

RULE OF LAW, GOVERNANCE CRISIS, AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN PAKISTAN: INTERSECTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS – A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Ghulam Ali Mangi

Assistant Professor of Political Science, Govt Degree College Kotdiji

khp.mangi@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author: *

Ghulam Ali Mangi

Abstract

Pakistan is the largest Islamic empire in the world, which was built in the name of Islam. It has an Islamic constitution, Islamic law, Islamic principles in every aspect of its life, justice and fairness, honesty and modesty, peace and security everywhere, which are among the essentials of a true Islamic system. This is the sweet dream that I had before the creation of Pakistan. Apparently, there was no possibility of its creation. The British, Hindus, Sikhs were all against it. And they called the concept of Pakistan a delusion and a foolish wish. But the Almighty God's power gave birth to the greatest Islamic empire despite all the enemies of Pakistan. And in a short period of time, it established its amazing influence on the map of the world. But alas, those in whose hands the system of this greatest Islamic government came into operation acted with great laziness and negligence in fulfilling the promises they had made to the Creator and the creation. Instead of expressing gratitude and implementing the Islamic system in every aspect of life, they became busy with other pursuits, from which the sincere people left one by one and the power fell into the hands of those who had no interest in Pakistan or Islam. This class was also forced to take the name of Islam and the integrity of Pakistan. But it was not ready for anything more than just giving the name of Islam a label.

1. Introduction

In Pakistan, the connection among the rule of law, governance issues, and national security is cyclical. Fragile legal frameworks undermine governance, leading to increased insecurity, which is then utilized to rationalize further exceptions to the rule of law. A strong rule of law is essential for legitimate governance, necessitating an autonomous judiciary, uniform application of laws, and accountability within institutions. Unfortunately, this foundational principle has deteriorated over the years in Pakistan. Factors such as judicial inefficacy, political meddling in law enforcement, and the establishment of parallel

military courts have undermined the authority of civilian legal systems.

If all the institutions of the state are working within the limits of the constitution and there is a transparent and uniform system of accountability, then we can improve governance - for good governance, it is necessary to stabilize our political electoral system - by following the principle of proportional representation, we can improve the quality of parliament and elect people who meet merit and qualifications -

In proportional representation, since votes are given to political parties instead of a candidate, we can get rid of such "electoral chaudris" who are not

interested in the people's problems and hold the entire political and administrative system hostage - the Prime Minister should be directly elected so that he is accountable to the people instead of the members of the assembly and his focus is not to save power but to solve the people's problems - Qayoum Nizami May 22 , 2024

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Rule of Law

Rule of law means no one is above the law, not citizens, not police, not the government, not military. It is the principle that a country is governed by laws, not by the arbitrary decisions of individual rulers. The law itself is supreme and applies equally to everyone.

Every one should be treated equally without looking at their status. We would not say that, one law for ordinary people, one law for people having high grades, one law for poor and one law for rich. In everyday life, we all should have a general law to be same for all the people living around us also who may have certain different characteristics from us.

For good government there are two core pillars of the rule of law known as accountability and transparency. Naomi Choi N , April 9, 2026, Accountability: This refers to the duty of state officials and institutions to justify their decisions, take ownership of outcomes and be answerable when authority is misused or responsibilities are neglected. It reinforces the idea that the law binds everyone equally and that power must remain under legal and political oversight. Accountability is central to fostering peaceful, fair and inclusive societies. Nebula 18 dec 2025

Transparency: As its core, transparency means that laws, state procedures and officials' actions should be open to public view and easy to understand. It demands that rules are clearly defined, decision making is not done behind closed doors and all the people have access to information. By making governance visible, transparency helps curb corruption and allows people to hold institutions to account.

In the context of Pakistan, the rule of law continues to face serious challenges. The influence of politics over institutions, slow judicial processes

and poor enforcement have all weakened legal authority. Dec 27, 2025

2.2 Governance Crisis

Pakistan is endowed with abundant natural resources, occupies a crucial geographic location, and is home to the sixth-largest population globally. However, in spite of these advantages, the nation struggles with economic difficulties and shows low performance in social development indicators. The persistent issues of ineffective institutions and slow advancement stem from a singular underlying problem: a chronic governance shortfall. Prolonged periods of inadequate management have impeded progress, evident in pervasive corruption, insufficient regulatory frameworks, bureaucratic delays, and tensions among governmental entities. Athar Uddin , 2025

The condition of environmental governance highlights a lack of institutional attention. Effective governance involves the management of public resources by state institutions, ensuring the protection of rights without corruption or misuse of authority, all while adhering to legal standards. In Pakistan, weaknesses in governance manifest in various forms. The delivery of public services is hampered by excessive centralization and sluggish bureaucratic processes. Political instability, characterized by frequent changes in leadership, undermines the consistency of policies. Oversight mechanisms are inadequate, as antiquated laws prevent genuine accountability from being established. The judicial system operates at a sluggish pace, with some cases lingering for years, which restricts individuals' access to legal solutions. Economic strategies lag behind current needs, failing to broaden the tax base or effectively manage public finances. Furthermore, the political environment is constricted, primarily influenced by family-run parties that hinder more extensive representation. Collectively, these issues illustrate the depth and interconnectedness of governance challenges in Pakistan, highlighting the necessity for a unified approach to address them.

In order to provide good governance to the people, it is necessary to increase the number of provinces on an administrative basis so that the

governance of the provinces can be made easier and better - Pakistan's electronic, print and social media and intellectuals should pay attention to the major national and public problems of Pakistan - how long will we continue to debate on personalities and political group tricks and not pay attention to the real problems of Pakistan - there is no social justice and equal opportunities in our state system - because of this People feel deprived and disappointed. Qayoum ,May 22, 2024

Several key issues deserve attention. First, service delivery is undermined by concentrated authority and procedural delays. The impact is clear in health and education. Rural health facilities regularly lack basic medicines and staff, while many schools operate with poor infrastructure and obsolete syllabi. Shifting authority to local levels and simplifying procedures would help ensure resources actually reach communities. The absence of clinics in remote districts shows how top-down decision making overlooks ground realities. Second, constant political disruption weakens governance. Regular changes in government break policy continuity and planning. The frequent rotation of senior officials prevents long-term strategy. Fixed terms for elected representatives and limits on politically driven transfers could bring stability and allow consistent administration. Third, the judicial system is burdened by delays. Litigation often extends over many years, leaving citizens without timely relief. This erodes faith in courts. Reforms to speed up hearings and improve court management are necessary. India's use of fast-track courts for specific matters offers a practical example Pakistan could adapt. Timely justice is essential for maintaining public trust in law. Fourth, economic performance is constrained by narrow tax laws and poor compliance. The 2024 budget again avoided taxing privileged groups, placing most of the burden on middle and low income citizens. Restructuring tax policy to ensure fair contributions would support growth and reduce inequality. Brazil's progressive tax reforms, which helped narrow income gaps, provide a useful reference. Better revenue collection would allow more investment in services and infrastructure. Fifth, political participation

remains restricted and often runs in families. This practice blocks diverse voices and reduces inclusiveness in policy making. Expanding access to politics for people from all backgrounds would improve governance quality. Sweden's system, which encourages participation by women and minority groups, shows how inclusiveness strengthens democracy. Pakistan urgently needs structural reforms to reduce corruption and create space for development. Clear mandates for institutions and proper separation of powers are essential. Singapore's emphasis on merit, pragmatism, and integrity has delivered results and offers lessons. A stronger role for media and civil society would improve transparency and oversight. An empowered judiciary that enforces laws consistently would rebuild public confidence. Drawing on proven practices from other countries can help reshape Pakistan's governance. Healthcare in rural communication
<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/healthcare-access>

2.3 National Security

In the current landscape, national security encompasses much more than merely guarding territorial boundaries. It also involves ensuring political stability, fostering a robust economy, maintaining social harmony, and addressing fundamental necessities such as food, water, and justice. Pakistan occupies a crucial geographical position at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Historically, our emphasis has been on defense due to ongoing disputes with neighboring countries; however, it is now increasingly evident that our domestic challenges pose a greater risk to the nation's future.

Defense and Terrorism: Pakistan possesses a formidable military and nuclear capabilities for its defense. However, it continues to face significant challenges from terrorism, sectarian conflicts, and issues in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Following 2021, there has been a rise in attacks attributed to the circumstances in Afghanistan. The ineffective policing and sluggish judicial processes allow militant organizations to function with relative ease.

Fragile Economy: Elevated debt levels, insufficient tax revenues, and energy shortages diminish our autonomy. When individuals lack employment or access to food, there is an uptick in crime and radical behaviors. Additionally, a frail economy constrains our ability to adequately fund defense and international relations.

Social and Governance Challenges: Inadequate healthcare, educational opportunities, and judicial systems leave populations exposed. Political unrest and rivalries among institutions hinder effective long-term strategies. In an environment of political uncertainty, policies regarding security and economic matters are subject to frequent changes.

Environmental and Resource Issues: Pakistan is confronted with challenges such as flooding, drought, and water scarcity. The impacts of climate change can lead to population displacement and fuel new disputes over essential resources.

The nation grapples with both external threats and internal weaknesses that are closely tied to failures in governance. Zaki Khalid, Feb ,20 ,2022

3. Intersections Between Rule of Law, Governance, and Security

3.1 Weakened Rule of Law Leads to Governance Failure

A deterioration in the rule of law can lead to the disintegration of governance structures. This phenomenon is evident in Pakistan. When laws are not enforced impartially and the authorities disregard legal standards, the entire system fails to function effectively .

Absence of Fear of Consequences: When judicial processes drag on for years, or influential individuals evade accountability, public officials lose their incentive to comply with the law. This leads to a rise in corruption, as they understand the likelihood of facing repercussions is minimal. Law enforcement may hesitate to register complaints against those in power, resulting in the misuse of public funds .

Erosion of Public Confidence: When individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are denied justice while affluent or politically connected individuals evade legal consequences,

trust in the judiciary and law enforcement diminishes. Consequently, ordinary citizens may resort to seeking resolutions through local strongmen or illicit means, further undermining the government's authority.

Alternative Authorities Emerge: In regions where the government struggles to uphold its regulations, other entities take charge. Armed groups, traditional councils, or local crime syndicates begin to make decisions. This is evident in areas of Balochistan, Karachi, and rural locales. As a result, the government's influence diminishes.

Ineffectiveness Prevails: In an environment where laws are ineffective, business agreements lack security and regulations are frequently altered. Investors are deterred from launching initiatives. Government officials often procrastinate on tasks due to fears of future accountability. Consequently, the quality of services in health, education, and water supply suffers significantly.

Political Influence on Institutions: When the legal system is employed solely against adversaries, organizations such as the police, NAB, and FIA lose their impartiality. Employment opportunities are allocated based on personal connections rather than qualifications. This undermines the effectiveness of governance, creating a detrimental cycle.

The Destructive Cycle: Poor governance further erodes the rule of law. As unemployment rises and services deteriorate, crime and radicalism increase. In response, the government often resorts to special legislation or military tribunals for swift resolutions. However, these measures further compromise the integrity of the conventional justice system. Thus, a weak legal framework fosters ineffective governance, which in turn leads to greater lawlessness. Muhammad Imran May , 20, 2025

3.2 Governance Crisis → Internal Security Threats

The failure of governance often leads to a rise in internal security challenges. In Pakistan, many of the current security dilemmas are not solely attributable to foreign adversaries. Instead, they stem from ineffective governance, inadequate public services, and a deficiency in justice.

Unemployment Fuels Crime: When young individuals are denied job opportunities due to ineffective economic strategies, some resort to illegal activities, substance abuse, or align themselves with extremist factions.

Lack of Justice Spurs Extremism: The judicial system is sluggish, and law enforcement is often corrupt. When ordinary citizens find it difficult to attain justice, they may gravitate towards organizations that offer swift, albeit violent, solutions.

Absence of Services Leads to Loss of Control: In regions such as Balochistan or impoverished areas of Karachi, the absence of essential facilities like schools, hospitals, and police protection creates a vacuum that is exploited by gangs and militants, rendering these areas perilous.

Political Strife Leads to Fragmentation: Continuous infighting among political leaders, coupled with shifting policies, results in national division. Political parties often manipulate ethnic and sectarian tensions to secure votes, exacerbating violence.

Corrupt Law Enforcement Undermines Efforts: When police are appointed based on political affiliations, their ability to combat crime diminishes. Criminals often evade justice through bribery.

Communities that are marginalized become increasingly susceptible to radicalization due to the lack of support from the state. Sayed Manzar Abbas Zaidi 2024

3.3. Security Issues → Undermining of Legal Principles

Persistent security threats can lead to a deterioration of the rule of law in a nation. This has been a recurrent issue in Pakistan. In efforts to combat terrorism and violence, the government often implements measures that gradually erode judicial independence and individual legal rights .

Establishment of Military Tribunals and Harsh Regulations: In response to terrorist activities, authorities have created military tribunals and enacted stringent anti-terrorism legislation. These mechanisms facilitate rapid legal consequences but circumvent traditional judicial processes. As a

result, public trust in the standard legal system diminishes over time .

Excessive Authority for Law Enforcement: During security operations, law enforcement agencies frequently detain individuals without adhering to due process. Reports of enforced disappearances rise. The lack of oversight leads to a disregard for the principle that the law applies equally to all citizens. .

Neglect of Routine Legal Matters: The focus on security-related issues diverts attention from ordinary legal cases. Disputes over property or familial matters can languish in the courts for extended periods. This results in a loss of confidence in the legal framework .

Legal System as a Political Tool: Political entities often leverage issues of security or allegations of corruption to exert influence on their rivals. The application of the law becomes uneven, transforming it into an instrument for political agendas rather than a mechanism for equitable justice. Al Jazeera , Pakistan law allowing military 'terror' courts expires, 2017

Diminished Rights: In the name of protecting citizens, authorities impose bans on demonstrations, enforce internet blackouts, and restrict movement. People often comply out of fear, yet this erosion of freedoms undermines fundamental rights. As this pattern continues, individuals begin to believe that power holds more sway than the law. Consequently, respect for the constitution and judicial systems diminishes. Each new threat is exploited to implement even more stringent regulations .

While security is essential, it should not dismantle the legal framework. Instead of creating new, specialized systems, the government ought to enhance the capabilities of law enforcement and judicial institutions. Even during challenging times, laws should be applied consistently to all individuals.

In Pakistan, ongoing security issues have negatively impacted the rule of law. If we persist in overlooking legal avenues for immediate peace, we will pave the way for enduring lawlessness. Genuine security can only be achieved when laws are robust and applied equitably to everyone. This situation fosters a cycle where security threats

rationalize the weakening of legal structures.
Heath.B,Grant ,

3.4 . Civil-Military Disparity

In Pakistan, there exists a disparity between the civilian administration and the military establishment. Factors such as conflicts, fragile political parties, and various security threats have contributed to an increase in military influence over policy formulation. Key choices regarding foreign relations and national security are frequently made with limited civilian oversight. This situation undermines the democratic process since those elected lack genuine power. It also leads to uncertainty for investors and international partners. Political parties tend to prioritize satisfying the military establishment rather than addressing the needs of the populace. To achieve stability, it is essential for civilians to manage governance while the military should focus solely on defense matters. Both entities must operate within the framework of the constitution to resolve this disparity. This issue significantly impacts democratic governance and the rule of law. Vinay Kaura 2025

4. Critical Issues in Pakistan

4.1 Inefficiency in the Judicial System

The issue of judicial inefficiency is a significant challenge in Pakistan. Even straightforward cases can take years to resolve due to an overwhelming backlog of cases, a lack of judges, and outdated procedures. Individuals often waste both time and resources by repeatedly attending court. Those from low-income backgrounds are particularly disadvantaged, as they cannot sustain prolonged legal battles. Delayed justice allows criminals to evade accountability, eroding public confidence in the judicial system. As a result, many may resort to illegal methods or tribal jirgas to obtain swift resolutions. Contributing factors to this sluggishness include poor case management, constant postponements, and political influence. To address these problems, an increase in the number of judges, the implementation of technology, and the establishment of strict timelines for case handling are essential. Sdaqat Ali April 2022

4.2. Misuse of Power and Elite Domination

Corruption occurs when individuals in authority exploit their roles for their own benefit. A specific type of this is elite domination, where a limited number of influential individuals monopolize resources, policies, or advantages that ought to be accessible to all. As a result, ordinary citizens are deprived of their equitable portion. This leads to disparities and undermines confidence in institutions. To combat this issue, it is essential to promote transparency and accountability to ensure that power and resources are distributed equitably.

The Andrea Mitchell Center for the Study of Democracy

<https://amc.sas.upenn.edu/gatecrashing-democracy>

4.3 . Political Unrest

Political unrest refers to a situation in which a nation's government frequently changes or operates ineffectively. This instability results in inconsistent laws and policies, leading to a decline in public confidence in the governmental system. The economy also suffers, as investors become wary, causing a slowdown in development. The ordinary citizens bear the brunt of this turmoil, as essential services and progress are disrupted. For a nation to advance, it is crucial to have stable governance and robust institutions.

4.4. Security-Focused Policy Framework

A security-focused policy framework occurs when the government prioritizes security matters in its policy-making process. This approach emphasizes defense, law enforcement, and the management of threats. However, crucial sectors such as education, healthcare, and development may receive less focus as a result. While security is vital for any nation, it is essential to maintain a balance to ensure that citizens' welfare is not overlooked. An excessive emphasis on security could hinder economic growth and erode public trust.

5. Policy Implications

5.1 Enhancing the Rule of Law

Enhancing the rule of law involves ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their wealth or status, adhere to the same legal standards, with no one being exempt from these laws. This process fosters confidence in the judicial system, law enforcement, and governmental institutions. When laws are enforced impartially, citizens feel secure, and justice prevails. Conversely, a lack of rule of law can lead to an uptick in corruption and the abuse of power. For a nation to achieve peaceful development, it is essential to establish robust and equitable legal frameworks

5.2 . Governance Reforms

Governance reforms refer to the implementation of changes within the governmental framework to improve efficiency and integrity. These reforms focus on enhancing transparency, minimizing bureaucratic obstacles, and simplifying access to public services for the populace. When executed effectively, these reforms can lead to a decline in corruption and bolster public trust in governmental bodies. Effective governance reforms are crucial for providing essential services such as healthcare, education, and legal support to ordinary citizens. Continuous reform efforts are necessary for ensuring that the system remains just and effective.

5.3 Integrating Security and Development

Integrating security and development means we should not focus only on military solutions. Instead, we need to shift from a military-centric approach to human security, where people's basic needs are protected. Investment in education, employment, and social welfare is important because it gives people hope and opportunities. When people have jobs and education, the chances of extremism go down. We can counter extremism better through socio-economic inclusion rather than just force. Real security comes when people feel safe, valued, and part of society.

5.4 Civil-Military Balance

Civil-military balance means having a proper relationship between the civilian government and the military. Both should work under the constitution and respect each other's role. The military is responsible for defense, while civilian leaders handle policy and governance. When this balance is disturbed, it creates political problems and weakens democracy. For a stable country, civilian control over policy with strong military support for security is very important.

5.5 Digital Governance and Transparency

Digital governance means using technology to make government work faster and more openly. It helps reduce paperwork, delays, and corruption because everything is recorded online. Transparency increases when people can track services, budgets, and decisions easily through apps or websites. It also makes officials more accountable since data is public. For better governance, digital tools should be used to connect people and government directly.

6. Recommendations

To improve the system, we need a few key steps. First, establish independent judicial accountability mechanisms so courts remain fair and no one misuses power. Second, reform police and prosecution systems to ensure quick and honest justice for common people. Third, promote political stability through electoral reforms so elections are transparent and trusted. Fourth, enhance coordination between federal and provincial governments to avoid policy clashes. Fifth, adopt a comprehensive national security policy that also integrates governance reforms, not just force. Lastly, encourage public participation and civil society engagement so people have a real voice in decisions. These steps can build trust and make governance stronger.

7. Conclusion

The crisis of governance, weak rule of law, and national security challenges in Pakistan are mutually reinforcing. Without strengthening legal institutions and improving governance, security policies alone cannot ensure stability. A holistic

and integrated policy approach is essential to break this cycle and promote sustainable peace and development.

Pakistan's national security cannot be separated from its governance crisis and weak rule of law. When institutions are unstable, corruption is high, and justice is delayed, it directly affects internal security and public trust. A military-centric approach alone cannot solve these problems. What we need is human security through better education, jobs, and social welfare. Strengthening rule of law, ensuring civil-military balance, and bringing digital transparency are key steps. Electoral and police reforms, along with federal-provincial coordination, can reduce the governance crisis. If we integrate security with governance reforms and public participation, Pakistan can achieve long-term stability and development.

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