



Vol. 3 No. 09 (September) (2025)

## A Critical Analysis of Pakistan's Political History: From Democracy to Martial Law to Hybrid Regimes

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### Abstract

This article critically examines the political history of Pakistan, and it focuses on the country's political journey from democracy to martial laws to hybrid regimes. It also aims to assess the factors that played a role in this political transformation in the country. There is little doubt in asserting that there exists power asymmetry between democratic and non-democratic forces in Pakistan. Pakistan inherited those parts of the subcontinent where law and order took precedence over democracy—for the British Empire. That non-democratic legacy continued after independence in 1947, when Pakistan enacted the Government of India Act 1935—with some amendments—as its interim constitution. The Government of India Act 1935 was a colonial document for the service of the British Empire—not of the people of India. Furthermore, the article analyses recurring features of Pakistan's constitutional history, including executive supremacy, technical legalism, and the unsteady transition patterns from democracy to authoritarianism, semi-authoritarian rule, and hybrid regimes. This article argues that the military-bureaucratic nexus and weak democratic culture in political parties are factors responsible for the sorry state of political affairs in Pakistan—the delayed constitutional-making process in the first decade, military intervention, institutional imbalance, authoritarian tendencies, and weak democracy. Related to research methodology, secondary sources (books, journals, magazines, etc.) were consulted for the article.

**Key words:** Pakistan, Democracy, Martial Law, Authoritarianism, Hybrid Regimes.

### Introduction

The roots of institutional imbalance in Pakistan can be traced to its first decade (1947-1958). In 1947, after Independence, members of the British-Indian parliament (1945-46) became members of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. The Indian Act 1935 was implemented with some amendments, which was less democratic and more authoritarian in nature. It strengthened the bureaucracy and adopted an authoritarian style of government (Shah, 2017). Quite a few provincial ministries were dismissed in the first few months. For example, the ministry of Khan Sahib in NWFP was dismissed on 22 August 1947, and that of M. A. Khuhro in Sindh was dismissed on 20 April 1948. Moreover, Liaquat Ali Khan



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advised the Governor General to send the Mamdot ministry home—on January 25, 1949—and imposed governor rule in Punjab. Such undemocratic practices strengthened authoritarian rule at the initial stage (Kundi, 2002). After the demise of Quaid-i-Azam and Liaqat Ali Khan, there remained only the trappings of democracy, and bureaucrats were running the state (Hassan, n.d). Nazimuddin became Prime Minister, and civil servant Ghulam Muhammad became Governor General. In 1953, the Governor General sacked Nazimuddin and appointed US Ambassador Muhammad Ali Bogra as PM—without elections (Rizvi, 2013).

No general elections were held in Pakistan until 1970, and only one provincial election was held in East Pakistan in 1954 in which the Muslim suffered a humiliating defeat (Ahmad, 2013). The United Front won by a landslide—by winning two hundred and twenty-three seats out of two hundred and thirty-seven seats—the ruling Muslim League won only fourteen seats. Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad sent the United Front government packing on May 30, 1954—only one month after the elections—by accusing it of conspiring with the Communist Party and banned the Communist Party. Major General Iskander Mirza was sent as governor to East Pakistan—to tighten central control (Callard, 1957).

After that undemocratic act, Governor General Ghulam Muhammad tried to delay the process of constitution making because the country was enjoying extensive powers under the amended 1935 Act. When a draft was ready for debate in the Constituent Assembly, the Governor General issued orders to the police to arrest all those who intended to vote for the proposed constitution (Cohen, 2004). Later on, the Constituent Assembly tried to take some power away from the Governor General in September 1954; he illegally dismissed the Constituent Assembly on October 24, 1954 (Hussain, 1993). After dissolving the assembly due to an interim 1935 act, which had given enormous power to Governor General Ghulam Muhammad, he appointed a new cabinet—with Bogra as premier—and he inducted C-in-C Ayub Khan as Defence Minister, Iskander Mirza as Interior Minister, and Chaudhry Muhammad Ali as Finance Minister, shifting power to non-elected officials (Rizvi, 2013).

On 21 June 1955, in the first indirect elections, the Muslim League did not win a majority. The Awami League, the United Front, and other small parties won the majority of seats. The Governor General reappointed Bogra as prime minister—without having a majority in the legislature (Abbas, 2023) Unconstitutional acts from 1951–1955 affected party politics and weakened democracy. After Ghulam Muhammad's retirement, Iskander Mirza became Governor General on the advice of C-in-C Ayub Khan (defense minister). Mirza replaced Bogra with Chaudhry Muhammad Ali as the new Prime Minister by Governor General (Kamran, 2008). The Prime Minister Chaudhry Muhammad Ali enforced first constitution in country after nine years on 23rd March 1956, unfortunately first constitution based on compromises and concessions.

Moreover, President Iskandar Mirza had a knack for intrigues and was in favour of a controlled democracy (Abbas, 2023). He encouraged the brother of Khan Abdul Gaffer Khan (Bacha Khan), Dr Khan Sahib, to form a new political party. To bolster his parliamentary position, Iskandar Mirza formed his own Republican Party. Ambitious politicians defected to the new political party, as it had the blessings of the civil servants. The Republican Party ousted the Muslim League and formed a new government—with Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy of the Awami League—as prime minister. (Kiran, n.d). Political polarisation was rampant. The country saw four prime ministers changed in the span of two years (1956-1958). More worryingly, in East Pakistan, two chief ministers and a governor were sent home within two days, after a chaotic session of the assembly was



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held. As a result of a violent episode in the assembly, the deputy speaker got wounded and later died (Rizvi, 2013).

The roots of institutional imbalance lie in the first decade—from 1951 to 1958. The country saw only one change of one Commander-in-Chief and two Governor-Generals. On the democratic side, seven prime ministers were dismissed. There was pressure for holding elections according to the 1956 Constitution. There was a hope for a general election in 1959 (Jalal, 1990). But President Iskander Mirza knew that if he conducted an election in 1959, then the Awami League and Muslim League would win the majority. Therefore, to stay in power, Iskander Mirza dismissed the parliament and abrogated the constitution. He became head of state, and Ayub Khan was appointed as Chief Martial Law Administrator. As expected, Ayub Khan deposed Iskander Mirza and took charge of the country—by imposing the first martial law in October 1958 (Kamran, 2008).

### **Military Interference in Politics**

C-in-C Ayub Khan knew the weaknesses of all political parties because Ayub remained a partner in the cabinet after 1954. After martial law Ayub Khan arrested many politicians, banned all political parties. The 1962 presidential constitution was enforced (Shah, 2017). PODO (Public Office Disqualification Order) and EBDO orders introduced, which were used to disqualify political opponents. Prosecution could be stopped if Politicians would not contest the election for seven years (Ahmad, 2013). Ayub Khan decided to control the parliament, he introduced his party. PML was divided into two factions. Pro-Ayub faction was termed as Muslim League Conventional under the leadership of Khaliq uz Zaman. Other faction of Muslim League was Council Muslim League who opposed Ayub undemocratic policies under the leadership of Mumtaz Daultana (Shah, 2017).

Another Martial Law—led by General Yahya Khan—put an end to the overly centralised regime of Ayub Khan in 1969. In 1969, he abolished the one-unit scheme and abrogated the 1962 Constitution. On March 30, 1971, he introduced his own LFO—Legal Framework Order. He held the first general elections in the country in October 1970. The Awami League won the elections (Malik, 2008). After the election result, there was no mood in West Pakistan to hand over power to Sheikh Mujib ur Rahman of the East. The 1st March 1970 session of the National Assembly was postponed, which resulted in a serious crisis in the East Wing in March 1971 (Ahmad, 2013). A serious deadlock developed. All this resulted in a crackdown on the Awami League's workers across East Pakistan. Sheikh Mujeeb Ur Rehman was arrested (Malik, 2008). Civil war started in October 1971. India attacked East Pakistan. Dhaka fell on 16 December 1971, when the Indian Army entered the city. East Pakistan became Bangladesh on 17 December 1971 (Cohen, 2004).

General Yahya left power on December 20, 1971—a turbulent era ended. Bhutto became the first civil martial law administrator. A commission—led by Hammod-Ur-Rehman—was set up to enquire into the reasons for the breakup of the country. The investigation was done, and a report was compiled, but it never saw the light of day—officially. Several civil servants and army officers were fired. Even Lieutenant General Gull Hassan, the commander-in-chief, was also shown the door (Malik, 2008).

In 1973 constitution parliament tried to prevent future military intervention. Article 6 was introduced, while Article 245 defined the military's role as subordinate to civilian authority. The tenure of the Army chief reduced to 3 years (Kamran, 2008). Later on, Bhutto regime became authoritarian, he introduced FSF (Federal Security Force) for internal agitation, and dismissed Balochistan government in 1973 and civilian supremacy was eroded. He diluted civilian supremacy. In 1975, FSF ousted some assembly members from Assembly on Bhutto directions (Ahmad, 2013). Bhutto won the 1977 general



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elections, but the opposition—Pakistan National Alliance—accused Bhutto of widespread rigging and started country-wide protests against him. Protracted negotiations and the subsequent deadlock gave General Zia ul Haq an opportunity to impose martial law. He imposed one in 1977 (Rizvi, 2013). Bhutto was arrested in 1977 for the murder of Nawab Kasuri. The FSF D G Masood became witness against Bhutto in Kasuri case, he was found guilty and sentenced to death. Bhutto was executed in April 1979 (Ahmad, 2013).

Zia banned political parties. He introduced the 8th amendment to the 1973 Constitution, which empowered the president to dismiss the parliament, and the president's pleasure was essential for the PM to remain in the office. In 1981, Zia nominated Shoora-based assembly. In 1985, non-party elections were held (Ziring, 1997). Democracy returned to Pakistan in 1988—after Zia died in a plane crash. The decade—1988-1998—saw the erosion of democratic values in Pakistan. The decade of democracy is marred by corruption and palace intrigues. Furthermore, the president, armed with 58(2)(b), felt no compunction in dismissing elected governments—on the flimsy charges of corruption. The military remained a silent observer until a bloodless coup in 1999, once again ending civilian rule (Faqir, 2015).

Meanwhile, Musharraf imposed martial law in 1999 his era different from other military dictators, Nawaz and Benazir were exiled. He chose the title of chief executive rather than a martial law administrator. He introduced a new form of controlled democracy—no ban on political parties, a pliant parliament was elected, and he relied on technocrats to run the affairs of the state (Ahmad, 2013) He introduced Pro establishment party PML-Q. General Election held in 2002, and used state power to secure his party's majority PML Q formed government at center. In his era, hybrid regime started (Cohen, 2004). The elected National Assembly completed its five-year term tenure, although prime ministers were changed. The 2008 general elections were held under Musharraf's watch, in which major political parties—including Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League—Nawaz (PML-N)—took part, while Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf boycotted the elections (Majeed, 2023).

### **Hybrid Regime and Its Characteristics**

The term 'hybrid regime' was introduced by Terry Lynn Karl (1995), and he referred to it as comprising both democratic and authoritarian elements. The practice and procedures in the hybrid regime are different from authoritarian regime and democratic rule. In a hybrid regime, the elected officials are controlled and restricted, impose oppressive laws that weaken the contract between the state and the people, and even neglect the constitutionally enshrined fundamental rights of the people As Linz defines, a hybrid regime is characterized by a shrinking space for pluralism, a personality-driven rather than ideological foundation, limited political mobilization, and a relatively unrestrained leadership. There are such terms used in political science literature for hybrid regimes like semi-authoritarian regime, and democratic tutelage, etc. However, the phrase 'hybrid regime' has been commonly used in Pakistani academic circles and political discussions for decades. Such characteristics can best explain the phrase hybrid regime; the elections would be conducted but contentious in nature. The results of the elections would not be fair, legal or transparent; they are tainted by attempts to manipulate the voter's turnout, biased media practices, and the abuse and harassment of opposition leaders, bringing the democratic cadres to a standstill (Levitsky and Way, 2002). The constitution of 1973, under Article 142, grants the power of lawmaking to the parliament. However, under hybrid regimes, the lawmakers are controlled by non-civilian forces, which override the constitutional authority of the legislatures, there are no checks and balances, and sometimes practices exist that place them above the law (Furman, 2007). In a hybrid



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regime, the spirit of the rule of law does not exist, and the incumbent government subjugates the judiciary in order to pass unconstitutional and controversial laws and decisions to cover its unlawful practices. The executive supremacy and doctrine of necessity, which has been a recurring feature of Pakistan's unchequered constitution, and the judiciary, playing both roles as arbiters of constitutionality and legal principles and as champions of the incumbent administration, have shaped the functioning of the state (Brown and Wise, 2004).

### **Musharraf and the Post-Musharraf Hybrid Regimes (2008-2013)**

Since its inception in 1947, Pakistan has been entangled in constitutional crises and political instability, which have created a democratic deficit and pushed the country in a more authoritarian, praetorian, and less democratic direction. The tumultuous political history of Pakistan is unequivocally characterized by steady military interference and the abandonment of democratic rule, which is best described as a tutelary hybrid regime (Adeney 2017). Pakistan has spent less time under civilian supremacy and more time under martial laws, authoritarian rule, and hybrid regimes. The deviation from the democratic path began after the unlawful dissolution of the Constituent Assembly on October 24, 1954 by Governor General Ghulam Mohammad, to cover unconstitutional practices under the Doctrine of Necessity. The unchequered constitutional history of Pakistan shows that the independent judiciary, a prerequisite for democratic rule, has been undermined many times. On numerous occasions, the judiciary was compromised under the façade of the 'Doctrine of Necessity,' prioritizing executive supremacy over constitutionalism and democracy (McGrath, 1999). The precedents of the Doctrine of Necessity and Hans Kelson's theory of revolutionary legality have been exercised many times against civilian leaders, creating deadlock in civilian supremacy, such as the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the disqualification of former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, and Imran Khan. The first two were dismissed under Article 58(2)(b) in 1990-93, while Imran Khan was removed under Article 95, under the guise of alleged corruption, misgovernance and a vote of no confidence. Pakistan held four elections between 1988 and 1999, but the fact is that no civilian government completed its tenure due to the extra-constitutional intrusions. However, General Pervez Musharraf overthrew the elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on October 12, 1999, and held the constitution in abeyance. Later, he issued the Legal Framework Order (LFO) on August 24, 2002, which undermined constitutionalism, parliamentary supremacy, and legalized the military takeover. The historical patterns show that civilian leaders used the military for their own purposes and political objectives; on the other hand, the military also manipulated the civilian setup to become entrenched in political issues and public affairs, which turned the state into a democratic tutelage and pretorian projection. However, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the 1970s used the military to crush political opponents in Balochistan, the same practice of torture, harassment, and dehumanization in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1971. After the debacle of East Pakistan, two decades later, civilian leaders used the military against their opponents, which enabled the military to dominate the political and economic domains and, many times, legitimized military coups under the Doctrine of Necessity and indirect intervention in civilian affairs (Lieven, 2011).

After the 2008 general elections, civilian supremacy was established, but the military indirectly controlled political parties and parliament through electoral changes, election rigging, suppression of the opposition and other coercive tactics. After the last period of direct military rule in 2007 by General Pervez Musharraf, it led to a consensus among the political parties to bring a democratic plan to restrain the military role from politics. After



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2008, civilian supremacy was restored, which reduced the direct influences of the military. The general election of 2008 was won by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which formed the government with a weak coalition. This landmark was achieved despite attempts to subvert parliament and elected leaders, primarily by dismissing prime ministers through the courts. However, this period was marked by high levels of bureaucratic politicisation leading to declining bureaucratic autonomy (Ali 2022; Rasool 2023). In 2013, the PPP government became the first parliament to complete its term, and for the first time in Pakistan's history, handed over power to a different party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). But the transition from one civilian government to another has occurred in a democratic wave. The military sought an opportunity to roll back the cycle of civilian supremacy. Two precarious events happened, which again slowed down the democratic process; a journalist reported in 2016 that a tussled came between the civilian government and the military leadership over the dismantling of militant groups operating on Pakistan soil, and in the same year, the Panama Leak implicated Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif holdings in undeclared offshore accounts, on which the supreme disqualified him from office in 2017. After the 2013 general election, a fierce debate emerged among the opposition, media journalists, and academic circles in Pakistan that there was evidence of pre-poll rigging and ballot fixing, but Imran Khan vigorously raised these issues following the 2013 polls (Mulla, 2017). However, the space was created, and the military saw an opportunity to exert influence and found a willing proxy in Imran Khan, the leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Pre-poll engineering brought Imran Khan to power (Javid and Mufti 2022). He governed with the mantra that the political executive and the military were on "the same page" and that this was a new kind of "hybrid" system of government. Moreover, the evidence supports that in the 2018 general election, Imran Khan benefited from military political engineering through restricted campaigns of the opposition political party Pakistan Muslim League; Nawaz Sharif was disqualified, and restrictions were imposed on the media outlets (Afzal, 2018).

Before the 2018 general election, the founder of the Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) political party, Imran Khan, chanted the revolutionary slogans of 'Naya Pakistan'. He galvanized the youth of Pakistan through his populist rhetoric and made narratives that appealed mass psychology. The incarcerated Prime Minister Imran Khan gained the support of the youthful middle- class, cashed under the hallow promises and modernizing agenda such as, dismantling dynastic and clientelist politics, eliminating corruption, addressing environmental challenges, job opportunities, containing poverty, and putting the country on the path of economic growth and prosperity. However, the 'phrase' hybrid regime was a routine discussion in Pakistani society, both in formal and informal forums. The term was pronounced for the PTI-led coalition government that took office in 2018. On December 9, 2018, the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) published a report that highlighted rigging in the electoral process. (Nadeem F. Paracha, 2020). During the PTI government, the military was more entrenched in public offices due to Imran Khan close links with the establishment in order to harass and torture the opponents. Yet, the government was democratic, but in spirit, it was a hybrid regime; the evidence of democratic recession also appeared elsewhere in South Asia, a process which forms part of what has been termed the third wave of autocratization (Anna Lührmann and Staffan I. Lindberg, 2019). The characteristics of authoritarianism and very limited democratic practices in various spheres of political life provide a short projection of a 'partly free' or hybrid regime. The term 'hybrid regime' has been used by scholars such as Katharine Adeney (2017) based on the real political landscape. Pakistan exists in a 'grey zone' in which multi- party elections coexist with reserved powers in the security and foreign policy



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areas for the powerful military (Shah, 2014).

When the PTI came to power in 2018, their close links with the establishment gave an impetus to increase unlawful and extraconstitutional practices of torturing and harassing the opposition, restrictions on the freedom of speech, abducting journalists, and compromising the independence of the judiciary. The Asia Director of the Human Rights Watch Organization, Brad Adams, in March 2020, explicated the situation in these terms: ‘The space for dissent in Pakistan is shrinking fast and anyone who criticizes government actions can become a target’ (Dawn, 14 March 2020). During the PTI government, it was well-known that many journalists were killed, tortured and assaulted by unknown persons, which was confirmed by an independent organization working for the promotion of press freedom worldwide. In 2019, Pakistan was ranked, as the eighth worst country for prosecuting the murderers of journalists in the Global Impunity Index (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019). Imran Khan brazenly criticised the Herald and the Jang media groups, and also blamed their flagship newspapers, Dawn and Jang, for printing ‘fake news’. In 2019, reports released by the Oxford Internet Institute and Freedom House revealed a bleak picture of increasing surveillance and control over internet sources and social media accounts, aimed at shaping and influencing public opinion.

In 2022, the link between Imran Khan and the establishment was disconnected due to conflicts, occurred and the link fell out (Mufti, 2023). The establishment worked with the opposition parties, led by the PML-N, to disqualify Imran Khan under the vote of no-confidence. The establishment used Khan as a proxy tool to become more entrenched in civilian affairs, through indirect ways, and Imran Khan lost the space. Imran Khan passed stringent criticism against the former Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa for interfering in elections and democratic affairs. Imran Khan was disqualified under Article 95 of the 1973 constitution through a vote of no confidence on April 10, 2022. The military used such political tactics, delayed the general elections, and held the election in February 2024, along with an irregular environment, witnesses, and allegations of pre-poll rigging, and a ban on Imran Khan’s party, the PTI (Mufti 2024). In May 2024, a jailed Imran Khan called for a protest, which led to attacks on military installations ostensibly by supporters of the PTI and its leader (Nelson 2025). The military cracked down harshly, arresting protestors and subjecting a number to closed military court trials and punishments. The recurring pattern of military intervention in civilian affairs has not stayed off; it has only changed its shape, not the practice—altering its approach toward political parties while remaining intact within the structure and system.

### Conclusion

The civilian leadership vacuum, institutional imbalances, and military-bureaucratic nexus have turned the country into a more autocratic projection than democratic. In the nascent stage, there was no indigenous constitutional mechanism until 1956, and for 9 years since 1947, the Government of India Act 1935, was a colonial lineage used to operationalize the affairs of the state. However, there were many issues in the Government of India Act 1935, though it was a crucial part of constitutional development in the Indian subcontinent, which started from the Regulating Act 1773, to control and regulate the affairs of the British colonies; but it was not truly suitable and objective for democratic states after independence. It was autocratic and authoritarian in nature, which empowered the Governor-General and allowed many extra-constitutional practices. Since its inception in 1947, Pakistan adopted authoritarian elements from the Government of India Act 1935; the Governor General had the power to dismiss the Prime Minister from his office and dissolve of the consistent Assembly. After the assassination of Liaqat Ali Khan, Governor-



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General Ghulam Mohammad was holding a more dictatorial authority position, and he dissolved the first Constituent Assembly on October 24, 1954, which further derailed the democratic spirit and slowed down the process of constitution-making. The unconstitutional dissolution of the Constituent Assembly by Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad was challenged by Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan, the Speaker of the Assembly, in the Sindh High Court. While the Sindh Court ruled the dissolution unconstitutional, the Federal Court delivered a judgment in favor of Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad. This executive supremacy and technical legalism became a precedent and were many times practiced, which impeded the path of democracy and undermined constitutionalism. The civilian leadership vacuum has strengthened the military-bureaucratic nexus and the alliances shaped by Iskander Mirza, Ghulam Muhammad, General Ayub Khan, and Chaudhry Muhammad Ali. Unequivocally, it led to the transition to direct military intervention in the form of martial law, which was justified under the Doctrine of Necessity. Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad was replaced by Iskander Mirza, who guided Ayub Khan and imposed martial law on October 7, 1958. Ayub Khan abrogated the constitution of 1956 and banned political parties and political activities, and suspend fundamental rights. After the 1965 presidential election, he was elected as the second president of Pakistan through rigging in the 1965 election and many unlawful practices. In the same period, Ayub Khan transferred power to General Yahya Khan on March 25, 1969. General Yahya Khan abrogated the Constitution of 1962 and imposed martial law in the country. His dictatorial policies, inhuman treatment, and the Bhutto–Yahya nexus of harassment, killing, and torture in East Pakistan ultimately led to its debacle, resulting in the creation of Bangladesh.

After the general elections of the 1970s, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was elected Prime Minister. In the early stages, Bhutto used the military for political purposes in Balochistan and East Pakistan. Later, due to the disconnect with non-civilian forces, General Zia-ul-Haq toppled his regime; the Constitution of 1973 was held in abeyance, and martial law was imposed across the country. Zia's Islamization injected extremism, intolerance, and radicalization into society. However, after Zia's martial law, Pakistan's unchequered history again rotated, and civilian supremacy was restored between 1988 and 1999. The Benazir Bhutto governments and Nawaz Sharif governments were dissolved through authoritarian elements and extra-constitutional powers under Article 58(2)(b); this extra-constitutional provision was abolished under the 18th Amendment. In the same way, the last period of direct military rule ended under Chief Martial Law Administrator General Pervez Musharraf (2000–07). He also passed extra-constitutional laws under the Legal Framework Order (LFO) to legitimize his unconstitutional status, as upheld in the Zafar Ali Shah v. General Pervez Musharraf case. After the General Pervez Musharraf regime, Pakistan was placed on the path of democracy and civilian supremacy, and direct military rule stayed off. However, the military started its interference through indirect tactics such as election rigging, the use of proxies, judicial activism, and judicial politicization, which is summed up in the term "hybrid regime." Hybrid regimes lie on the spectrum between democratic and autocratic regimes, displaying features of both types, creating complexity in understanding where power lies, how it is exercised, by whom, and to what end. After the 2018 general election, the phrase hybrid regime mostly became part of the discussion in Pakistan's academic circles and among media journalists. It was more exposed and practiced through pre-poll rigging in the 2018 election, because Imran Khan was a project of the establishment to become more entrenched in civilian affairs after the rift that happened in civil–military relations between 2008 and 2017, under the democratic transition of governments from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim



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League-N. After the link was weakened between Imran Khan and the establishment, he was disqualified from office through a vote of no confidence, and still the characteristics of a hybrid regime are a recurring feature of Pakistan's current political situation and incumbent government.

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