

Unveiling Pakistan: A Primer on A Journey Through Its Past, Present and Future

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1. Introduction

Overview of Pakistan

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a 15th-ranked¹ Middle Power Nation², and it has the world's ninth-largest armed forces and a declared nuclear weapon state, with six nuclear tests conducted in 1998. Its conventional name is Pakistan; the former is West Pakistan; the federal capital is Islamabad; and Lahore is the cultural capital. Sindh, Punjab, North West Frontier Province, and Balochistan are the four provinces. It has more than 70 languages spoken as first languages; the linguistic varieties of Pakistan are complex. Urdu (the national language) and English (official), but Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Baluchi, and Seraiki are considered the main languages. Muslims in Pakistan are culturally homogeneous. The nation that first separated from British India and then East Pakistan (Bangladesh) is currently an independent Federal Republic, referred to as a constitutional government in which the powers of the Central Government are limited by law. In Pakistan, the military's iron grip defines the landscape of power, and democracy battles to breathe under the weight of authority. Pakistan emerged as an independent nation on the map in August 1947, a sovereign state that had broken away from the British Indian Empire, and has become the fifth most populous country in the world, with a population of 252.4³ million.



Image Source: [Nationsonline](https://nationsonline.org)

¹ [Friday Times, January 2024](https://www.ft.com/content/2024-01-05/friday-times)

² [World Economic Forum, January 2024](https://www.weforum.org)

³ [Worldometers, 2024](https://www.worldometers.info)

This marks a significant growth over the past few years, reflecting a consistent increase in population. It has a notably young population; 40.3% come under 15 years old, 56.0% are between 15 and 64, and 3.7% are 65 years and over⁴. This shows that much of the population is still in the growth and development stage, posing opportunities and challenges for the country's education and healthcare systems. To some degree, it is a male-predominant country with 103.6 males for every 100 females⁵, 95% Muslims, and 5% others, and has the second-largest Muslim population. Predictions indicate that the population is said to be growing. The population may reach over 300 million and potentially peak at around 404.68 million by 2092⁶. Currently, the growth rate is about 2%, but it is anticipated to decline to less than 1% by mid-century gradually⁷. A series of economic crises, a strategically exposed northwest boundary, and full-scale wars with India have plagued Pakistan.

2. Historical foundation

In the late 19th century, Hindus and Muslims in India were living in harmony, but during British colonial rule, the socio-political landscape in India started to change for the worse. Under British rule, irreconcilable differences emerged between Hindus and Muslims as a result of the British "Divide and Rule" policy. The main focus was to keep Indians divided by separating Hindus and Muslims, they not only sparked communal tensions but authorized the political organization for Muslims to highlight distinction in communities as the All-India Muslim League came into existence in 1906, to advocate for the welfare of Indian Muslims, but the League was converted into a hub of political actions and demanded a different independent nation consisting of Muslim majority provinces in the northwest and eastward of India. The Pakistan Movement, which is also known as Tehrik-e-Pakistan, was a political move aimed at the creation of a new nation-state named Pakistan and the Lahore resolution of 1940 became a critical turning point, with major figures like Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Liaquat Ali Khan, Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, and Aga Khan III. Sheila Pant led Pakistani women and encouraged their participation in national politics. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 divided British India into two independent nations, India and Pakistan, with the Radcliffe Commission determining boundaries based on religious

⁴ [PBS GOV, Pakistan](#)

⁵ [NSW Government, Pakistan](#)

⁶ [Associated Press of Pakistan](#)

⁷ [World Population Review, Pakistan 2024](#)

differences, this led to the bloodiest migration of around 15 million⁸ Muslims and Hindus, resulting in an estimated death toll ranging from 200,000 to 2 million⁹.

3. Political Scenario

Officially, Pakistan is a democracy, but its Stratocratic¹⁰ nature is well known. Throughout its history, Pakistan has had dramatic political changes.

I. Government Structure

Pakistan was formed as a federal Republic with the Prime Minister as head of the government and the President as head of the state, and the legislature is bicameral, consisting of the National Assembly and Senate, but since the State's founding, democracy has suffered brutally. Since the death of its founding father, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who died 13 months after independence from British India, not a single transfer of power has occurred properly. Pakistan's political history is chequered with the dismissals of six¹¹ Prime Ministers in the 1950s, four military coups, and four dissolution of the Parliamentary Government using Presidential Constitutional powers. There was no going back once a few events occurred that made Pakistan a weak political nation.

1. Yahya Khan was defeated¹² by the military in 1971 and forced to cede power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's elected government.
2. Another event occurred in 1988¹³ when President General Zia-UL-Haq's plane crashed.

II. First Republican Era (1947-1958)

It commenced with its creation in 1947 as a Muslim-led nation, governed under a constitutional framework, adopting its first constitution in 1956 with Muhammad Ali Jinnah as Governor General and Liaquat Ali Khan as Prime Minister.

1. Muhammad Ali Jinnah died in 1948 and was replaced by Khwaja Nazimuddin.
2. Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan drafted the Objectives Resolution, presently it is the preamble of Pakistan's constitution, and was assassinated in Rawalpindi in 1957.

⁸ [Times of India, August 2023](#)

⁹ [Stanford Report, March 2019](#)

¹⁰ [The Express TRIBUNE, October 2024](#)

¹¹ [Non-proliferation Policy Education Centre](#)

¹² [India Today, 2000](#)

¹³ [Gulf News, August 2018](#)

3. Pakistan got its first constitution in 1956, turning the country from an autonomous dominion into an “Islamic Republic.”
4. President Iskander Mirza carried out a coup d’etat in 1958¹⁴ and suspended the constitution; subsequently, Army Chief General Ayub Khan deposed Mirza and declared himself President. He appointed a commission to formulate a new system of government for the country.

III. Military Rule and Martial Law (1958-1971)

This era saw regional disparities and tensions and a lack of sovereignty, particularly in East Pakistan, which led to the division of Pakistan into two different nations Pakistan and East Pakistan. Military rule began, with President Iskander Mirza abrogating the constitution and leading to the accession of General Ayub Khan. Under Ayub Khan’s leadership, the term Basic Democracy was introduced, Which redefined local governance and limited electoral participation.

1. The second Constitution was created in 1962¹⁵ as a Presidential form of government, with a 156-member National Assembly and a Presidential electoral college of 80,000¹⁶ “Basic Democrats”. Members of both bodies were equally divided between West Pakistan and East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh).
2. Ayub Khan defeated Fatima Jinnah in a controversial and closely fought poll in 1965.
3. Amid protests, Ayub Khan resigned as president in 1969, handing over power to Army Chief General Yahya Khan. Martial Law was proclaimed, and all assemblies were dissolved.
4. General elections were held in 1970, with East Pakistani leader Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman’s party emerging as the overall winner. The results of the poll were contested.
5. 1971 The controversy over the general election led to a war, also involving India, that resulted in the independence of Bangladesh after a brutal Pakistani army action in East Pakistan.

IV. Democratic Transitions and Instabilities (1971-PRESENT)

Following the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, the Pakistan’s People’s Party (PPP) a centre-left political party in Pakistan, led by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto came into power

¹⁴ [Times of India, November 2022](#)

¹⁵ [Aljazeera News, April 2023](#)

¹⁶ [DAWN News, Sep 2017](#)

entering the second democratic era, this period was marked by electoral fraud, leading to Bhutto's execution and the resurgence of military power under General Zia-Ul-Haq in 1977. Since then, Pakistan has oscillated like a pendulum between military and democratic rule with various political parties coming to power and leaving without completing their tenures, often amid accusations of corruption and governance failures.

V. Key Political Figures, Political Parties, Elections and Reforms

Pakistan is a nation with a multi-party system with failed democratic principles and organizational structures. The recent 2024 election controversies and significant reforms over the past 10 years have led to mistrust of people in the democracy and the major players, such as Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan, are currently shaping the political narratives in Pakistan.

Major Political Parties

1. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)
2. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)
3. Pakistan People's Party (PPP)
4. Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)
5. Awami National Party (ANP)
6. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F)
7. Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q)
8. Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)
9. Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)
10. Balochistan Awami Party (BAP)

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, a centrist party led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, is a leading figure. It came into power for the third time in 2013 with a clear majority. But Sharif was removed from office in 2017, unable to complete his term in office due to corruption charges¹⁷ against him. In 2018, days before the national election, Nawaz Sharif and his daughter, Maryam, were sentenced to jail for 10 years, while his younger brother, Shahbaz Sharif, led a coalition government after Imran Khan's removal due to corruption charges in 2022. Although Shehbaz's future role with his elder brother in Pakistan is uncertain, and he is believed to have closer ties with Pakistan's powerful military than Nawaz, on the other hand, Imran Khan, a former Prime Minister and leader of the PTI, remains a popular figure despite various charges and legal challenges, and his party has substantial support from the population.

¹⁷ [International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, July 2017](#)

VI. Recent Elections 2024

General elections, originally, were supposed to be held in 2023, but it was held on 8 February 2024¹⁸ to elect the members for the 16th National Assembly. The Election Commission of Pakistan announced the detailed schedule on 15th December 2023¹⁹. During election day, mobile networks and the internet got cut off²⁰ and a terrorist attack took place a day before the elections in Balochistan, the terrorists killed at least 28²¹ people. This was expected to disrupt the voters' turnout, but more than 61 million voters were present, voter turnout was 47.6²² per cent relative to 52.1 per cent in the 2018 elections. The result was an upsetting event.

1. Major discrepancies in polling stations.
2. Unexplained delays in the vote count and result being tabulated.
3. The Free and Fair Election Network, an election observer, noted²³ that its election agents were not allowed to observe the result tabulations in about half of the electoral constituencies.

Despite all the upsetting events, **Shehbaz Sharif has been elected second term as Pakistan's new P.M with 201-92²⁴, leading a coalition government, as the joint candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League(Nawaz) PML-N and the Pakistan's People's Party (PPP) while Omar Ayub Khan was PTI-Backed Sunni ittehad council's nominee.**

VII. Role of the Military in Politics

The military's influence over Pakistan has a strong dominant force in policymaking and taking direct control of the administration, as well as shaping foreign relations and disregarding democratic principles. Reports²⁵ say that the military manipulated the 2024 election outcomes to maintain influence while side-lining certain political parties like the PTI. Pakistan's military has retained its role as a key power broker, and even that the new government will form as a junior partner to the military.

¹⁸ [Hindustan Times, Oct 2024](#)

¹⁹ [Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, Feb 2024](#)

²⁰ [TIME, Feb 2024](#)

²¹ [Dawn, Oct 2024](#)

²² [Arab News, Oct 2024](#)

²³ ("FAFEN Urges ECP to Take Notice of Non-Adherence to Legal Requirements by ROs in Results Tabulation")

²⁴ [Le Monde, Oct 2024](#)

²⁵ [The Conversation, Feb 2024](#)

4. Baloch Issue

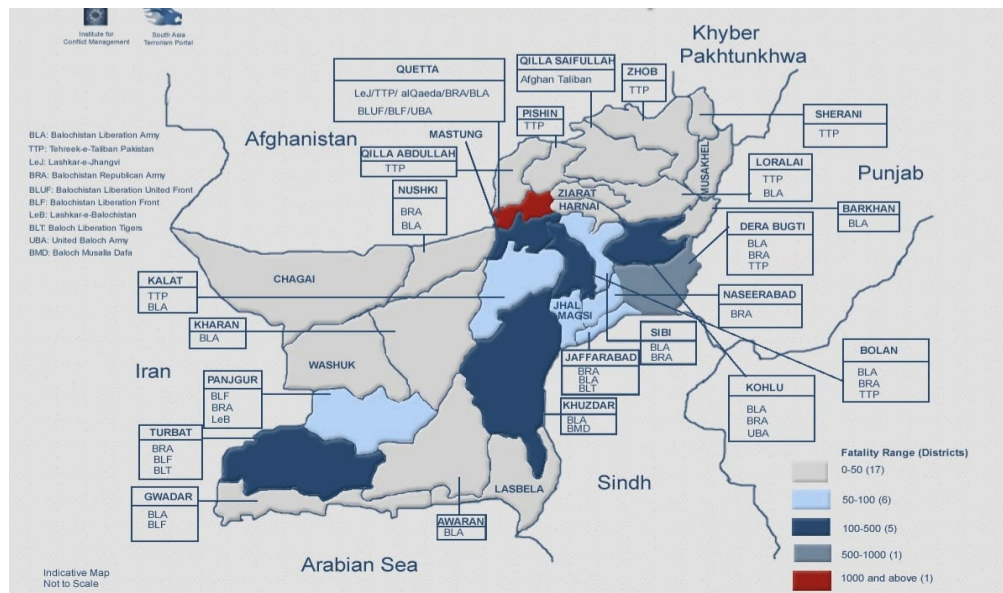


Image Source: [South Asia Terrorism Portal](#)

Pakistan's largest province, Balochistan, covers an area of 347,190 Sq, Km forming 43.6 per cent²⁶ of the total area and is home to the ethnic Baloch minority, this community is different from the Sindhi and Punjabi communities. This region is split between three countries: Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; it's a tri-junction region. Natural resources abound in Balochistan, it has more than eighty²⁷ mineral resources with significant deposits. This region is strategically and economically important for Pakistan, making it equally important from its geopolitical standpoint. Despite being the largest and most important state of Pakistan, Balochistan remained marginalized and underdeveloped.

1. The collateral damage

The Indian Independence Act 1947 gave the autonomous princely states to join either India or Pakistan or to remain independent, so Balochistan was formed by joining the Quetta, Noshkie, British Chief Commissioner's Province, Nasirabad Tehsil, Khanate of Kalat, Las Bela, and Makran²⁸. The princely state of Kalat, part of Baloch state, chose freedom and refused to join Pakistan, and through parliamentary procedure,

²⁶ [Government of Balochistan](#)

²⁷ [The Economic Times, May 2021](#)

²⁸ [Government of Balochistan](#)

Kalat declared itself independent, but Balochistan was annexed by Pakistan²⁹ by the end of 1947, and it became part of Pakistan in June 1948.

2. Phases of Balochistan Insurgency

Prince Kareem Khan³⁰ rejected the incorporation of Balochistan in Pakistan, took refuge in Afghanistan, and continued the armed struggle against Pakistan. Pakistan's rebellion went into five phases. The first phase with the instrument of accession in 1948 started but ended early; after this, three organized phases came into being: 1958-59, 1962-64, and 1973-77 and full-fledged armed rebellion occurred. In 2003 and the present, the fifth phase, is still ongoing. In this phase, small guerrilla attacks, assassinations, and underground intelligence are emphasized more, while also witnessing normalization of human rights violations, mass murder, rapes, and exploitation by Pakistani forces in the Baloch region.

3. The major insurgent groups involved

According to the Pakistani government, there are five insurgent groups active in the region of Balochistan. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) is the biggest and most powerful insurgent group in Balochistan, demanding complete separation from Pakistan and exclusion of China from the region, following other groups are, the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), the Baloch Republican Army (BRA)³¹, Lashkar-e-Balochistan, and the Baloch Jhalawan Tigers. China's deep economic involvement in Balochistan has placed it at the centre of the conflict; 38 ports³² have been built by Chinese investment since 2000; an additional 43 ports are in planning or construction. Seventy-eight ports have Chinese stakeholders. According to reports,³³ the agreements indicate that 91% of revenues from Gwadar Port will go to China and 9% will go to Pakistan for the next forty years however the port of Gwadar is strategically important for trade and energy routes for both China and Pakistan but due to Pakistan's debt burden, Pakistan is ready to give its whole nation on the plate of China. Chinese investments have been a source of contention, with Baloch accusing the Pakistani government and the Chinese companies of exploiting Balochistan's resources without fair compensation. The crises in the Baloch region assume even

²⁹ [The Nation, Dec 2015](#)

³⁰ [The Journal of Contemporary Asian Studies, Oct 2018](#)

³¹ [Stanford University, Oct 2024](#)

³² [DW, May 2024](#)

³³ [Balochistan Voices, Oct 2024](#)

more strategic significance because of the geopolitical shifts following the Taliban's³⁴ takeover of Afghanistan. Pakistan shares a border with Afghanistan, and the power shift has influenced local dynamics and intensified the Baloch struggle. History is repeating; a somewhat similar event happened with East Pakistan, which led to Bangladesh's liberation in 1971³⁵ to protect the Bengali community from political, economic and social injustice.

5. Foreign Relations

Pakistan's foreign relations are essentially with an India focus; its persistent preoccupation with India is the primary driver of their foreign policy, and secondly is the mindset that was responsible for the creation of this country, rooted in the belief that Pakistan is the successor to the great Muslim empires of the past, and its foreign policy utilizes a mercenary approach³⁶ in conjunction with its military.

1. Historical Legacies of conflict and cooperation

Pakistan's relations are the legacies of conflict and corporations, especially with India and Afghanistan. After the 1947 partition from British India, Pakistan was and is still involved in a series of conflicts over cross-border terrorism and territorial disputes, especially regarding Kashmir, leading to multiple wars and ongoing tensions.

- I. There have been many diplomatic efforts to step down the disputes.
 - a. The Shimla Agreement, 1972
 - b. India had accorded MFN status to Pakistan in 1996.³⁷

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Exports	US\$.2.2bn	US\$.1.85bn	US\$.2.1bn	US\$.1.83bn	US\$.1.92bn	US\$ 2.06bn
Imports	US\$ 0.426bn	US\$0.497bn	US\$.441bn	US\$.456bn	US\$0.488bn	US\$0.495bn
Trade Balance	US\$.1.8bn	US\$.1.3bn	US\$.1.7bn	US\$.1.3bn	US\$.1.435	US\$ 1.57bn

The figures for India-Pakistan bilateral trade from 2013-2019

³⁴ [Global Conflict Tracker, July 2024](#)

³⁵ [The National Archives, Oct 2024](#)

³⁶ [Middle East Institute, Dec 2023](#)

³⁷ [India Today, Feb 2019](#)

According to the High Commission of India³⁸, the Pakistan cabinet decision of November 02, 2011, to reciprocate remains unimplemented. In August 2012, India announced a reduction of 30% in its SAFTA Sensitive List for non-least Developed Countries of SAFTA [including Pakistan], bringing down tariffs on 264 items to 5% within three years, but Pakistan continued to follow a restrictive trade policy towards India. In the aftermath of the cross-border terror attack in Pulwama, India, on 15 February 2019 withdrew Most Favoured Nation Status to Pakistan. India also hiked customs duty on exports from Pakistan to 200% on 16 February 2019. Subsequently, as part of its unilateral measures, Pakistan suspended bilateral trade with India on 7 August 2019.

- a. The Lahore Declaration, 1999³⁹.
- b. Bilateral Dialogue in December 2015⁴⁰

Despite all these efforts, the relations are still not smooth. Pakistan's perception is that "India wants to capture Pakistan," but the reality is India wants peace and cooperation by implementing its neighbourhood-first policy.

2. Security Concerns: Terrorism and Extremism

Pakistan has been witnessing an increased number of deaths, rising by 35 percent⁴¹ over the past year to 689, making it the second-greatest annual increase in the last ten years. This trend was mirrored by a rise in the number of terror assaults, which increased by 34⁴² percent to 490 in 2023. According to the Global Terrorism Index⁴³ 2023, Pakistan is in fourth place with a score of 7.916 and has become an epicentre of terrorism. All posts across the US Mission Pakistan carried "high" or "critical" threat ratings on the Security Environment Threat List. The terrorist activities became more aggressive in Pakistan after the Taliban took over Afghanistan; whole local dynamics have been changed; militant groups operating from Afghanistan have increased tensions along the Pakistan-Afghan border. Major terrorist groups that focused on conducting attacks in the country included the TTP⁴⁴, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and ISIS-K, Separatist militant groups conducted terrorist attacks against varied targets in Balochistan, Punjab, and Sindh provinces. TTP posed a significant threat to Pakistani

³⁸ [High Commission of India, Islamabad, Pakistan](#)

³⁹ [First Post, May 2024](#)

⁴⁰ [High Commission of India, Islamabad, Pakistan.](#)

⁴¹ [Global Terrorism Index | Countries most impacted by terrorism](#)

⁴² [Institute for Economics & Peace, Measuring the impact of terrorism, Feb2024](#)

⁴³ ("Global Terrorism Index | Countries most impacted by terrorism")

⁴⁴ [Combating Terrorism Centre at West Point, May 2023](#)

police, military, and security services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In attacking various targets, terrorists used a range of tactics, including IEDs, VBIEDs, suicide bombings, and targeted assassinations. In Oct 2023 Pakistan turned out over 1.5 million Afghans for not having proper documentation, Pakistan asserts⁴⁵ that Afghanistan's sheltering of militants in the region has resulted in violence and bloodshed, but the main reason is a lack of injustice by the Pakistani government and political instability causing this turmoil.

3. India-Pakistan Relations: The Kashmir Dispute

India and Pakistan share a tense and frigid relationship, and Pakistan's persistent focus on Kashmir makes it a battleground and the most strategic place in the world where three powerful countries collide: India, Pakistan, and China.

After the end of India's struggle for freedom, there was a rise of India and Pakistan as independent states. The Kashmiri sense of political dispossession was made acute by the dispute between India and Pakistan; there had been multiple wars, disputes, and armed skirmishes.

1. 22 October 1947⁴⁶ Pakistan attacked Kashmir.
2. After 1947, Pakistani tribal militants invaded Kashmir.
3. India-Pakistan War of 1948. (ended with a UN-mediated ceasefire, Line of Control).
4. 1962: China invaded and became part of the Kashmir conflict and made things worse in the region.
5. In 1965, a full-scale anti-India insurgency in Indian-administered Kashmir by Pakistan left the region devastated.
6. India-Pakistan War 1971.

PoK (the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) which was part of the Jammu and Kashmir region (India) that Pakistan overtook in 1947, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh's 1/3 part, consisting of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, whose status is not specified in the constitution, and according to the First post⁴⁷ report, PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan demand reunion with India as they are not Pakistanis. This region became more critical and a centre for brutal conflicts after Pakistan granted access to the Shakhs Valley to China. India controls approximately 48⁴⁸ percent of the land area of the region, Pakistan controls 35 percent, and China 17 percent.

⁴⁵ [Forbes, Oct 2023](#)

⁴⁶ [India Today, Oct 1947](#)

⁴⁷ [First Post, January 2023](#)

⁴⁸ [Global Citizen Journey](#)

Since India's revocation of Article 370⁴⁹. In August 2019, which granted Jammu and Kashmir special status, relations between India and Pakistan deteriorated significantly, leading to a series of security challenges for both nations.

4. Relations with Major Power Blocs: US and China

Pakistan is the frontline state in China-US relations. It wants strategic relations with China, but also at the same time needs the U.S. to address its economic and security challenges. In 2022, Pakistan hosted Congresswoman Ilhan Omar⁵⁰ an anti-India bias. The visit to Pakistan was a rare visit made by a U.S. lawmaker to influence the Kashmir issue. However, as India-U.S. relations are taking new turns and strengthening diplomatic relations, Pakistan is tilting towards China. Observers⁵¹ note that given China's huge investments in Pakistan, the country cannot take an overt pro-US stance anytime soon. Additionally, Pakistan is struggling with growing debt, taken from both the Chinese government and commercial banks. Pakistan has become dependent on IMF aid; Its external debt reached 130.4 bn USD⁵² in Mar 2024, compared with 131.4 bn USD in the previous quarter. Pakistan External Debt: data is updated quarterly, available from June 2006 to Mar 2024. The data reached an all-time high of 131.4 USD bn in Dec 2023 and a record low of 37.2 USD bn in June 2006, and it has fallen into China's debt trap diplomacy, on the other hand, Pakistan has been witnessing increased disengagements from US due to decreased involvement in Afghanistan and inclusion in the US Financial Task Force (FATF) grey list in June 2018⁵³, this category puts the country under increased scrutiny and this caused serious turmoil for Pakistan's banking sector, making it difficult for the state to access foreign capital, during this time China gave economic assistance and became a close ally of Pakistan and trades are also expanding.

5. Role in Regional Organization: SAARC and OIC

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is an organization founded in Dhaka in December 1985 by Zia ur Rehman to promote socio-economic development in South Asia with member states Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, but today SAARC has become less integrated regional cooperation.

⁴⁹ [Times of India, Dec 2023](#)

⁵⁰ [WION News, Aug 2023](#)

⁵¹ [The Cradle, 14 November 2022,](#)

⁵² [CEIC Economic Database, 2006 – 2024](#)

⁵³ [The Economic Times, News, Oct 2022](#)

In 2006, many agreements were signed, like the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)⁵⁴, the SAARC Development Fund, the Integrated Programme of Action (2012), the Counter-Terrorism Mechanism, the SAARC Satellite⁵⁵, etc. SAARC has become a failure and a stagnant body because of South Asia's least interconnected region, Pakistan. 1947: The India-Pakistan rivalry remains one of the most enduring and unresolved conflicts; Pakistan's membership in SAARC has become a burden. For a long time, Pakistan ignored the SAARC protocol for better regional connectivity.

1. Pakistan has kept the SAARC Motor Vehicles Agreement and the SAARC Regional Railways Agreement under block⁵⁶.
2. Pakistan has also been ignoring other basic ideals of SAARC⁵⁷.
3. Reduce intra-regional trade
4. Promoting Geo-Political Stress
5. Destroying infrastructure in India and Afghanistan.
6. Failure to become a fair trade partner of South Asian countries.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is the world's second-largest⁵⁸ intergovernmental organization after the UN, with a membership of 57 states. Pakistan is a founding member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and Pakistan is the only Muslim nuclear state. Through OIC, Pakistan seeks to uphold Muslim solidarity. Palestine and Kashmir are the only two core issues of the Islamic world. Pakistan played a leading role in enabling the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to get observer status at the UN. Pakistan has always looked at the OIC as an important forum for political support in Kashmir.

6. Social Issues and Development

The 2023-2024 UNDP Report⁵⁹ places Pakistan in the 'low' human development category, with a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.540 and a global ranking of 164 out of 193 countries. In the 2021-2022 Report, Pakistan had a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.544 with a global ranking of 161 out of 191 countries. One of the major pressing issues in Pakistan is malnutrition resulting from poverty. Pakistan recently readjusted the poverty line model from the previous 2001 template, and as a result, 60⁶⁰ million Pakistanis are

⁵⁴ [United Nations, LDC Portal](#)

⁵⁵ [Press Information Bureau, Government of India](#)

⁵⁶ [Economics Times News, Nov 2014](#)

⁵⁷ [The Diplomat, Sep 2022](#)

⁵⁸ [Organisation of Islamic Cooperation \(OIC\) | World Economic Forum](#)

⁵⁹ [UNDP's 2023-2024 Human Development Report](#)

⁶⁰ [The Economics Times, April 2016](#)

living below the poverty line and around 44⁶¹ percent of children under 5 are stunted. One of the key factors leading to this is illiteracy, as 25 million children still don't go to school and rarely one child from a family makes it to grade 10, and this shows a strong concern about educational practices within Pakistan leading to educational inequalities and gender discrimination. Pakistan ranked 143rd in the sub-indicator of economic participation and opportunities, 140th in terms of labour force, 71st in terms of wage equality in similar working areas, 137th in estimated earned income, and 132nd in terms of technical workers.

Indicator	Rank	Score	Difference F-M	Female vs Male Min Max	Min-Max
Economic Participation and Opportunity	143rd	0.362	-	-	-
Labour-force participation rate %	140th	0.304	-56.14	24.53-----80.67	0 - 100
Wage equality for similar work, 1-7 (best)	71st	0.625	-	-	-
Estimated earned income	137th	0.251	-6.23	2.09-----8.32	0 - 150
Legislators, senior officials and managers %	139th	0.061	-88.59	5.71-----94.29	0 - 100
Professional and technical workers %	132nd	0.358	-47.23	26.39-----73.61	0 - 100

According to the Global Gender Gap 2023⁶² Index compiled by the World Economic Forum, which ranks Pakistan 142nd out of 146 countries assessed, this level of gender discrimination is the result of dated social hierarchy roles, men as providers outside the home and women are largely excluded from public life.

⁶¹ [Pakistan | World Food Programme](#)

⁶² [WEF-Global Gender Gap REPORT, JUNE 2023](#)



Image Source: [Global Gender Gap Index](#)

Moreover, there is a large problem with the gender pay gap in Pakistan, it's so high that the female labour force has a participation rate of 23.18⁶³ percent compared to men at 76 percent, and women are also paid 23 percent less than men for similar work. Freedom of Expression and Press is also one of the vital social issues in Pakistan; it is controlled by government entities and extremist organizations. The 2024 World Press Freedom compiled by the non-governmental organization Reporters Without Borders ranks Pakistan 152nd⁶⁴ out of 180 countries evaluated. Freedom of Religion and its internal security is also threatened by terrorism, political regimes, religious extremism, and separatist movements. There have been anti-terrorism laws that were tightened several times, suspending some fundamental rights. The survey conducted by Gallup Polling,⁶⁵ a company in the US, concluded that “the political scenario is equally gloomy as the economic one,” and seven in ten Pakistanis lack confidence in the elections. The spread of social turmoil in the region is the result of the government’s weak response to the unjust people.

⁶³ [Trading Economics, 2024](#)

⁶⁴ [Dawn News, May 2024](#)

⁶⁵ [Gallup News, Feb 2024](#)

7. Conclusion

Pakistan, a nation that boasts the world's sixth-largest standing armed forces and a substantial nuclear capability with hidden nuclear policy, its history and the current situation are facing multiple internal and external conflicts and intolerance to diversity, terrorism, and extremism with separatist ideology. Its instabilities in the past few years have shown that it has failed to become an independent democratic nation since its partition in 1947. Struggling to make its national identity and maintaining the country's prospects for social and political stability. Pakistan's social, economic, and political condition, with the military's stronghold in influencing administrative procedures, indicates that it is high time to strengthen its democracy, take hold of sovereignty, change its foreign policies, and explore beyond India's focus. It's time to update new equations. As noted, "democracy has failed brutally in forming its base in the state, and its politics are based on personalities, especially the puppets of the military instead of parties and principles." Presently, Pakistan's socio-economic situation gives a clear picture of its population living below the poverty line, indicating that "around 44 per cent of Pakistan's population is malnourished," highlighting the dire need for effective educational reforms and food security initiatives. The government needs to shift its focus and concentrate on human development and the standard of living of the nation. Furthermore, the low female participation in the workforce and the gender pay gaps show that female discrimination and lack of equal opportunities have woven into the fabric of Pakistani society. The conditions in the region have made it essential for Pakistani policymakers to pursue comprehensive reforms. As Benazir Bhutto famously stated, "The true strength of a nation lies in the wellbeing of its citizens," a sentiment that must resonate with current and future leadership. By fostering political accountability, investing in education, promoting gender equality, and looking beyond its chair of power and self-glorification, Pakistan can pave the way toward a more prosperous and stable future, ultimately enabling it to use its potential and vibrant young population and focus on replacing guns from books in the hands of the youths.

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