered a 1% tax on turnover, simplified filing, protection from routine audit and an opportunity to declare assets without being asked about their source. This follows salaried taxpayers contributing around Rs630 billion in FY2026. The Federal Board of Revenue itself estimates that 4.2 million retailers use commercial electricity connections, while trader representatives claim the actual number of retailers is closer to 12.5 million. Pakistan may have achieved a primary surplus, but it still has not solved the more difficult fiscal question of who pays for the state and who remains politically difficult to tax.

The external position carries a similar contradiction. Remittances reached $41.6 billion and reserves rebuilt to roughly $17-18 billion at the State Bank, helping Pakistan move away from the acute dollar shortage that previously forced import restrictions and emergency financing. Yet goods exports remain weak compared with imports, and exports of goods and services account for only around 10% of GDP. Pakistan exported a larger share of its economy in the 1990s than it does today. Around 2000, Pakistan's economy was larger than Bangladesh's and more than twice the size of Vietnam's; both countries subsequently moved ahead while building much deeper export and manufacturing bases. Pakistan's gross fixed capital formation is around 13% of GDP, compared with more than 30% across much of East and South Asia. Capital goods account for less than 14% of imports, against around 44% in Vietnam. These figures point to a basic problem: Pakistan is under-investing in the machinery, technology and industrial capacity required to become more productive.

Trade policy has contributed to this under-investment. Pakistan has historically maintained relatively high tariffs while integrating far less aggressively into free-trade arrangements than its Asian competitors. Only around a quarter of imports are covered by regional trade agreements, largely because of the China-Pakistan FTA, compared with more than 80% in Vietnam and above 60% in several Southeast Asian economies. The National Tariff Policy 2025-30 may reduce the cost of imported inputs and machinery, but trade liberalisation on its own cannot repair an industrial system constrained by expensive energy, inconsistent regulation, high taxes, limited finance and weak logistics. Pakistan's difficulty is that growth still generates imports faster than exports. That is why every recovery eventually threatens the reserves that made the recovery possible. Record remittances have postponed that constraint, but dependence on workers earning abroad is a poor substitute for building firms capable of earning abroad. There is also a regional dimension: labour migration and remittance flows remain concentrated in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Kashmir, while Sindh and Balochistan benefit far less. Weak local governments compound these disparities. Provinces received roughly Rs9.2 trillion in federal transfers in FY2026. At the same time, only about Rs1.8 trillion was expected to reach local governments, leaving the institutions responsible for municipal services, transport, sanitation and much local economic infrastructure chronically weak.

Pakistan is also trying to make its borrowing less precarious. The proposed $10 billion US Treasury facility is intended to support confidence and allow Pakistan to raise longer-term financing from international markets rather than continuing to depend so heavily on bilateral rollovers.

The government currently relies on large short-term deposits from Saudi Arabia, China and other partners and plans further Eurobond, sukuk and dollar-settled rupee bond issuances following its recent Panda bond. Moving towards longer maturities would reduce rollover risk. It does not remove the underlying dependence. Pakistan's credit rating has improved to the B range but remains below investment grade, meaning market borrowing can still be expensive. Replacing bilateral debt with market debt may improve treasury management; it does little to address the reason Pakistan repeatedly needs external financing.

The wheat market shows how institutional weaknesses can create fresh macroeconomic problems even when headline indicators improve. Government estimates initially suggested that production of about 29.8 million tonnes, together with carryover stocks, would be adequate. Satellite-based estimates placed production much lower, at around 27.5 million tonnes, while measures of annual consumption vary considerably depending on the methodology used. The government subsequently moved towards importing one million tonnes. Pakistan has been here before: 3.59 million tonnes were imported in 2023-24, followed by a record domestic harvest that created excess supply and pushed down prices received by farmers. Growers now face higher fertiliser, diesel and electricity costs, uncertainty over procurement and disagreement over what constitutes a viable support price. Pakistan Kissan Ittehad estimates production costs at Rs3,761 per maund and argues that a commercially viable price should be closer to Rs4,702. It warns that reduced sowing could create a three-million-tonne shortfall costing about $1.2 billion in imports. Its proposal to extend phosphatic fertiliser subsidies beyond DAP also exposes another policy distortion, since most phosphatic fertiliser used by wheat farmers comes in other formulations. The exact shortfall remains uncertain. That uncertainty is itself the problem. Pakistan is making decisions worth hundreds of millions of dollars without a production and consumption database trusted by farmers, traders and different arms of government.

Source: Pexels

The country does possess new sources of export growth. IT and professional services can generate foreign exchange without requiring workers to migrate, while medical tourism could make better commercial use of Pakistan's large pool of trained doctors and relatively low treatment costs. But Turkey's success in medical tourism came from accreditation, quality control, visas, regulation and international marketing, rather than cheap healthcare alone. Pakistan's much larger constraint sits further upstream. Around 40% of children under five remain stunted, severe food poverty affects a large share of young children, and the Human Capital Index remains around 0.41. A country trying to move into higher-value manufacturing and services is simultaneously allowing a large proportion of its future workforce to enter adulthood with impaired health, learning and productivity.

Pakistan has therefore moved out of immediate economic danger without settling the question of what comes next. Investment remains exceptionally low, exports remain shallow, the tax burden is uneven, wheat policy is being made with disputed data, local governments remain weak and human capital indicators are poor. These problems explain why Pakistan repeatedly stabilises without transforming. The next economic crisis may arrive with a different trigger, but unless productivity, investment and institutional capacity improve, its underlying causes will look very familiar.

Diplomatic Landscape

Pakistan's diplomatic position in August 2026 reflects a more active but also more complicated foreign policy. Islamabad is trying to strengthen relations with China, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Iran while preserving its ties with the United States. This gives Pakistan greater diplomatic space, but it also requires increasingly careful balancing as tensions among these partners grow.

The most important development has been Pakistan's deeper engagement in the Middle East. Field Marshal Asim Munir's August visit to Tehran focused on preventing further escalation, reopening the Strait of Hormuz and keeping negotiations alive after the initial US-Iran diplomatic timetable failed to produce an agreement. Pakistan's geographic position, relations with Iran and continued access to Washington and Gulf capitals give it some credibility in this role. However, mediation also carries risks. Pakistan has limited ability to influence the decisions of either Tehran or Washington, and prolonged confrontation could eventually force Islamabad into more difficult choices.

Source: Tribune

The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline illustrates this tension clearly. Pakistan continues to face potential financial liability because it has not completed its section of the project, while Iran has already developed much of the required infrastructure on its side. Islamabad is therefore trying to negotiate a settlement that addresses possible arbitration costs, the price of Iranian gas and Pakistan's future energy needs. Yet the project cannot be treated purely as an energy decision. US sanctions remain a major constraint, and Pakistan has indicated that implementation would be easier if Washington granted a waiver. The pipeline therefore captures a wider problem in Pakistan's foreign policy: economic opportunities with neighbouring countries are often limited by geopolitical pressures beyond Pakistan's control.

Source: Arab News

At the same time, Pakistan has moved closer to Saudi Arabia and Türkiye through the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement. The agreement, under which an attack on one member would be treated as an attack on all three, represents a significant expansion of Pakistan's regional security partnerships. It also suggests that Middle Eastern states are looking for additional security arrangements rather than relying exclusively on Western guarantees. For Pakistan, closer defence cooperation could strengthen military, technological and economic relations with two important partners. But this relationship will have to be managed carefully so that stronger ties with Riyadh and Ankara do not undermine Pakistan's relationship with Tehran. Pakistan is therefore trying to maintain an unusual position: participating in a new regional defence arrangement while simultaneously acting as a diplomatic bridge to Iran.

Relations with the United States remain equally important but are not without friction. Pakistan formally protested after the US ambassador to India described Jammu and Kashmir as an important part of India. Islamabad rejected the statement and emphasised that Kashmir remains a disputed territory under its interpretation of relevant UN resolutions. The episode is significant because Pakistan has simultaneously welcomed President Donald Trump's offers to facilitate dialogue on Kashmir and sought closer engagement with Washington on regional security. This shows that improved relations with the US have not removed longstanding differences, particularly over India and Kashmir.

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Source: Tribune

Taken together, these developments suggest that Pakistan is pursuing a more diversified foreign policy. It is strengthening security ties with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, retaining China as its main long-term economic partner, keeping diplomatic channels open with Iran and maintaining engagement with the United States despite continuing differences. This diversification is useful because it reduces dependence on any one relationship. However, it also makes foreign policy more demanding. Pakistan's partners increasingly have competing interests, particularly in the Middle East. The success of Pakistan's diplomacy will therefore depend less on the number of high-level visits or agreements it signs and more on whether it can protect its economic and security interests without becoming drawn too deeply into rival regional blocs.

Social and Humanitarian Updates

Pakistan's social and humanitarian landscape in August 2026 shows a widening gap between policy announcements and the state's ability to protect citizens in practice. Across health, employment, agriculture, policing, labour rights, digital rights and media freedom, the same pattern is visible: laws and policies exist, but implementation remains weak and public institutions often respond only after a crisis has already occurred.

The health sector provides the starkest example. Fourteen infants were killed in a fire at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences in Islamabad, adding to a long record of hospital fires caused by weak safety systems, poor building standards and lax enforcement. Similar incidents have repeatedly occurred in major public hospitals since 2010. At the same time, Pakistan recorded around 1.8 million malaria cases last year, with rising transmission in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. These health emergencies point to weaknesses in basic public health functions such as disease surveillance, sanitation, hospital safety, local health infrastructure and emergency preparedness. Recent disease outbreaks in rain-affected areas of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, where residents reported cleaning flooded neighbourhoods themselves, further demonstrate how quickly public health risks increase when municipal services fail.

Source: Dawn News

The government's first National Youth Employment Policy is another important update that aims to reduce the number of young people outside education, employment or training. However, the policy also exposes a larger problem. Training more young people will have limited impact if the economy does not create enough productive jobs. Pakistan risks improving the supply of skilled workers without addressing weak investment, limited private-sector growth and poor access to finance. In that situation, migration rather than domestic employment may remain the most attractive option for many young people.

Problems of accountability also extend to law enforcement. More than 84,500 complaints were reportedly filed against Punjab Police in the first seven months of 2026, including around 39,000 complaints concerning failure to register cases, 19,300 relating to poor investigations and 14,700 involving alleged corruption or bribery. Although authorities report resolving most complaints, the volume itself raises questions about institutional performance. If complaints are repeatedly closed through internal departmental processes without meaningful consequences for misconduct, high disposal rates may not necessarily indicate stronger accountability.

Rights protections are facing similar implementation gaps. Punjab's proposed rules against child labour at brick kilns acknowledge that existing legislation has not been sufficient to end child labour and debt bondage. Registration of workers, inspections and stronger penalties can help, but enforcement alone will not solve the problem if families remain dependent on advances from kiln owners because of poverty, debt and lack of social protection. Removing children from kilns must therefore be linked with schooling, income support and protection for their families.

Source: Dawn News

Digital and civic rights are another emerging concern. Pakistan still lacks a comprehensive personal data protection law despite repeated reports of large-scale leaks involving identity and communications data. This is becoming more serious as the state expands digital identity systems, online public services and artificial intelligence. At the same time, new restrictions requiring journalists working for foreign media to obtain permission for reporting outside Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi have drawn criticism from press freedom groups. Together, these developments point to a wider governance challenge: the state is expanding its administrative and technological reach faster than the legal protections available to citizens.

The broader picture is therefore not one of a state without policies, but of a state struggling to convert policy into reliable public protection. Pakistan's immediate social challenge is not producing more plans. It is making institutions work consistently, especially for citizens who have the least political and economic power.

Security Updates

Pakistan's security situation remained under pressure in August 2026, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The main concern is not only the frequency of attacks, but the changing capability of militant groups.

In K-P, 156 police personnel were reportedly killed between January and July. Militants are increasingly using drones, thermal imaging and night-vision equipment, with nearly 250 drone-related attacks reported against police and government installations in recent months. Violence remains concentrated in southern and tribal districts but is also spreading towards Malakand and Swat. This has exposed a serious gap between militant capabilities and the equipment, training and infrastructure available to frontline police. Even where anti-drone systems have been provided, unreliable electricity and communications limit their effectiveness.

Source: Tribune

The wider trend remains concerning. Reported attacks in Pakistan increased from 658 in 2022 to 2,425 in 2025, while attacks attributed to the TTP rose from 118 to 838. The security challenge is therefore becoming both more persistent and more sophisticated.

Pakistan's response will need to go beyond repeated military operations. K-P requires better-equipped and better-trained police, stronger counter-drone capacity and improved frontline infrastructure. In Balochistan, security measures will also need to be accompanied by credible political engagement and better governance. Without these parallel efforts, operational gains are unlikely to translate into lasting security.

Climate Change Related Updates

Pakistan's recent monsoon experience again shows that climate change is increasingly exposing weaknesses in urban governance rather than creating entirely new problems. Heavy rainfall in Islamabad and Rawalpindi in August caused serious urban flooding, with Leh Nullah reaching dangerous levels and water entering homes, markets and public facilities. More than 120mm of rain was recorded in several parts of the twin cities within a short period. Yet much of the damage resulted not from Leh Nullah overflowing, but from smaller drains and sewerage systems failing to cope with the volume of water.

This distinction is important. More intense rainfall is becoming increasingly likely as the climate changes, but poor drainage, encroachment, weak waste management and construction without adequate flood planning determine how damaging that rainfall becomes. Authorities had already identified vulnerable points along Leh Nullah before the monsoon. Repeated flooding therefore points as much to failures of prevention and urban planning as to extreme weather itself.

Source: Dawn News

The challenge is also one of public engagement. Climate change is often discussed in Pakistan through national policies, international commitments and specialist forums, while affected communities experience it through flooded homes, extreme heat, water shortages, disease and lost livelihoods. Climate communication will remain weak if it does not connect these everyday experiences with decisions over drainage, housing, water management, public health and local government accountability.

Pakistan therefore needs to treat climate resilience as a basic governance issue. Early warnings and emergency response remain necessary, but they cannot substitute for year-round drainage maintenance, enforcement against unsafe construction, better land-use planning and stronger local institutions. As extreme weather becomes more frequent, the cost of weak urban governance will increasingly be measured in damaged livelihoods, public health risks and repeated displacement.

Reading Recommendations

- Reviving the Role of Youth in Pakistan's Social and Political Life (Click Here)
- From Digital Ambition to Democratic Trust: Charting Pakistan's Path Toward Inclusive Digital Governance (Click Here)
- Why Are Sexual Violence Cases Rising While Convictions Remain So Low in Pakistan? (Click Here)
- Pakistan's Rising Poverty: What Is Driving the Recent Increase in Poverty and Household Vulnerability? (Minimum Wage versus Actual Living Costs) (Click Here)
- Protecting Pakistan's Children: Why Are Children Still Vulnerable to Abuse and What Happens When They Report It? (Click Here)
- Beyond Hunger: Tackling Nutritional Deficiencies Among Pakistani Children (Click Here)
- When the Weather Becomes a Workplace Hazard: Climate Change and Labour Rights in Pakistan (Click Here)
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- Reimagining Civil Society Action in Pakistan (Click Here)
- Building Digital Resilience of Civil Society (Click Here)
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- The FY 2025–26 Budget and Its Impact on Pakistan's IT & ITeS Sector (Click Here)
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