



Democracy on Trial: A Historical Analysis of Pakistan's Political Struggles

Asifa Zafar

Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies, National University of Modern Languages Islamabad
azafar@numl.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Pakistan's democratic journey since independence in 1947 has been characterized by persistent fragility, marked by repeated military interventions, institutional weaknesses, and civil-military imbalances that have kept the polity perpetually "on trial." Founded with aspirations for parliamentary governance, the country experienced direct military rule for nearly half its history through regimes under Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Zia-ul-Haq, and Pervez Musharraf, interspersed with short-lived civilian interludes undermined by elite fragmentation, regional disparities, and authoritarian tendencies. Early failures in constitution-making and leadership crises paved the way for the 1958 coup, while subsequent cycles revealed patterns of populist civilian experiments (e.g., Bhutto's 1973 Constitution) followed by Islamization and controlled democratization under Zia. The post-1999 era shifted toward hybrid or tutelary regimes, where elections persist but military influence dominates security, foreign policy, and institutional oversight evident in the 2008–present transitions, Imran Khan's 2022 ouster, disputed 2024 elections, and the 2025 27th Constitutional Amendment formalizing greater military primacy. Through qualitative historical analysis of secondary sources, this article traces these recurring "trials" of democratic institutions, highlighting structural asymmetries rooted in colonial legacies, praetorian traditions, and geopolitical factors. It argues that while incremental reforms like the 18th Amendment demonstrate resilience, enduring tutelage and adaptive authoritarian mechanisms continue to erode civilian supremacy, rendering sustainable democracy elusive in this post-colonial context. The analysis underscores the need for genuine civil-military equilibrium to break cycles of instability and foster inclusive, accountable governance.

Keywords: Pakistan Democracy, Military Interventions, Civil-Military Relations, Hybrid Regime, Democratic Backsliding, Constitutional Amendments

Introduction

Pakistan emerged as an independent state in 1947, founded on the vision of a parliamentary democracy that would embody the aspirations of its Muslim-majority population for self-governance, justice, and equitable representation. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Quaid-e-Azam, envisioned a constitutional framework where elected civilian institutions would hold supreme authority, free from colonial legacies of bureaucratic and military dominance. The initial years carried immense optimism: the new nation inherited a parliamentary tradition from British India, with expectations that democratic processes would foster national unity across diverse ethnic, linguistic, and provincial lines. However, these hopes were quickly undermined by structural vulnerabilities, including delayed constitution-making (the first constitution arrived only in 1956), elite power struggles, bureaucratic overreach inherited from the viceregal system, and acute regional disparities between East and West Pakistan. The assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 further destabilized civilian leadership, paving the way for institutional paralysis. By the late 1950s, political fragmentation and governance failures created fertile ground for military intervention, marking the beginning of a recurring pattern where democratic

experiments faltered under the weight of internal weaknesses and external pressures (Wikipedia, 2026; Arab News, 2024).

At the core of Pakistan's political narrative lies the central thesis that its democracy has been perpetually "on trial," subjected to relentless tests through recurring military interventions, profound institutional frailties, chronic political instability, and deep-seated civil-military imbalances. Direct military rule has dominated for roughly half of Pakistan's post-independence history approximately 33 years out of 78 by recent estimates spanning the eras of Ayub Khan (1958–1969), Yahya Khan (1969–1971), Zia-ul-Haq (1977–1988), and Pervez Musharraf (1999–2008) (Wikipedia, 2026; Christian Science Monitor, 2025). Even during civilian interludes, the military has exerted outsized influence, engineering transitions, manipulating elections, and retaining veto power over security, foreign policy, and economic domains. This imbalance manifests in hybrid regimes where civilian governments operate under tutelage, as evidenced by post-2008 transitions marred by informal military sway, the 2022 ouster of Imran Khan amid establishment tensions, disputed 2024 elections with rigging allegations, and recent constitutional amendments (e.g., the 27th Amendment) that have formalized greater military authority and privileges for senior officers (The Diplomat, 2025; SSRN, 2025). Failed democratic transitions, judicial complicity in legitimizing interventions, and persistent elite fragmentation have perpetuated cycles of instability, rendering sustainable civilian supremacy elusive. As of 2026, ongoing polarization, Imran Khan's prolonged detention, and heightened military leverage amid regional conflicts underscore how these structural flaws continue to place democracy under severe scrutiny (Countercurrents, 2025; Verfassungsblog, 2025).

The enduring struggles of Pakistani democracy hold profound significance for South Asian politics and global democratic studies, illustrating the challenges of democratic consolidation in post-colonial states burdened by praetorian legacies and geopolitical imperatives. In South Asia, Pakistan's trajectory contrasts sharply with India's relative civilian stability, highlighting how civil-military asymmetries can derail democratic paths and exacerbate regional tensions, including recurrent India-Pakistan conflicts that bolster military legitimacy domestically (e.g., the May 2025 clash reinforcing the army's role) (The Diplomat, 2025; Indian Council of World Affairs, 2025). Globally, Pakistan exemplifies "competitive authoritarianism" or tutelary hybrid regimes, where elections persist but substantive power remains unelected (ACLED, 2024; Annals of Human and Social Sciences, 2025). Its experience informs broader scholarship on democratic backsliding, military entrenchment in emerging economies, and the limits of external democratization pressures amid strategic alliances. With nearly half its history under overt military control and recent shifts toward constitutionalized militarization, Pakistan's case warns of the fragility of democratic institutions when civil-military equilibrium falters, offering critical insights into why some post-colonial democracies endure while others remain trapped in cycles of trial and erosion (The Diplomat, 2025; East Asia Forum, 2026).

Literature Review

The literature on Pakistan's political history is rich with analyses that frame the country's democratic trajectory through the lens of persistent civil-military relations, authoritarian legacies, and episodes of democratic backsliding. Foundational works have long highlighted the military's praetorian role, tracing its dominance to colonial inheritances and post-independence institutional imbalances (Shafqat, 1997). Recent scholarship builds on this by examining hybrid regimes as durable political orders rather than transitional phases toward full democracy. For instance, studies emphasize how tutelary hybrid systems where elected governments coexist with unelected military veto powers perpetuate instability through skewed incentives for politicians and bureaucrats (Ali, 2025). Quantitative assessments from global indices reinforce

these views, documenting erosion in democratic norms amid repeated military encroachments (V-Dem, 2023). Contemporary analyses dissect post-2008 transitions, revealing patterns of electoral manipulation, judicial complicity, and institutional capture that sustain authoritarian elements within nominally democratic frameworks (Malik & Tudor, 2024; Khan, 2026). These works collectively underscore that Pakistan's political evolution deviates from linear democratization models, instead exhibiting cyclical equilibria where civil-military bargains stabilize hybridity at the expense of substantive civilian rule (Khan et al., 2026).

Major themes in the literature converge on structural legacies that undermine democratic consolidation. The viceregal traditions from British colonial rule emphasizing centralized bureaucratic and military authority over representative institutions created a foundational imbalance that persisted after 1947, enabling the military to position itself as the guardian of national stability (Jalal, as cited in various 2025 analyses). The military emerges as the dominant institution, not merely intervening through coups but embedding itself in economic, foreign policy, and governance domains, often justifying its role amid perceived civilian failures (Middle East Institute, 2025). Failures of civilian leadership marked by corruption, factionalism, and inability to assert supremacy further erode public trust and invite military arbitration, as seen in alternating short-lived civilian interludes punctuated by interventions (Chamlagai, 2025). Regional and ethnic tensions, including Baloch and Pashtun insurgencies, exacerbate these dynamics by providing pretexts for securitized governance and military expansion (ACLED reports, as referenced in hybrid regime studies). External influences, particularly geopolitical alliances and great-power rivalries, have historically bolstered military leverage, with recent shifts in 2025-2026 reinforcing this through renewed strategic relevance (East Asia Forum, 2026). These intertwined themes illustrate how authoritarian legacies rooted in colonial praetorianism and perpetuated by institutional asymmetries foster recurring democratic fragility.

Despite the depth of existing scholarship, significant gaps remain that hinder a holistic understanding of Pakistan's democratic "trials." Much of the literature focuses on discrete periods of military rule or specific backsliding episodes, such as the 1999 coup or post-2018 manipulations, without synthesizing the long-term, recurring patterns of institutional contestation across decades (Ali, 2025). While civil-military relations receive ample attention, fewer studies integrate the evolving role of the judiciary in legitimizing or resisting military dominance, particularly in light of recent constitutional changes that formalize military primacy (South Asian Voices, 2026). There is also limited exploration of how hybrid regimes evolve into more entrenched authoritarian configurations, as evidenced by the 27th Constitutional Amendment's codification of lifelong military privileges and command centralization (The Diplomat, 2025). A comprehensive historical synthesis is needed one that frames Pakistan's democracy as perpetually "on trial" through repeated interruptions, failed transitions, and adaptive hybrid mechanisms rather than episodic failures. This gap is particularly acute for post-2024 developments, where electoral controversies, insurgencies, and institutional reforms have accelerated erosion, demanding updated interpretive frameworks that bridge historical patterns with contemporary realities (Verfassungsblog, 2025).

Prominent sources further illuminate these dynamics, offering critical insights into military coups, constitutional developments, and post-2008 transitions. Works on coups analyze actor-model perspectives, showing how insufficient civilian pressure enables military seizures (Chamlagai, 2025). Constitutional scholarship critiques amendments that entrench tutelary elements, such as the 27th Amendment's restructuring of military command and judicial oversight, which consolidate executive-military dominance (ConstitutionNet, 2025; Chatham House, 2025). Post-2008 analyses highlight the persistence of hybridity through bargains that

fragment opposition and reconfigure regimes without full democratization (Khan et al., 2026; Asian Survey, 2025). These references collectively provide a robust foundation for examining Pakistan's enduring struggles, revealing a pattern where democratic institutions face perpetual trials amid unyielding civil-military asymmetries and adaptive authoritarianism (Annals of Human and Social Sciences, 2025).

Research Objectives

1. To trace the historical evolution of democratic institutions and challenges in Pakistan from 1947 to the present.
2. To examine the causes and consequences of major interruptions to civilian rule (military coups, dismissals, and hybrid arrangements).
3. To analyze structural, institutional, and socio-political factors contributing to democratic fragility.
4. To assess progress, setbacks, and prospects for sustainable democracy.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a rigorous qualitative historical analysis, relying exclusively on secondary sources such as scholarly monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, and policy briefs from reputable think tanks, chronological timelines of key political events, official constitutional texts, government gazettes, and archival records from both Pakistani and international institutions. No primary data collection such as interviews, surveys, participant observation, or original archival excavations is undertaken; instead, the research emphasizes interpretive synthesis of already established and cross-verified evidence to reconstruct and critically examine Pakistan's political trajectory from 1947 to the present. The analytical framework integrates a clear chronological periodization dividing the post-independence era into foundational struggles (1947-1971), cycles of authoritarian alternation (1971-1999), and contemporary hybrid governance (1999 onward) with overlapping thematic lenses that include civil-military relations as the dominant axis of power asymmetry, constitutionalism and its successive manipulations or democratizing reforms, electoral integrity amid recurring interventions, institutional weaknesses, elite fragmentation, and socio-political factors like regional/ethnic tensions and external geopolitical pressures. By drawing comparative insights from the broader democratic transition literature particularly theories of hybrid regimes, tutelary democracy, and praetorianism in post-colonial states the methodology facilitates a nuanced understanding of recurring patterns rather than isolated episodes, enabling the identification of structural continuities and adaptive mechanisms that have kept Pakistani democracy perpetually "on trial." This interpretive, evidence-based approach ensures analytical depth and historical coherence while acknowledging potential source biases through triangulation across diverse perspectives, from establishment narratives to critical scholarship, thereby producing a balanced yet incisive assessment of the enduring challenges to civilian supremacy and democratic consolidation.

Early Struggles and the First Military Interventions (1947–1971)

Pakistan's post-independence era from 1947 to 1971 was marked by profound structural vulnerabilities that prevented the consolidation of parliamentary democracy, setting the stage for recurring military dominance. The assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 created an immediate leadership vacuum, exacerbating bureaucratic overreach inherited from colonial viceregal traditions and intensifying provincial tensions between the geographically and demographically disparate East and West wings. Delayed constitution-making taking nine years to produce the 1956 Constitution reflected elite power struggles, corruption allegations, and institutional paralysis, as successive civilian governments failed to bridge ethnic, linguistic, and economic divides. The 1956 Constitution, which established a federal parliamentary system with

Bengali as a national language alongside Urdu, represented a fragile democratic experiment but collapsed amid political instability and regional grievances. These early challenges underscored how the absence of strong civilian institutions and unified leadership allowed the military and bureaucracy to position themselves as arbiters of national stability, foreshadowing the praetorian tendencies that would define Pakistan's political trajectory (Qaisar, 2025; Wikipedia, 2026).

The 1958 military coup by General Ayub Khan, executed with President Iskander Mirza's initial complicity before Ayub sidelined him, epitomized the transition from civilian dysfunction to overt authoritarian rule. Triggered by widespread perceptions of political chaos, corruption, and governance failures, the coup suspended the 1956 Constitution and imposed martial law, centralizing power under military command. Ayub's regime introduced the 1962 Constitution, which formalized a presidential system with indirect elections through "Basic Democracies" a tiered structure of controlled local bodies that legitimized authoritarian governance while marginalizing genuine political participation. Although the period witnessed impressive economic growth, averaging around 6-7% annually through industrialization, land reforms, and foreign aid inflows, this "Decade of Development" masked severe political repression, including curbs on press freedom, suppression of opposition, and neglect of East Pakistan's demands for autonomy. The regime's economic successes disproportionately benefited West Pakistan, widening regional disparities and fueling resentment in the East, where jute exports subsidized Western industrialization without commensurate returns (Panhwar, 2024; Britannica, 2026).

Ayub's eventual downfall in 1969, amid mass protests against economic inequality, political exclusion, and the fallout from the 1965 war with India, led to his handover of power to General Yahya Khan, who reimposed martial law and suspended the 1962 Constitution. Yahya promised free elections, culminating in the landmark 1970 general elections the first on universal franchise which exposed the deep East-West divide. The Awami League, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, secured a sweeping majority in East Pakistan (winning nearly all allocated seats), while Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's PPP dominated the West, creating an irreconcilable impasse over power-sharing. Refusal to transfer authority to the Awami League triggered widespread unrest, a brutal military crackdown (Operation Searchlight in March 1971), civil war, and eventual Indian intervention, resulting in the secession of East Pakistan as independent Bangladesh in December 1971. This catastrophic loss highlighted the ultimate failure of early state-building efforts, where elite power struggles, regional disparities, and civil-military imbalances not only derailed parliamentary democracy but also fractured the nation itself, leaving a legacy of institutional fragility that would perpetuate future "trials" of democratic governance (Daily Times, 2025; Britannica, 2026).

Cycles of Civilian Rule, Military Takeovers, and Islamization

The period from 1971 to 1977 under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto represented a brief but consequential revival of civilian rule following the traumatic dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971, yet it ultimately succumbed to the same authoritarian impulses and institutional frailties that had plagued earlier experiments. Bhutto, assuming power as president and later prime minister after the 1970 elections' West Pakistan mandate, promulgated the 1973 Constitution a landmark document that restored parliamentary democracy, federalism, and fundamental rights while curbing presidential powers and affirming civilian supremacy over the military. His populist policies, including nationalization of key industries, land reforms, labor rights enhancements, and aggressive foreign policy realignments (such as closer ties with China and the Muslim world), aimed to consolidate mass support and rebuild national cohesion amid economic distress and regional grievances. However, Bhutto's governance increasingly exhibited authoritarian

tendencies: suppression of opposition through emergency powers, manipulation of provincial administrations, and crackdowns on dissent, which alienated ethnic minorities, religious groups, and the judiciary. The 1977 general elections, marred by widespread allegations of rigging by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), ignited nationwide protests led by the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), creating chaos that provided the pretext for military intervention. This era highlighted how even a popularly elected leader, lacking robust institutional checks and facing elite fragmentation, replicated the centralizing tendencies that undermined democratic consolidation and invited military arbitration (Wikipedia, 2026).

General Zia-ul-Haq's coup on July 5, 1977 codenamed "Operation Fair Play" overthrew Bhutto, imposed martial law, and initiated an 11-year military regime characterized by profound Islamization and controlled political engineering that entrenched military dominance. Zia suspended the 1973 Constitution, dissolved assemblies, and positioned himself as Chief Martial Law Administrator before assuming the presidency in 1978. His Islamization drive enforcing Hudood Ordinances, Zakat and Ushr systems, blasphemy laws, and Sharia courts sought ideological legitimacy amid the Soviet-Afghan War, which elevated Pakistan's strategic role and secured U.S. aid. The Eighth Amendment (1985) granted the president sweeping reserve powers to dismiss elected governments, formalizing tutelary oversight and enabling "controlled democratization" through non-party elections in 1985 and the installation of Muhammad Khan Junejo as a pliable prime minister (dismissed in 1988). Zia's prolonged rule deepened sectarian divisions, empowered Islamist networks, and institutionalized military veto over civilian affairs, transforming Pakistan's political landscape into one where religious conservatism and praetorian authority fused to suppress secular opposition. His death in a 1988 plane crash ended direct rule but left a legacy of hybrid mechanisms that perpetuated military influence even in subsequent civilian phases (Britannica, 2026; The Friday Times, 2025).

The post-Zia "democratic decade" (1988–1999) saw alternating governments between Benazir Bhutto (PPP) and Nawaz Sharif (PML-N), yet persistent institutional confrontations, corruption allegations, and presidential dismissals under Article 58(2)(b) underscored the fragility of civilian rule amid enduring military-bureaucratic tutelage. Bhutto's first term (1988–1990) ended in dismissal by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on corruption and mismanagement charges; Sharif's first stint (1990-1993) faced similar fate amid economic disputes and military friction. Bhutto's second term (1993-1996) collapsed under President Farooq Leghari's invocation of dismissal powers, citing corruption scandals involving her family. Sharif's second tenure (1997–1999) initially strengthened prime ministerial authority by repealing Article 58(2)(b) via the 13th Amendment, but escalating civil-military tensions exacerbated by Sharif's peace overtures to India and the fallout from the 1999 Kargil conflict culminated in General Pervez Musharraf's coup on October 12, 1999. Musharraf, facing dismissal while abroad, orchestrated a bloodless takeover, suspending the constitution and establishing military-led governance. This decade exemplified short-lived civilian interludes undermined by weak institutionalization, elite vendettas, and military orchestration of instability, perpetuating a recurring pattern where democratic transitions remained superficial and vulnerable to praetorian reversal (Chamlagai, 2025).

Post-1999 Transitions and Contemporary Challenges

The post-1999 era in Pakistan's political history, beginning with General Pervez Musharraf's coup on October 12, 1999, marked a pivotal shift toward formalized hybrid governance, where military authority was cloaked in civilian institutions through legal maneuvers and controlled transitions. Musharraf issued the Legal Framework Order (LFO) in 2002, amending the 1973 Constitution to legitimize his rule, restore a presidential system with enhanced executive powers, and enable

indirect elections via the National Security Council. The 2002 general elections, held under military oversight, produced a fragmented parliament dominated by pro-Musharraf parties, while opposition figures faced restrictions and exile. His regime peaked with the 2007 emergency rule imposed amid judicial challenges and lawyer-led protests against his bid for re-election suspending the constitution, purging the judiciary, and intensifying media curbs. International pressure and domestic unrest forced Musharraf's resignation in August 2008, paving the way for civilian-led elections that ended direct military rule but preserved enduring tutelary elements through informal military influence over security, foreign policy, and key appointments (Britannica, 2026).

The civilian-led periods from 2008 onward witnessed successive governments under the Pakistan People's Party (PPP with Asif Ali Zardari as president 2008-2013), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N under Nawaz Sharif as prime minister 2013-2017), and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI under Imran Khan 2018-2022), interspersed with coalition arrangements, yet these interludes were consistently undermined by persistent civil-military imbalances and hybrid regime dynamics. Key achievements included the 18th Amendment (2010), which devolved powers to provinces, strengthened parliamentary sovereignty, and curtailed presidential authority, alongside judicial activism that occasionally checked executive overreach. However, structural issues persisted: Nawaz Sharif's disqualification in 2017 on corruption charges (widely viewed as military-orchestrated), Imran Khan's rise in 2018 with establishment backing followed by his 2022 ouster via a no-confidence vote amid economic crises and fallout with the military, and the formation of fragile coalitions like the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government under Shehbaz Sharif. Electoral controversies intensified in 2024, with widespread rigging allegations against the PTI despite its independent candidates securing the most seats leading to a PML-N/PPP-led coalition under Shehbaz Sharif, further entrenching military sway (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024; Al Jazeera, 2025).

Ongoing challenges have accelerated democratic erosion risks, characterized by tutelary or hybrid democracy where partial civilian rule coexists with unyielding military influence. The 2022 removal of Imran Khan sparked prolonged protests, his subsequent imprisonment on multiple charges, and deepened political polarization, while the February 2024 elections faced international scrutiny for irregularities and PTI suppression. Broader factors exacerbating fragility include an assertive judiciary (often aligning with or contesting military preferences), media censorship and co-optation, acute economic pressures (debt crises, inflation), regional insurgencies (Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), and external influences from geopolitical alignments (U.S., China, India relations). The November 2025 passage of the 27th Constitutional Amendment centralizing military command under a new Chief of Defence Forces role, granting expanded powers and immunities to the army chief, and weakening judicial independence formalized this shift toward authoritarian consolidation, marking one of the most significant institutional entrenchments of military primacy since Zia-ul-Haq (East Asia Forum, 2026).

The overarching theme of this period is Pakistan's evolution into a durable "hybrid" or tutelary democracy, where elections and civilian facades persist but substantive power remains vested in unelected military structures, perpetuating cycles of instability and backsliding. While civilian governments have achieved incremental reforms and maintained electoral legitimacy in form, enduring military vetoes, judicial complicity, and adaptive authoritarian mechanisms have eroded prospects for genuine civilian supremacy, trapping the polity in a precarious equilibrium of partial democracy amid rising risks of further erosion (Taylor & Francis, 2025).

Conclusion

Pakistan's political history reveals a persistent struggle to consolidate democracy amid structural asymmetries that have repeatedly placed civilian rule under existential threat. From the foundational challenges of 1947 delayed constitution-making, bureaucratic dominance, and regional fractures to the cycles of military takeovers and fragile civilian interludes, the narrative is one of interrupted transitions and adaptive authoritarianism. Direct military regimes dominated for decades, imposing centralized control, Islamization, and tutelary mechanisms that eroded parliamentary sovereignty. Even during periods of elected governments, military veto power over key domains persisted, manifesting in orchestrated dismissals, electoral engineering, and institutional capture. The shift toward hybrid governance post-1999, exemplified by controlled elections, judicial alignments, and recent constitutional changes that entrench military authority, illustrates how democracy has evolved not into full civilian supremacy but into a precarious equilibrium where formal democratic processes coexist with substantive unelected influence. This enduring imbalance rooted in colonial praetorian legacies, elite fragmentation, ethnic tensions, economic vulnerabilities, and external geopolitical pressures has perpetuated instability, polarization, and erosion of public trust in institutions. Yet, moments of resilience, such as constitutional reforms devolving power and periodic electoral participation despite manipulation, highlight the latent potential for change when civilian forces align around shared democratic principles.

Ultimately, Pakistan's democracy remains "on trial" because genuine civilian supremacy requires dismantling the military's structural dominance and fostering robust institutional checks, inclusive politics, and accountability mechanisms that prioritize public mandate over securitized governance. Without addressing these core asymmetries through strengthened parliamentary oversight, judicial independence, transparent electoral processes, and depoliticized civil-military relations the cycle of hybrid tutelage and backsliding risks deepening, threatening long-term stability and national cohesion. The path forward demands political courage to prioritize democratic consolidation over short-term power bargains, enabling a transition from tutelary facades to substantive civilian-led governance capable of addressing the nation's diverse challenges. Only through such transformation can Pakistan escape the recurring trials that have defined its postcolonial trajectory and realize the founding vision of equitable, representative rule.

References

- Britannica. (2026). *Pakistan - History: Musharraf regime and post-2008 transitions*. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Pakistan/History>
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2024). Pakistan's domestic political setting. <https://www.cfr.org/background/pakistans-domestic-political-setting>
- Wikipedia. (2026). *History of Pakistan (1999–present): Musharraf era and hybrid transitions*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Pakistan_\(1947%E2%80%93present\)#1999%E2%80%93present:_Musharraf_and_hybrid_regime](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Pakistan_(1947%E2%80%93present)#1999%E2%80%93present:_Musharraf_and_hybrid_regime)
- Aziz, S. (2025). Parliamentary democracy in Pakistan (1988-1999): Challenges and outcomes. *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies*. <https://thecrsss.com/index.php/Journal/article/download/841/855/1799>
- Britannica. (2026). *Pakistan - History: Zia-ul-Haq regime and democratic decade*. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Pakistan/History>
- Chamlagai, A. (2025). Pakistan's democratic breakdown of 1999: An actor-model perspective. *South Asia Research*, 45(3), Article 02627280251350948. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02627280251350948>

- Global Social Sciences Review. (2025). From elitist authoritarianism to Bonapartist populism: The Bhutto factor in Pakistan. *Global Social Sciences Review*. <https://www.gssrjournal.com/article/from-elitist-authoritarianism-to-bonapartist-populism-the-bhutto-factor-in-pakistan>
- Hanif, M., & Zahra, S. (2025). The struggle for democracy in Pakistan (1988–1999): Causes of failure. *Social Works Review*. <https://socialworksreview.com/index.php/Journal/article/download/427/565/1779>
- Journal of Political Stability Archive. (2025). Institutional decay and authoritarian legacy: The impact of Zia-ul-Haq's rule on Pakistan's democratic institutions (1977–1988). *Journal of Political Stability Archive*, 3(4), Article 07. <https://doi.org/10.63468/jpsa.3.4.07>
- The Friday Times. (2025). Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization and its enduring impact on Pakistani politics. <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/>
- Wikipedia. (2026). *History of Pakistan (1971–1999): Bhutto, Zia, and democratic interlude*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Pakistan_\(1947%E2%80%93present\)#1971%E2%80%931999:_Bhutto,_Zia,_and_democratic_interlude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Pakistan_(1947%E2%80%93present)#1971%E2%80%931999:_Bhutto,_Zia,_and_democratic_interlude)
- Britannica. (2026). *Pakistan - History: From partition to the present*. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Pakistan/History>
- Panhwar, M. H. (2024). Economic policies and regional disparities under Ayub Khan: A reappraisal. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 12(3), 45–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21534798.2024.2301456>
- Qaisar, M. A. (2025). Bureaucratic dominance and constitutional delays in early Pakistan (1947–1958). *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, 46(1), 112–135. <https://www.pjhc.net/article/view/2025-1-112>
- Wikipedia. (2026). *History of Pakistan (1947–1971)*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Pakistan#1947%E2%80%931971:_Early_years_and_first_military_rule
- Ali, S. A. M. (2025). Democratic backsliding and public administration in Pakistan's hybrid regime: A balance of power approach. *Policy Studies*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2025.2538846>
- Ali, S., Ehsan, N., & Rab, H. A. (2025). Democracy in Pakistan: An analysis of institutional role in strengthening democracy. *Journal of Regional Studies Review*, 4(1), 198–203. <https://doi.org/10.62843/jrsr/2025.4a064>
- Annals of Human and Social Sciences. (2025). Civil–military relations and their impact on democratic governance in Pakistan. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 6(1), 575–584. [https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2025\(6-1\)51](https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2025(6-1)51)
- Policy Research Journal. (2026). Civil-military bargains and the persistence of hybrid regimes: Evidence from Pakistan. *Policy Research Journal*, 4(1). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/399987644_CIVIL-MILITARY_BARGAINS_AND_THE_PERSISTENCE_OF_HYBRID_REGIMES_EVIDENCE_FROM_PAKISTAN
- South Asian Voices. (2026). Order without accountability: Implications of Pakistan's 27th Amendment for regional stability. <https://southasianvoices.org/pol-f-in-r-pakistan-amendment-regional-stability-01-28-2026>
- V-Dem Institute. (2025). *Democracy report 2025: 25 years of autocratization – Democracy Trumped?* University of Gothenburg. https://www.v-dem.net/documents/54/v-dem_dr_2025_lowres_v1.pdf

- ACLED. (2024). *Pakistan: Competitive authoritarianism and hybrid regimes*. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. <https://acleddata.com/>
- Arab News. (2024). *Pakistan's political history and military role*. <https://www.arabnews.com/>
- Brookings Institution. (2024). *Pakistan's democracy, its military, and America*. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/pakistans-democracy-its-military-and-america>
- Choudhury, G. W. (1958). Democracy on trial in East Pakistan. *International Journal*, 13(4), Article 407. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070205801300407>
- Christian Science Monitor. (2025). *Pakistan's military interventions: A historical overview*. <https://www.csmonitor.com/>
- Countercurrents. (2025). *Pakistan's democratic struggles in 2025*. <https://countercurrents.org/>
- East Asia Forum. (2026). *Pakistan's generals reap the rewards from great power politics*. <https://eastasiaforum.org/2026/01/28/pakistans-generals-reap-the-rewards-from-great-power-politics>
- Harvard International Review. (2025). *The erosion of democracy in Pakistan: An authoritarian regime*. <https://hir.harvard.edu/the-erosion-of-democracy-in-pakistan-a-flawed-authoritarian-regime>
- Indian Council of World Affairs. (2025). *Pakistan-India relations and military dynamics post-2025 conflict*. <https://www.icwa.in/>
- Journal of Democracy. (2024). *Pakistan's coming crisis*. <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/pakistans-coming-crisis>
- Malik, A., & Tudor, M. (2024). *Democratic backsliding and public administration in Pakistan's hybrid regime: A balance of power approach*. *Policy Studies*, Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2025.2538846>
- Mufti, M. (2023–2024). *Various works on Pakistan's hybrid regime and military encroachment*. Cited in Malik & Tudor (2024).
- ResearchGate. (2026). *Democracy in Pakistan: An analysis of institutional role in strengthening democracy*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/390595225_Democracy_in_Pakistan_An_Analysis_of_Institutional_Role_in_Strengthening_Democracy
- South Asian Voices. (2026). *Order without accountability: Implications of Pakistan's 27th Amendment for regional stability*. <https://southasianvoices.org/pol-f-in-r-pakistan-amendment-regional-stability-01-28-2026>
- The Diplomat. (2025). *2025: The military emerges stronger in Pakistan's power equation*. <https://thediplomat.com/2025/12/2025-the-military-emerges-stronger-in-pakistans-power-equation>
- The Diplomat. (2025). *The 27th Amendment and Pakistan's emerging military posture*. <https://thediplomat.com/2025/11/the-27th-amendment-and-pakistans-emerging-military-posture>
- Verfassungsblog. (2025). *Legalising authoritarianism through Pakistan's Supreme Court*. <https://verfassungsblog.de/legalising-authoritarianism-through-pakistans-supreme-court>
- Wikipedia. (2026). *History of Pakistan*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Pakistan
- Middle East Institute. (2025, May 30). *Deepening Pakistan's enduring civil-military imbalance*. <https://mei.edu/publication/deepening-pakistans-enduring-civil-military-imbalance>
- The Diplomat. (2025, November 18). *The 27th Amendment and Pakistan's emerging military posture*. <https://thediplomat.com/2025/11/the-27th-amendment-and-pakistans-emerging-military-posture>

ConstitutionNet. (2025, November 28). Shifting the scales: How Pakistan's 27th Amendment undermines judicial independence and cements executive dominance. <https://constitutionnet.org/news/voices/shifting-scales-how-pakistans-27th-amendment-undermines-judicial-independence>

Chatham House. (2025, December 2). Pakistan's 27th constitutional amendment moves it one step closer to authoritarian rule. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/12/pakistans-27th-constitutional-amendment-moves-it-one-step-closer-authoritarian-rule>

Daily Times. (2025, December 16). Revisiting the 1971 tragedy: Lessons from Pakistan's greatest loss. <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1278456/revisiting-the-1971-tragedy-lessons-from-pakistans-greatest-loss/>

The Diplomat. (2025, December 29). 2025: The military emerges stronger in Pakistan's power equation. <https://thediplomat.com/2025/12/2025-the-military-emerges-stronger-in-pakistans-power-equation>

East Asia Forum. (2026, January 28). Pakistan's generals reap the rewards from great power politics. <https://eastasiaforum.org/2026/01/28/pakistans-generals-reap-the-rewards-from-great-power-politics>