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# Crisis of Good Governance in Pakistan: Need for reforms and institution building

## 1) Introduction

There is no denying the fact that the performance of governance system in Pakistan has ~~remained~~ <sup>been</sup> unsatisfactory ~~since~~ <sup>for</sup> very long. However, it can be improved if certain pragmatic measures are taken and needed reforms are introduced.

## 2) Defining the concept of good governance

## 3) ~~Challenges facing good governance~~ in Pakistan;

3.1) Polarized and unstable political environment

3.2) Continuous low economic growth  
GDP growth rate 2 percent - (IMF)

3.3) Alarmingly high corruption  
Corruption Perception Index ranks the country 133 out of 180 countries

3.4) Appalling situation of living standards  
39.4 percent population living below the poverty line (PIDE)

3.5) High Unemployment rate  
6.3 percent of labour force is unemployed.  
(Economic Survey 2023-24)

3.6) ~~Crime rate increasing alarmingly~~  
Case in point: ~~Crime rate in Street~~  
Crime in Karachi

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3.7) Failure ~~of~~ complete devolution of power to the grassroots levels.

Article: 140A → waiting implementation

3.8) Dismal performance of judiciary in the dispensing justice

Rule of Law Index rank the country 130 out of 142 countries

3.9) Lack of Accountability

3.10) Hike in terrorist activities in the country

67% rise in 2022 from 2022 (PICSS)

#### 4) Reforming Governance system in Pakistan

4.1) Ensuring Political stability in the country

4.2) Devising long-term policies for sustainable economic growth.

4.3) Introducing stringent measures to curb corrupt practices

4.4) Establishing robust accountability system by making accountability Bureaus independent of political intervention

4.5) Devolving power to the local government.

4.6) Making Judicial system robust and independent

4.7) Ensuring complete independence of Media and press

World Press Freedom Index: Pakistan stands at 152 out of 180 nations.

4.8) Improving coordination amongst different levels of government

→ CCI, NEC

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4.9) Taking measures to improve living standards of people

Case Study: China → elevated 800m people from poverty.

4.10) Curbing Rise of terrorist activities by taking ~~on board~~ political forces and local peoples <sup>on board</sup>

5. Conclusion

Also address institution building

The progress and prosperity of any country is only possible when its governance system is efficient and effective. There is no denying the fact that the performance of governance of governance system in Pakistan has ~~remained~~ <sup>been</sup> unsatisfactory ~~since~~ <sup>for</sup> very long. However, it can be improved if certain pragmatic measures are taken and needed reforms are introduced. There are multitude of factors which impede the good governance in Pakistan. For instance, political instability since the day of its independence, low economic growth, rampant corruption, appalling living standards, high unemployment rate, expansion in criminal activities especially in urban centers, lack of political participation at grassroot level and failure of government to ensure complete devolution of power to the local levels, dismal performance of judiciary in dispensing justice, lack of accountability, absence of rule of law and unprecedented use in terrorism in the country. However, despite these challenges, ~~it~~ governance in Pakistan can be improved if government takes certain

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pragmatic measures and reforms. For suppose, it ensures political stability in the country and formulates long-term policies for sustainable economic growth. It ushers in stringent measures to curb & corrupt practices and establishes robust accountability system by making it independent of political intervention. Furthermore, government should devolve power to the local governments completely and reform its judicial system. It should also make media and press free and improve coordination amongst its various levels of administration. Besides, it should work for the betterment of the people by improving their living standards. Finally, rise in terrorist activities should be curbed by taking on board all political forces and revamping security apparatus in tune with the needs of modern day security.

Good governance is significantly important for the efficiency and effectiveness of various sectors, <sup>in the government</sup>. In order to understand the good governance, it is apt to take into consideration the definition of UNDP on good governance. The United Nations Development Program defines good governance as "a process which encourages staff incentives, training of civil servants, administrative and fiscal decentralization and dialogue between governments and civil society. This is quite a comprehensive definition on the part of UNDP to define good governance. Thus, good governance include multitudes of things from staff incentives to the empowerment of local government. Hence, in order to ensure good governance in any country, countries have to take introduce a number of reforms in their governance sectors.

Political instability and 'polarization' is a long-lasting challenge for Pakistan since its birth in 1947. It is because of this scenario, the country has remained almost 33 years under direct military control. Moreover, indirect military control of civilian affairs is a cons-

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tant phenomenon. It is not only military that is responsible for political instability in the country, but also political elites who when not in government, try every tactic to topple the sitting government. Testimony to this is regime changes in the country. Since inception up to now, the country has not a single premier who has completed his term in the office. The irony of political system of Pakistan is that the political parties, when in power victimize their political opponents and when in opposition, they use every means, fair or foul, to overthrow the government. Hence, this tug of war between political forces and intervention of military in politics have dealt a significant blow to political stability in the country and in turn to the good governance in the country.

In addition to this, continuous low economic growth hinders good governance in the country. For economic stability, it is necessary that the country should be politically stable. Pakistan, being politically unstable faces enormous challenges to ensure sustainable economic growth. According to the IMF, the country's GDP



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Growth rate remains 2 percent this year. Though it is good that the GDP is in growth rate is making progress from past years, nevertheless it is significantly low in the region. Owing to the political instability, there remains policy unpredictability which in turn hampers economic growth. The country has so far utterly failed in maintaining and devising long-term policies which are necessary for sustainable and viable economic growth. Thus, economic crisis has added to the woes of good governance in the country.

Furthermore, corruption is rampant in the every sector of the country which deteriorates any prospect for good governance in the country. Amnesty International's Corruption Perception Index ranks the country at 133rd position out of its 188 member states. This paints a worrying picture of the country. It means plenty of country's resources are embezzled by its officials before they reach to the people. People, even for their legal works have to bribe the officials so that they could be done. Hence, people's welfare projects become prey to the corrupt practices.

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of the officials. All in all, mal-  
practices in the governance system  
of Pakistan obstruct functioning of  
good governance in the country.

Moreover, appalling conditions  
of living standards in the  
country are significant challenge  
to the good governance in the  
country.

The country, where a big  
chunk of population is living below  
the poverty line, it becomes quite  
difficult for people to hold govern-  
ment to account for mis-governance.

Because people in these conditions  
are oblivious of their rights and  
duties and hence they blame fate  
not government for their problems.

39.4 percent of population is living below  
the poverty line in the country accor-  
ding to Multidimensional poverty Index  
of Pakistan Institute of Development Eco-  
nomics (PIDE). It shows more than 1/3rd

of the country's population is grap-  
pling with absolute poverty. People  
in these circumstances are deprived  
of their basic needs. To conclude,

people living in such horrible condi-  
tions testifies to the absence of good  
governance in the country.

Alongside this, unemployment  
rate in the is on the rise which

adds insult to injury of already poor people. In the face of back-breaking inflation and ever-increasing poverty, it further worsens the good prospects of life ahead when unemployment is also record high. According to the econo. ic survey 2023-24 of Pakistan, 6.3 percent of labour force is unemployed in the country. Unemployment rate is unexpectedly high and youth constitutes a big proportion of the unemployed. Every year thousands of graduates enter the job market, but job market is unable to absorb them all. To cut the long story short, unemployment is detrimental to the well-functioning of good governance in Pakistan because it could lead to the social unrest which even <sup>can</sup> halts the semblance of governance in the country.

Apart from these, increase in criminal activities across the country is a serious challenge posed to good governance in the country. There are multiple factors which pave the way for uptick in criminal activities in the country. For instance, poverty, unem. ployment, inflation, weak criminal justice system and compromised law enforcement agencies and absence of community policing. The rise in crim

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e can be fathomed well if we appraise the criminal activities in the urban centers. Briefing to the Cabinet, Sindh Home Minister Lengar and IGP Mukhtar noted that 7,822 cases of street crime reported in Karachi in January 2024. This paints an awful picture of criminal activities in the country and correspondingly raises a serious concern for governance in sector in the country. Aforesaid data is just from Karachi, this situation is indeed quite worrisome. To sum up, increasing criminality, especially in urban centers, does not bode well for good governance in the country. Moreover, the reluctance of ruling elites to completely devolve the powers to the local governments is hampering the good governance in the country. Though the center has devolved the share of provincial powers to the provinces, nevertheless, provinces have not yet devolved powers to the local government as stipulates the constitution. Article 140A of the constitution makes it mandatory for the provinces to devolve the powers to local governments. However, so far this article is waiting for enforcement. Efficient and effective local government system is a guarantee of good governance. It actually an

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ails an opportunity to the local populace to participate in political process in the country. Unfortunately, political forces have not yet realized the importance of local government. Hence, absence of proper local governments have compromised the good governance in the country.

Furthermore, dismal performance of judiciary in dispensing justice and protecting violations of human rights has compromised the good governance in the country. Pakistan's judiciary's inefficiency can be seen more vividly in its standing at Rule of Law Index than anywhere else. Rule of Law Index ranks the country at 130 out of its 142 <sup>member states</sup> countries. Moreover the country is worst performing in the region after Afghanistan. When justice system is so poorly performing, how it is possible that the country will be administered through good governance. Hence, abysmal performance of judiciary further diminishes any prospect for good governance in the country.

Additionally, lack of accountability in the country is one of the major challenges to the good governance in the country. Though the country has

multiple accountability bureaus at both national and provincial levels, yet its accountability apparatus operates quite badly. Many reasons are cited for compromised accountability apparatus of the country. However, one of the main factors is thought to be political intervention. The accountability bureaus have become a tool of political victimization nothing more than that. Thus, the transparency and efficiency of system is not their concern. Instead they pursue political opponents. Hence, compromised accountability system has dented good governance in the country seriously.

Lastly, resurgence in terrorist activities has further deteriorated the chances of good governance in the country. After the withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan and reinstallation of Taliban government in Afghanistan, terrorism has seen an unprecedented rise in the country. Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) reported 67% rise in terrorist activities in 2023 from 2022 in the country. Terrorist activities poses existential challenge to the country.

and disrupt functioning of its governance system in catering to the needs of people. Thus, the rise in terrorism has seriously jolted the good governance in Pakistan.

In the preceding paragraphs, the essay has discussed the challenges good governance in Pakistan is facing. Whereas, in the following paragraphs, it will discuss reforms that are needed for good governance in the country.

There is no doubt in saying that political stability is one of the most significant factors for good governance in any country. To substantiate this point, one could see the difference of progress and prosperity between the politically stable and politically unstable countries. In Pakistan good governance has taken back seat because political elites are not free to focus in this direction. They are indulged in political confrontations. In order to embark on the path of prosperity and progress, all political forces of the country must unite and present allow no space to apolitical elements to exploit the differences between them. Hence, political stability is the bedrock of

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good governance in any country. Similarly, sound and sustainable economic growth is necessary for the continuity of good governance. For achieving sustainable economic growth, it is the formulation of sound, viable and long-term policies which play a pivotal role. However, for devising long-term policies requires political stability. Nevertheless, Pakistan is having experiencing low economic growth for a few years now. Fortunately, the country has successfully averted the bankruptcy and is on the road to economic prosperity. But it has done so with help of bilateral lenders and the IMF. This critical scenario underscores the importance of sustainable economic growth which in continuity of good governance in the country.

Furthermore, curbing corrupt and mal-practices are amongst the pertinent steps to ensure good governance in the country. Unless stringent measures are taken, corruption will remain unaltered. Government should overhaul its anti-corruption mechanism, and it should be designed on the pattern of those countries whose systems are enviably successful at curbing corruption in their respective countries. If corrupt official are not held to account,

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this encourage the corruption more, and it is quite dangerous for the proper operation of normal functions of the country. All in all, corrupt practices should not be tolerated at all for the continuity of good governance in the country.

In addition to this, establishment of robust accountability system is one of the preconditions for good governance in the country. A country cannot be transparent and efficient in its operations if its accountability system is compromised. It is quite pathetic to mention here that the country's accountability bureaus both at the national and provincial levels have reduced to the tools of political victimization. Consequently, those who show fidelity with the political parties in power, they become holy cows and no one can hold them accountable. In order to ensure transparency, and efficiency and effectiveness in both private and public sectors in the country, accountability bureaus should be made independent of political intervention. Thus, sound and robust accountability system is the must for good governance in the country.

Alongside these reforms, devolving power

to the local administration is <sup>one</sup> some of the most needed steps for ensuring good governance in the country. Local governments make political participation at the grass-roots levels possible. In 18th amendment, law-makers instituted provisions not only for provincial autonomy but also for the power transferance to the local administration. However, article 140A is not fully implemented yet. Fully-empowered local governments are increase people's confidence in the political process of the country. And politically informed and vigilant public can only found in those countries where local governments are empowered. Thus, it demonstrates that the good governance without powerful local government are is not possible. Hence

Apart from this, judicial system should be strong and independent in dispensing justice. Sound judicial system is quite necessary for good governance in the country. Government should reform its judiciary and make it independent of any intervention. Furthermore, judiciary assert itself and desist any encroachment from other forces of states in its domain.

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In order to make its justice system more efficient and effective in discharge of justice, it should follow in those countries who comes at the top in ranking of efficient countries in this domain. All in all, robust justice system plays a crucial role in ensuring good governance in any country.

Moreover, Independence of media and press is as much important for good governance in the country as are other aforesaid reforms. When media is independent and free, it operates as a check on inefficiency and corruption in the country. Transparency can only be guaranteed in the system through the independent media. Media informs and formulates public opinion along with other elements, such as political parties and interest and pressure groups. It validates the point that independence of media is must for good governance. Thus, taken into consideration these things it becomes indispensable that media should be made independent for the sake of good governance in the country.

Additionally, improved coordination amongst different levels of govern-

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ment is of utmost importance for good governance in the country. The bodies, such as Council of Common Interests, and National Economic Council, which are established for dispute resolution amongst various levels of government, should be made fully operational. In case of any dispute between the central and provincial government or amongst the provincial governments, these bodies should be activated to resolve the differences. Its coordination among these various levels of government is consequential for good governance in the country.

Similarly, uplifting and improving the living standards of people is the essence of good governance. If people's lives are not improving and they are facing precarious situation, it means governance is compromised. Pakistan must follow its neighbour, China, which has elevated 800 million people out of poverty. China was working since 1970s on this project and it successfully reached its target in 2020s. It shows that it is not an impossible task to improve the living standards of people, if government makes concerted effort in this direction. To cut the long story short, improv-

ing living - standards of masses is the objective of good governance.

Finally, terrorist activities must be curbed by taking on board political and local forces, for the good governance in the country. Terrorist outfits are creating hindrances in ensuring good governance across the country. Terrorism can be controlled by adopting multi-pronged strategy. First and foremost strong action should be taken against extremist forces in the country. Second, the security apparatus of the country must be upgraded to suit the needs of modern day security challenges. Third, local communities should be informed of this threat via ulemas and civil society.

In order to curb terrorism, it is pertinent to take local people into confidence. Last but not the least, economic and social inequities in these areas must be addressed. All in all, curbing terrorism is necessary for good governance in the country.

Conclusively, there is no doubt that the performance of good governance sector system of Pakistan has remained abysmal since quite a long time. However, it can be improved if certain pragmatic measures are taken

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and needed reforms are introduced. Currently, the country is confronted with multiple challenges that are impeding the good governance in the country. For instance, unprecedented political instability, low economic growth, unabating corruption, dismal living standards situation, ever-increasing unemployment rate, alarmingly high crime rate, especially in urban centers, reluctance of provincial governments to devolve the power to the grassroots levels, pathetic performances of judicial system in the discharge of justice, lack of accountability and record rise in terrorism. However, things can improve in terms of good governance if certain pragmatic measures are taken in the various sectors of the country. For suppose, ensuring political stability and sustainable economic growth, curbing corruption and establishing robust accountability system, fully empowering the local governments and making judiciary independent, giving complete freedom to the media and improving coordination among various levels of administration, uplifting living standards of people and providing no space for terrorism. Hence, good governance can be brought ensured if government makes concerted effort for it.

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