

Crisis of Good Governance in Pakistan: Need for Reforms and Institution Building

Thesis Statement:

Pakistan has unfortunately been locked in a Crisis of good governance. Thus, Pakistan needs to bring structural policy reforms in key areas; moreover, critical institutions need to be re-capacitated to heal the fractures of this long-festering crisis.

I. Introduction

II. Crisis of Good Governance in Pakistan

A. Responsiveness of government institutions to the needs of the people has been poor.

Case in Point: AERC's 'Unfulfilled 18th Amendment'.

B. Transparency in governmental institutions and their decisions has deteriorated over time.

Case in Point: UNDP's Report on Transparency.

C. Civic participation and awareness of government

Law is the machinery of law.

Case in Point: Youth Parliament under PILPAT

D. Rule of law is flouted frequently to benefit a select few.

Case in Point: 26th Amendment.

III. Reforms Needed to Ensure Good Governance in Pakistan.

A. Improve public access to information, to enhance civic participation.

Case in Point: Delayed RTI Laws in Punjab

B. Reduce red tapism to cut bureaucratic hurdles, enhancing governance effectiveness.

Case in Point: KPS Information Commissions.

C. Replace seniority-based promotions with performance-based evaluations to promote efficiency.

Case in Point: 2023 Punjab's Civil Services Reforms.

D. Penalize government departments and officials for negligence in service delivery to enhance responsiveness.

Case in Point: Citizen Feedback Model under PITB.

E. Decentralize local bodies with financial and legislative authority to promote ^{grassroots} accountability.

Case in Point: KP Local Government Act (2013).

F. Increase the digitization of government services to improve transparency in governance.

Case in Point: Punjab's LRMS.

IV. Need for Institution Building to Ensure Good Governance.

A. Introduce specialized units in anti-corruption bodies to improve accountability.

Case in Point: Prosecution Division within NAB.

B. ^{Devolve} legislative powers to legally strengthen democratic oversight bodies to improve government responsiveness to people's needs.

Case in Point: Strict Code of Conduct Enforcement.

C. Digitize revenue collection institutions to enhance governance transparency.

Case in point: FBR's e-invoicing under SRO

D. Ensure independent budgeting for judiciary to ensure its impartial upholding of the rule of law.

Case in point: Autonomous JCP.

E. Depoliticize bureaucracy by ending deputation culture to put an end to corruption.

Case in point: Tensure Protection in CSA (1973)

F. Institutionalize public consultations on major laws and bills in legislature to enhance inclusiveness.

Case in point: Independent Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)

V. Conclusion

The state should not just be there, but seen to be present at the most basic points of public service delivery. When there is a drift between state and society, state institutions become inaudible, inaccessible, and unaccountable to its citizens, and the social contract gets fractured in the process. Thus, the crisis of good governance is not merely the faltering of state institutions or structural policies but a failure of the political process itself. When government institutions do not respond to the people's needs, and transparency in their decisions is either poor or non-existent, governance gets locked in a self-destructive crisis. Thus, deep structural policy reforms are needed to prevent good governance in Pakistan. For that to happen, improve public access to information to enhance citizen engagement. Furthermore, reduce red tapism in governance machinery to enhance its effectiveness. In a similar vein, replace seniority-based promotion with performance-based evaluation to promote government's efficiency. By the same token,

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State institutions need to be capacitated to embed good governance principles in the political culture of Pakistan. For that to happen, introduce specialized units in anti-corruption bodies to improve institutional accountability. Also, devolve legislative powers to democratic oversight bodies to improve government's responsiveness. Similarly, digitalize revenue collection institutions to enhance government's transparency. Thus, Pakistan has unfortunately been locked in a crisis of good governance. It needs to bring structural policy reforms in key areas; moreover, critical institutions need to be re-capacitated to heal the fractures of this long-festering crisis.

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