

**ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL**Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 05 No. 01. Jan-March 2026. Page#. 4943-4952

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)**Safeguarding the Vote: Institutional Mechanisms and Directions for Electoral Reform in Pakistan****Dr. Saeed Ahmed Butt**

Assistant Professor, GCU Lahore

saeedbutt@gcu.edu.pk**Dr. Abida Hassan**

Assistant Professor, (Law), Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Law School, Government College University, Lahore.

dr.abidahassan@gcu.edu.pk**ABSTRACT**

Electoral integrity is a key precondition of constitutional democracy, political legitimacy and the effective safeguarding of political rights of the citizens. Despite continuous electoral reforms and strengthening of constitutional and legal structure in Pakistan, there are still challenges such as allegations of electoral irregularities, administrative inefficiencies, polarization, issues around campaign finance, intra-party democracy, use of state resources, electoral violence, disinformation and populist backlash, often caused by public disaffection towards electoral institutions, which continue to cast a shadow on the credibility of the electoral process. This study critically discusses the institutional arrangements put in place to secure the vote in Pakistan and the effectiveness of these institutional mechanisms in ensuring free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections. This paper employs qualitative research methodology and doctrinal legal analysis and comparative institutional assessment of the constitutional provisions of the Constitution of Pakistan, the Elections Act, 2017, judicial pronouncements, reports of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and international standards on democratic elections (UN and International IDEA). The study also makes an international comparison between the electoral governance system in Pakistan and selected democratic jurisdictions to find out the best practices and possible reforms. The results reveal that while Pakistan has put in place a number of institutional protection measures, the effectiveness of these measures is limited due to the lack of implementation, institutional capacity, political interference, poor enforcement systems and low trust levels among stakeholders. It recommends measures for meaningful electoral reform, such as augmenting the independence and administrative capacity of the Election Commission of Pakistan, increasing transparency in campaign funding, improving voter registration and electoral dispute resolution, regulating digital political communication, and enhancing the representation and participation of women and marginalized groups; and increasing the adoption of secure, transparent electoral technology. The study finds that long-term sustainable democratic governance in Pakistan has to be achieved through a comprehensive institutional reform that will consolidate electoral integrity, constitutional guarantees, people's trust and protect each and every vote, count accurately and make it countable in democracy.

Keywords: Electoral Reform, Electoral Integrity, Pakistan, Election Commission of Pakistan, Democratic Governance, Electoral Law, Constitutional Democracy, Campaign Finance, Electoral Institutions, Political Participation.

1. Introduction

In Pakistan, the issues faced when voting, the consequences of the above-mentioned issues on the fundamental rights of citizens and democratic governance in Pakistan, as well as the relevant legal and regulatory environment. This paper now shifts focus towards the institutions that implement the laws and safeguard the right to vote. These include the Election Commission of Pakistan, which is the principal constitutional authority overseeing elections; the judiciary as the supreme authority in matters related to electoral rights; the legislature of Pakistan, which is comprised of Parliament; political parties as the means through which democratic contestations are conducted; and civil society together with the media as the external check. This paper will address the issue of institutional effectiveness in the protection of the right to suffrage, because, as demonstrated throughout the research there is a significant difference between what exists in law and what exists in reality in Pakistan.

2. Functioning of ECP

The ECP is the highest constitutional authority in the country charged with organizing and overseeing elections. The commission is created by the Constitution of 1973 (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, arts. 218–221), which states that "the Election Commission shall ensure that the election is held honestly, fairly and squarely, and that corrupt practices are guarded against." (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, art. 218(3)) The responsibilities of the commission are laid out in provision 218 to 221 of the Constitution and implemented through the Elections Act of 2017. In the recent case of (Election Commission of Pakistan VS Javed Hashmi, 2014) SC reiterated the independence of the ECP and emphasized that it is the responsibility of the commission to protect the integrity of elections from any kind of outside influence. However, despite such a robust constitutional mandate, the ECP operates within a number of structural constraints that make its role less effective. The first and foremost one is related to the institutional dependency of the commission on the government-supplied officials.

The Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, and polling staff members are not regular employees of the ECP but are deputed from the civil service, and hence their loyalty remains with the executive branch. In such a scenario, Article 218 cannot be considered as ensuring the independence that is expected of the Election Commission. As noted by (Naz, 2018), there are stark differences between constitutional independence and operational independence, and case of the ECP is a perfect example to illustrate the point.

3. Conduct of Elections:

One of the most obvious roles of the ECP relates to the conduct of elections and involves constituency delimitation, polling station management, enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct, and result tabulation and transmission. It was stated that there were problems such as poor polling station infrastructure, lack of proper training of presiding officers, and failure in result management. Even the official report published by the ECP following the 2013 general elections pointed out these deficiencies (Election Commission of Pakistan, 2013). By imposing a ban on mobile internet and telephone services throughout Pakistan on polling day due to security concerns, it became next to impossible for anyone to monitor the entire electoral process in real time. Both (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2024) and the (Free and Fair Election Network, 2024) found that such a restriction had a negative impact on transparency and reduced the trust of voters, candidates, and the observers. Moreover, the decision by the ECP to remove the electoral symbol of PTI prior to elections, thus forcing the

party to field its candidates as independents, was also contested in the Supreme Court. The SC's historic decision in the case of reserved seats favored PTI's claim and indirectly criticized the Commission (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf VS Election Commission of Pakistan, 2024). This conversation highlights the fact that the holding of an election may not meet the threshold prescribed under Article 218(3) regardless of existing procedures.

4. Voter Registration and Electoral Rolls:

Registration of the voters is a prerequisite of voting rights. As per the provisions laid down under Section 8 of the Elections Act, 2017, the ECP has to prepare the national electoral rolls based on information supplied by the NADRA. Article 51(2) in the Constitution clearly states that only those citizens who are at least eighteen years old and whose names are included in the voting list for their constituency will be considered eligible for voting. In principle, it provides for a well-rounded registration scheme. One such exclusion is that of the gender disparity in the registration of voters, which is clearly evident. It can be seen that prior to the February 2024 election, around ten million more male voters than females had been registered from among 127 million voters registered by then, whereas females made up almost half of the country's population (Election Commission of Pakistan, 2024). This is largely due to the inability of millions of women, especially those living in rural, tribal, and conflicted regions, to secure the Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC), which is essential for registering as a voter. There are also different types of administrative exclusions facing religious minorities, disabled individuals, and transgender members of society. Legal provisions give them the right to register, yet the actual system of administration excludes some of them.

5. Monitoring and Accountability

The Elections Act of 2017 gives the provision for the accreditation of both national and international election observers as well as for political parties to appoint polling agents in each polling station. These accountability measures acknowledge that the ECP cannot be the only institution to monitor itself. However, these two monitoring and accountability procedures were greatly hindered during the 2024 elections. Firstly, due to the ban of all telecommunications on election's day, observers could not communicate with their headquarters to report any problems or to verify the results immediately. Many discrepancies between provisional results collected by polling agents and the actual results announced by returning officers were noted, which led to post-election litigation for several months. In addition to these, the internal accountability within the ECP is rather weak. There is no independent auditing within the ECP, and only certain aspects of the ECP's administrative decisions can be reviewed (Ahmed, 2021). Notes that where electoral institutions are not liable for their own misconducts, the number of breaches and infringements continues to increase without any repercussions, leading to the erosion of the entire democratic process. This scenario aptly describes the latest experience of holding elections in Pakistan.

6. Role of the Judiciary:

6.1 Constitutional Petitions:

It was revealed that superior courts have emerged as the most significant external mechanism to regulate the manner in which elections are conducted and the exercise of the right to vote in Pakistan. 184(3) and article 199 of COP have been widely used in electoral issues. According to the (Workers' Party Pakistan v. Federation of Pakistan, 2012) case, any election held in a coercive atmosphere cannot be considered to be free and fair, and it becomes incumbent on the state to ensure a conducive environment for democratic practices. The right to establish political parties and be involved in the same is a fundamental right which cannot be arbitrarily

curtailed according to (Benazir Bhutto VS Federation of Pakistan, 1988), which is a direct intersection point with the issue of protecting the franchise.

The 2024 elections have seen the constitutional petition system reach a peak of activity. The involvement of the Supreme Court in matters pertaining to the schedule of provincial elections, the withdrawal of the PTI's party symbol, and the reservation of seats illustrated not only the importance of this process but also its structural constraints. On one hand, judicial intervention was essential for protecting rights that would have been otherwise compromised; on the other hand, the number of election petitions filed in 2023 and 2024 also highlighted the incapability of other constitutional bodies notably the ECP and Parliament to fulfill their respective duties without judicial intervention (Aziz, 2023).

6.2 Election Tribunals:

Election Tribunals are the dedicated venue for post-election dispute resolution. As stipulated under Section 140 of the Elections Act, 2017, any candidate or voter who feels aggrieved by an election outcome can file a petition against that result within forty-five days from its announcement, and the Tribunal consisting of an acting or retired High Court judge can inspect ballot papers, gather evidence, and overturn the result if it determines that the irregularities influenced the outcome. While this provision represents a good structure on paper, its implementation in reality has always been hampered by delayed appointments of presiding officers for the Tribunal, as well as other complexities in the process, and the sheer number of petitions filed exceeds the Tribunal's capacity. As explained, election disputes in Pakistan often take years to resolve, by which time any democratic merit in the process is lost.

6.3. Judicial Review of Electoral Processes:

In addition to overseeing the electoral process, the higher judiciary can review various aspects of it through judicial review proceedings. These include constituency delimitations, the decision of returning officers to reject candidates' nomination papers, the validity of ECP rules, and the implementation of the Model Code of Conduct. Such aspect of governance is crucial in ensuring that the electoral commission does not exceed its powers without getting called to account. On the other hand, according to the discussion regarding the 27th Amendment, the effectiveness of the supervisory role can only be as effective as the independence of the judiciary itself. In essence, if the judiciary itself can be easily influenced by politics, it cannot ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

7. Parliamentary Oversight and Legislative Reforms

The parliament plays a vital role in electoral governance through new legislations' development or amendment of previously existing ones, as well as through parliamentary oversight of the performance of the ECP. In the past years, there have been notable changes in electoral law through the Elections Act, 2017. While there has been a need for legislative reform, the lack of oversight by the parliament has undermined the performance of the ECP. This includes the failure of parliamentary standing committees charged with the oversight of election-related issues to meet regularly and demonstrate necessary knowledge on such matters. Equally disturbing is the fact that Parliament's power to legislate about elections is being used as a political tool. The 2023 amendments to the Elections Act under a caretaker government, which lacked the constitutional legitimacy to make substantive electoral law (according to legal experts and opposition parties), had an effect on the process in such a way that the amendments were considered pro-political actors prior to the February 2024 elections (Free and Fair Election Network, 2024). Such a violation of legislative power ranks high on the list of structurally destructive forces affecting the integrity of the electoral process.

8 Role of Political Parties:

Under Article 17 of the Constitution of 1973, as mentioned earlier, every national has the right to establish or take part in any political party of their choice. Under the Elections Act, 2017, political parties registered under the Act are obliged to respect the Code of Conduct, ensure internal democracy within the organization, and maintain transparency in financial dealings. Ideally, political parties are seen as tools used by citizens to express their preference in electoral processes. In reality, however, the major political parties in Pakistan have often played the role of electoral distorters rather than democrats. The use of electable candidates who have been chosen based on their financial standing and personal influence in the area and not their political commitment is reflective of a patronage-driven political culture (Ahmed, 2021). The process of candidate selection, whereby women, minorities, and people living in poverty are deliberately kept out of controllable constituencies, maintains the structural discrimination. In the 2024 elections, these issues were highlighted. De-registration of PTI, filing criminal cases against its members, and threats of violence to potential PTI candidates meant that during the pre-election period, one of the biggest parties in Pakistan faced systematic disenfranchisement. This is state-sponsored suppression of political competition, which is incompatible with the right to a clean election enshrined in Article 218(3).

9. Role of Civil Society and Media:

Non-governmental civil society organizations and independent media serve a supplementary yet crucial function in ensuring suffrage. Domestic election monitoring by organizations such as FAFEN has provided comprehensive and factual records of election-related misconduct and abuses that are used to hold individuals accountable in public discourse and to document violations that the ECP and the judiciary have not pursued (Free and Fair Election Network, 2024). Programs for voter education, training of polling agents, and legal reforms are some ways in which civil society can contribute towards creating the conditions for effective political participation. The role of the media is enshrined by the Constitution of Pakistan in its provision 19th, which guarantees freedom of press and speech. In other words, the role of an independent press is essential to the functioning of a democracy in any country as the participation is informed. It was reported during the election cycle of 2024 that there was pressure on the media to not cover news related to PTI in addition to intimidation of journalists working in the elections campaign on social media platforms (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, art. 19). In other words, when there is distortion in the information, people cannot make an informed decision and the mere act of voting loses its significance.

10 Comparative Lessons from Other Democratic Jurisdictions:

Comparative observations may be helpful for understanding reform paths taken by other democracies. In India, the Election Commission has built an institution culture of strong and regular enforcement showing how constitutional autonomy could actually build up credibility (Krishnamurthy, V., 2020). The Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa is a success story for credible elections despite living in a deeply polarized country, thanks to institutional independence from political figures and the employment of professional civil servants (Diamond, 2021). In Bangladesh, there is a clear case study of what happens when institutions fail: the subjugation of the country's election commission to the executive authority resulted in continuous controversial elections and backsliding of democracy like in Pakistan until 2024. Looking at the global level (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018), highlight the process of democratic erosion that includes selective prosecution, media influence and electoral institution manipulation in countries where democratic decline is observable prior to their elections, as in Pakistan.

11 Findings:

The findings of this research indicate that the voting right in Pakistan is constitutionalized in a cluster of constitutional provisions, mainly Article 17, 25, 51(2), and 218 of the Constitution of 1973. The Elections Act, 2017 and judicial interpretation are used in order to regulate this right even more extensively. In their design, the formal legal system of regulation is adequate enough for ensuring truly free and fair elections. The core issue which this research has found in research is not lack of law, but the fact that politicians and state bodies fail to use it consistently and objectively. This research suggests that problems with suffrage are systematic and mutually inclusive rather than accidental and isolated. Threats of violence in Baluchistan and FATA, that have cost 28 deaths during the electoral violence prior to the general election of February 8, 2024, are one of the main physical barriers to participation (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Voter suppression impacts women more systematically with ten million less women compared to men registered for voting in 2024 even though women form forty-nine percent of the electorate (Election Commission of Pakistan, 2024). Flaws in the tabulation process affect the validity of the popular mandate. Inconsistent implementation of election laws allows for violation of the laws. Political influence impacts the impartiality of the ECP and to some extent the judicial branch and media. The democratic quality index ranking by University of Wurzburg placed Pakistan at number 123 among 176 countries in the world (Siddiqui, Rehman, & Mirza, 2020).

It is additionally found that the 8th February 2024 general elections significantly deviated from the constitutional requirements of Article 218(3). It has been noted how the PML-N party faced systematic voter suppression by the withdrawal of symbols, filing thousands of criminal charges against party members and allegations of voter coercion against their candidates. On election day, Pakistan went into total communications lockdown affecting independent observations. Following the elections, several result discrepancies in many constituencies brought about numerous lawsuits. The restoration of PTI's reserved seat by the SC in its judgement amounted to recognition of the constitutional flaws in some institutional decisions regarding the election (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf v. Election Commission of Pakistan, 2024).

11.1. Identification of Legislative Gaps:

A number of major legislative gaps are identified in this study. In terms of the constitution, the biggest gap is the lack of an explicit fundamental right to vote in Part II of the Constitution of 1973. The right to vote is an interpretation based on articles 17, 25, and 51(2). This interpretative approach can be less certain in comparison with a constitutional article, and it leads to uncertainty and exploitation of the doctrine in the context of litigation. An amendment in the constitution recognizing the right to vote as a fundamental right will resolve the problem. As far as statutory provisions are concerned, the Elections Act of 2017 has serious deficiencies, such as inadequate regulation of campaign financing. The obligation to report assets and expenses does exist; however, enforcement has been weak and politicized. Disinformation, social media voter harassment and intimidation, and cyber meddling are other areas that the Act does not address; however, these are becoming more important due to the importance of social media in the formation of the informational context of elections (Khan, 2023). The Section 86 obligation to attain a minimum level of participation by women voters has been ineffective, and it did not help avoid the exclusion of women voters in some constituencies.

11.2. Structural Weaknesses and Administrative Deficiencies:

In the case of the quality of elections in Pakistan, structural problems are inherent. The reliance of the ECP on civil servants from government organizations is a critical problem for the work of the Election Commission because their primary loyalty is to executive authorities. In the

absence of a permanent body of professional civil servants trained in electoral law, electoral administration, and electoral technology, the Commission is forced to work with individuals who only have episodic experience with elections and do not have any vested interest in the performance of the Commission itself (Naz, 2018). The appointment of presiding officers for these tribunals being consistently delayed for weeks or even months after each general election. The number of petitions received in the aftermath of the 2024 elections was far too many for the system to handle. The oversight exercised by the parliament over the ECP has been insufficient, with the relevant standing committees failing to carry out their oversight functions in a proper manner. There is political interference and ownership concentration within the media sector that has inhibited editorial freedom when it was needed most.

12. Recommendation:

12.1. Constitutional Amendment:

It is proposed that Parliament adopts a constitutional amendment that explicitly grants voting as a fundamental right in 2nd part of the COP of 1973. The amendment would place a positive duty on the state to ensure that voter registration and effective participation occur for all eligible citizens, with special attention paid to women, minority groups, people with disabilities, and individuals living in regions where there is ongoing conflict. This would eliminate any doctrinal uncertainty and ensure that there is a constitutional foundation for the courts to enforce the voting right. Moreover, the Elections Act, 2017 must be amended in its totality to incorporate campaign finance laws that entail enforceable requirements for the real-time publication of expenditures and contributions, auditing, and disqualifications in cases of non-compliance. It is suggested that there be an enforceable protocol concerning security to be developed between the ECP, the Ministry of Interior, the security institutions involved, and the provinces through a formal understanding. In this regard, it must be ensured that the Commission shall control the entire security setup during the process of elections, while at the same time defining the circumstances in which force from military and paramilitary organizations can be used. Additionally, appropriate accountability measures would be put in place regarding any action by the security establishment that might obstruct the voting rights of the candidates. In particular, the ban on telecoms during the poll day in 2024 must be specifically made illegal under the Elections Act, except for emergencies of extremely limited scope, sanctioned by the courts.

There should be stricter punishment against acts of electoral violence and the intimidation of voters or candidates and election-related infrastructure through the introduction of laws under the Pakistan Penal Code beyond those already present in Sections 171-A to 171-J. Coercion undermines the legitimacy of election results as demonstrated in the legal precedent set forth in the case of (*Workers' Party Pakistan v. Federation of Pakistan*, 2012) and all that is necessary is for an appropriate enforcement mechanism to be implemented in order to put the aforementioned principle into practical effect.

It is advised that ECP implement a proactive and legally binding mechanism for voter registrations. This would entail placing the responsibility for identifying and registering eligible but disenfranchised citizens including but not limited to women, persons living with disabilities, members of the transgender community, and members of minority religions on ECP in the form of a statutory obligation. In addition to this, it should be performed as part of a continuous effort in conjunction with NADRA's identity database rather than periodic pre-election voter registration campaigns which have been the trend thus far. Steps should be taken through inter-ministerial coordination efforts to overcome socio-administrative obstacles which discourage acquisition of CNICs among women.

Legislation mandating implementation of a joint effort to facilitate disenfranchised citizens acquiring CNICs should be passed into law (Zia, 2019). As regards women's participation in politics, there needs to be an amendment of the Section 86 mandate on minimum female voter turnout, mandating returning officers to investigate all constituencies in which organized efforts to prevent female voters from registering have been identified and providing penalties for candidates and their campaign supporters in case of such practices. The quota system regarding reserved seats for women within the national/provincial parliament should be revised and raised, and quota itself modified so that these seats can supplement but not replace women's participation as candidates within regular constituencies.

The ECP is encouraged to create and publicly disclose its technology policy for elections, from voter registration to vote counting and result announcement. Electronic or online voting systems should only be considered after intensive debates in Parliament, an independent technical review, and piloting, with the overriding criteria being that the chosen technology increase confidence in the process itself rather than make administration more convenient. As seen from international experience, including that of Germany, which has opted to go back to manual voting in view of security challenges of electronic voting, caution is warranted in regard to the use of technology in the election process (Krishnamurthy, S., 2020).

It is suggested that the superior courts make guidelines in regard to electoral disputes by constitutional procedures. Such guidelines would include the criteria under which constitutional cases in regard to electoral affairs would be admitted into court in order that there is always a distinction made between review of constitutionality of actions carried out and determination of election results, which is a function of the tribunals; timelines within which the presiding officers are appointed and the case decided upon; evidence that can be presented in an election dispute proceeding; The range of measures that may be invoked successfully, including interim orders to remedy breaches of rights during the pre-election phase while the violation is taking place.

A Permanent Bipartisan Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform should be established through legislation. Its role will include reviewing the effectiveness of the ECP at the end of each electoral cycle, examining the legal system on an ongoing basis, hearing evidence from CSOs and independent experts, and making binding recommendations to Parliament. There should be hearings open to the public, publication of public reports after each general election, and an official government response in writing within ninety days of the publication of each report. Such an approach will institutionalize parliamentary accountability of electoral governance, reducing its dependence on partisan politics in favor of democratic principles. Finally, the procedure for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner and the ECP's members must be changed. Under the existing system, where there is consultation between the PM and the Opposition's leader, the system offers very little checks and has rarely, if ever, delivered appointments considered politically independent. An improved system that includes hearings conducted by parliamentary committees where public evidence is heard, and the professional qualification, independence, and expertise of the candidates are evaluated, will increase the independence of the Commission from the political executive.

12. Conclusion:

In this study, it has been shown how, by examining in detail the constitutional structure, problems of conducting elections, implications regarding fundamental rights, legislative scheme and implementation, Pakistan has been shown that the protection of suffrage is intrinsically bound up with democracy itself. Suffrage is not any single right among others; suffrage is the means through which individuals select their rulers, hold them responsible, and

make democracy legitimate. In Supreme Court case (Muhammad Nawaz Sharif v. Federation of Pakistan, 1993), it was held that in interpreting provisions of constitution, care should be taken so that democratic governance could be promoted. Suffrage is the most elementary expression of such a democratic governance.

Pakistani law and legislation already have an elaborate scheme, in the very design of which free and fair elections can be protected. Pakistani Constitution of 1973 ensures the independence of the ECP, ensures political participation, and provides judicial oversight over the election process. Elections Act 2017 is another progressive statutory development. Courts of competent jurisdiction have throughout years of juristic deliberation reaffirmed the importance of free and fair elections for Pakistan's constitutional regime (Waseem, 2019). There are structural impediments to voting by women, minority members, people with disabilities, and other disenfranchised communities that cannot be adequately addressed by the present system. Operational independence of the ECP is still more of a theoretical concept than practical one. Violence and intimidation continue from election cycle to election cycle. Standards of administration vary. The rules governing elections are viewed simply as tools by political players regardless of whether they lose or win. Finally, the institutions mandated to ensure that these rules were applied have been incapable of doing so in several instances. These suggestions are practical and based on law. These measures need not entail an overhaul of the electoral process, only an unflinching dedication to ensuring that the current process functions as intended by the Constitution --- that is, through a constitutional guarantee of the right to vote, a truly autonomous ECP, elimination of obstacles to participation for marginalized populations, campaign finance laws that actually hold up under scrutiny, result counting processes that are completely transparent, dispute settlement within an acceptable timeframe, and parliamentary monitoring of all of the above. None of these goals are unrealistic; the issue lies not in a legal barrier, but in the lack of political will. And, like democracy itself, political will emerges from a democratic environment where individuals' rights to suffrage are better protected (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

References

- Ahmed, Z. (2021). Electoral integrity and democratic consolidation in Pakistan. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 34(1), 109–135.
- Aziz, S. (2023). Judicial intervention and constitutional crises in Pakistan: The 2022–2024 experience. *Pakistan Law Review*, 18(2), 28–47.
- Benazir Bhutto v. Federation of Pakistan, PLD 1988 SC 416.
- Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, Article 19.
- Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, Article 218(3).
- Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, Articles 218–221.
- Diamond, L. (2021). *Ill winds: Saving democracy from Russian rage, Chinese ambition, and American complacency*. Penguin Books.
- Election Commission of Pakistan v. Javed Hashmi, PLD 2014 SC 149.
- Election Commission of Pakistan. (2013). Report on the general elections 2013. Election Commission of Pakistan.
- Election Commission of Pakistan. (2024). General election 2024: Registered voters' statistics. <https://www.ecp.gov.pk>
- European Union Election Observation Mission. (2024). Pakistan: General elections 8 February 2024 — Preliminary statement. European Union External Action Service.
- Free and Fair Election Network. (2024). Election one-day observation report: General elections 2024. FAFEN Secretariat.

- Human Rights Watch. (2024). Pakistan: Rights conditions for February 2024 elections. <https://www.hrw.org>
- Khan, I. (2023). Digital disenfranchisement: Social media, disinformation and electoral integrity in South Asia. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, 18.
- Krishnamurthy, S. (2020). Electoral governance and institutional credibility: Lessons from India's Election Commission. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 28(1), 1–22.
- Krishnamurthy, V. (2020). *Election Commission of India: Constitutional autonomy and enforcement culture*. Oxford University Press.
- Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How democracies die*. Crown Publishing.
- Liaquat Hussain v. Federation of Pakistan, PLD 1999 SC 504.
- Muhammad Nawaz Sharif v. Federation of Pakistan, PLD 1993 SC 473.
- Naz, F. (2018). Institutional independence and the Election Commission of Pakistan. *Lahore Journal of Policy Studies*, 11(2), 39–65.
- Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf v. Election Commission of Pakistan, Constitution Petition No. 13 of 2024 (Supreme Court of Pakistan).
- Siddiqui, A., Rehman, T., & Mirza, U. (2020). Democratic quality and governance deficit: Pakistan in global rankings. *South Asian Politics Quarterly*, 15(3), 275–295.
- Waseem, M. (2019). *Competing for power: The constitutional impasse in Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.
- Workers' Party Pakistan v. Federation of Pakistan, PLD 2012 SC 681.
- Zia, A. (2019). *Women's political participation and identity documentation in Pakistan*. UNDP Pakistan.