

## THE HYBRID RULE 2.0 IN PAKISTAN: AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES (2022-2023)

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the formation, policies, and challenges faced by the government that came into power after the removal of Imran Khan's government through a no-confidence vote in April 2022. Imran Khan's government (2018-2022) was considered to be the first experiment in hybrid rule – one in which the military establishment plays a key role in policy-making – in Pakistan. It was followed by Shahbaz Sharif-led government (2022-2023), that is generally referred to as hybrid rule 2.0. The focus of this paper is thus the formation, policies, and the political and economic challenges faced by hybrid rule 2.0.*

*Keywords: Hybrid rule, Vote of No Confidence, PDM, Establishment, fiscal policy.*

### INTRODUCTION

*The formation of hybrid rule in Pakistan was not unprecedented. Pakistan has had hybrid democracy in one form or another since the nation's founding in 1947. The military has been playing a dominant role in the politics of Pakistan since its inception. According to HamzaAlvi, it was natural for the military to dominate all other institutions, as the military was the only disciplined institution at the time of the partition of India (ALAVI, 2024). Military authoritarianism and some trappings of democracy, i.e., elections, came together to establish Pakistan's hybrid democratic system. There are several historical elements that contributed to the formation of Pakistan's hybrid democratic system. First, Pakistan's democratic experiences have been greatly impacted by the military's involvement in politics and governmental activities, especially in foreign policy. The military's engagement in political events may be linked to the development of Pakistan's hybrid democratic system. A few notable historical events that illustrate the military's influence in political affairs between 1956 and 2008 are the abrogation of the 1956 constitution, the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 2007, and the overthrow of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977. Since then, the military establishment's use of the veto power to reject legislation, appoint judges, and dismiss civilian governments has remained a crucial component of Pakistan's democratic system (Hamid Iqbal, 2023)*

*Second, Pakistan's hybrid democratic system developed partly as a result of*

*internal conflicts and ethnic politics. Many religious, linguistic, and ethnic groups have a significant impact on the political landscape of the nation; they include the narratives of the Sindhi, Baloch, Punjabi, and Pashtun peoples. Finally, and maybe most importantly, Pakistan's development into a hybrid democracy from the country's founding to the present has been greatly influenced by political unrest in addition to economic difficulties. Historically, the country's persistent poverty, high unemployment, erratic food supply, terrorism, and social instability have hampered economic progress and prosperity. Pakistan's hybrid democratic system has so continued to be a vital component of the nation's political environment. But during the PDM administration, the system acquired distinctive characteristics that aided in the formation of a political party coalition government. The PDM, an alliance of opposition parties, is unanimously opposed to military involvement in domestic political matters. The idea of hybrid democracy, which has endured throughout Pakistan's political landscape, is established by the interactions between the military and civilian components of the political system. Strong military institutions and democratically elected civilian administrations have long been intertwined, making it difficult for democracies to consolidate and rule. Eleven political parties form the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) coalition.*

*In reaction to allegations of vote tampering in Pakistan during the 2018 general election, which PTI eventually won, the PDM political movement was established. PDM was founded as a political movement in September 2020 in opposition to the PTI government's mishandling of foreign policy, bad governance, economic catastrophe, and political persecution. After successfully unseating Khan in a no-confidence motion on April 10, 2022, the PDM established a government led by opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif in 2022 (Ali & Fateh Muhammad, 2021). The PDM's main goal was to propagate the story of inflation under the PTI administration and assign responsibility for its detrimental effects on Pakistanis to Imran Khan. The PDM leaders said that Faiz Hameed and Qamar Javed Bajwa were in charge of manipulating the 2018 elections so Imran Khan could be named Pakistan's prime minister. Despite leaving the nation, Sharif remained a prominent and active figure in Pakistani politics. He became well-known in 2020 as a pivotal player in the founding of the Pakistan Democratic Movement, which sought to reduce the power of the military establishment over civilian governance. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif asserted and accused Qamar Javed Bajwa and Faiz Hameed of rigging the 2018 general elections in order to install Imran Khan as prime minister in an address that was televised from London. Sharif said that Khan's appointment to his post was brought about by the two individuals. We have seen that the administration's policies are actively acting against the interests of the country. Pakistan Muslim League, Pakistan People's Party, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam formed the alliance in particular. On September 20, 2020, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari summoned the APC to a grand political coalition at the Marriott Hotel Islamabad in order to unseat the PTI government. The attendees unanimously supported the 26-point resolution, which was read out by Fazal-ur-Rehman, a vocal opponent of the military establishment (J. Ali, 2022). PDM was founded on September 20, 2020, with the goal of overthrowing the current administration. Respecting, honoring, and promoting the voting process is one of the PDM's core principles (Muhammad Naeem Zafar, 2023).*

## ESTABLISHMENT OF HYBRID RULE 2.0

*Following its official establishment on September 20, 2020 in Islamabad, the PDM engaged in a range of conferences, demonstrations, and other events with the aim of overthrowing the current regime. The first protest took place in Gujranwala on October 16, 2020, and it was widely reported in the local press as a momentous public manifestation. In October 2020, the PDM arranged protests in which about fifty thousand people took part (Ellis-Petersen, 2021)The head of the Pakistan Democratic Movement, or PDM, is MaulanaFazal-ur-Rehman. JamiatUlema-e-Islam, Awami National Party, JamiatAhe Hadith, Awami National Party-Wali, Pakistan Peoples Party, Pakistan Muslim League (N), PakhtunkhwaMilliAwami Party, National Party-Bizenjo, QaumiWatan Party, BalochistanAwami Party, and Balochistan National Party (Mengal) are the eleven political parties that joined forces to form the coalition.*

*When taken as a whole, these political parties almost perfectly capture Pakistan's political spectrum. More specifically, there have been four periods in Pakistan's history during the last 75 years when the Army has held political power. However, comparable opposition groups have previously united to oppose military dictatorships, often with significant victories to their credit. The opposition parties forced Field Marshal Ayub Khan from office as Pakistan's president in the late 1960s.In contrast, opposition parties did not have the same degree of success under General Zia-ul-Haq's administration in the 1980s.The accusations made against Zia were motivated by the Campaign for the Restoration of Democracy.*

*Again, in the first decade of the 2000s, a group of individuals united to overthrow General Pervez Musharraf. The Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD) was the name of this organization. These opposition parties have not only battled military dictators; in the past, they have also battled against civilian administrations in an attempt to overthrow them, as shown by the politics of 1990. For example, in 1977, even though the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Government had been elected, it was these alliances that brought General Zia to power. However, it is crucial to remember that the previous Bhutto administration was particularly charged with manipulating economic policies and conducting fraudulent elections. The Pakistan National Alliance was in charge of overseeing the opposition alliance's operations at the time. In relation to the coalition opposing the Imran government, it is crucial to acknowledge that, unlike the Bhutto administration that ruled in 1977, the alliance has the full backing of the military. For some years now, Pakistan's political groups have been collaborating to form an alliance with the aim of overthrowing the country's current civilian authoritarian administration. However, this combination has adopted the organization and form of the Pakistan Democratic Movement for the first time. Thus, the PDM struggle of today was significantly different, and it might gain more popular support if it continues. A new, coherent anti-government movement has emerged in Pakistan amid a worsening economic crisis. Since its founding in September, the PDM (a coalition of eleven parties) has planned massive rallies in three of the nation's most significant cities.*

*On March 17, 2022, more than 20 PTI members showed up in Assembly, which helped the PDM achieve great achievement. According to PTI, these National Assembly members have disregarded article 63(A) and have been influenced by money. PDM, however, refuted these claims and said that the dissident members'*

choice was the result of their own free will. Dissenting members allowed PDM to interact with government-aligned parties MQM and BAP in order to show that the administration has become weak and that PDM already has enough votes to pass the motion of no confidence. Prior to the ballot motion, the MuttahidaQaumi Movement Pakistan and the BalochistanAwami Party (BAP) joined the opposition alliance on March 29 and 30, respectively. The opposition coalition won because the motion of no confidence gained 174 votes in favor of it, without the backing of any members who abstained or used article 63(A). When Imran Khan's time as prime minister of Pakistan ended on April 9, 2022, Shehbaz Sharif was selected by the parliament via a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan. Opposition coalitions have a history in Pakistan. They have united to challenge military dictators, but with differing degrees of success.

Like the PDM of today, the Pakistan National Alliance targeted a civilian government headed by a populist who was charged with gaining an advantage via election fraud, enforcing harsh economic policies, and using authoritarian methods. One of the most notable distinctions between then and today is that the PDM confronted civilian government that was backed by the military. The PDM declared protests against inflation at a time when the opposition was already heavily criticizing the government for the growing costs of several items. According to the PDM, inflation negatively impacted Pakistan's economy and people's quality of life. The PDM's main attention was on this story and agenda. Pakistan's economy has survived despite the installation of economic landmines by the previous Imran Khan Administration and issues with food and fuel supply chains worldwide. To everyone's dismay, there hasn't been a single incident of default.

Almost all of Pakistan's political parties banded together to employ constitutional procedures in Parliament to remove an unpopular government, which is how PDM came to power. Since its founding in April of last year, the government has prioritized the early completion of development and transportation infrastructure projects in order to provide the people of Islamabad with simple, convenient, and affordable mobility. Pakistan's effective removal from the FATF grey list was made possible by good inter-ministerial collaboration and support from top military officials, all of whom worked together under the direction of the PDM.

Though challenging at first, the journey was ultimately made possible by persistent efforts. Global inflation has been triggered by geostrategic rivalry, increased fuel and food costs, and unprecedented floods. In response, the government has expanded subsidies for certain categories and reinforced the safety net. The prime minister claims that in an attempt to alleviate the populace, government has been putting in a lot of effort over the last year to diversify the energy mix. Reduced dependence on more costly energy sources is the aim of the current spike in interest in coal, solar, and hydropower projects. The PTI administration did not take political control of the CPEC project in the manner in which previous PML-N-led administrations had.

This was most probable because the project's development was negotiated, started, and directed by the PML-N administration when Nawaz Sharif was prime minister. One of the main causes of the delay was the PTI's attempts to negotiate the biggest rescue package ever offered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to Pakistan. The International Monetary Fund needed to get information from Pakistan

on Chinese investments in the country in order for them to be eligible for the loan. Nonetheless, there was a chance that some requirements associated with the IMF loan, such as budgetary restraint, might cause the CPEC projects to stall and harm Pakistan-China relations and cooperation. Pakistan has a chance to modernize its aging infrastructure and boost national economic activity thanks to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). PDM head FazlurRehman told a news conference in Islamabad at a gathering of top leaders of the parties that formed the PDM that the opposition was honoring its pledge to the people of Pakistan to openly discuss the platform's main goals. The following are the 12 points of the charter: The first is the supremacy and enforcement of the Constitution; the second is the autonomy of Parliament; the third is the removal of intelligence agencies and the establishment from politics; the fourth is the establishment of the judiciary as an independent body; the fifth is electoral reform; the sixth is the holding of fair and independent polls; the seventh is the defense of democratic and human rights; the eighth is the protection of the 18th Amendment and provincial rights; the ninth is the formation and implementation of the local government system; the tenth is the protection of the media and freedom of expression; the eleventh is the removal of terrorism and extremism; and the twelfth is the emergency economic plan. Pakistan is now going through the most severe and unheard-of economic turmoil in its history. The PDM administration is to blame for the country's historic economic problems.

The PDM administration has made a name for itself as being antagonistic to the economy and exports. Other political groups who covertly support the present administration need to bear some of the blame for the financial turmoil. The people chastised the administration for not doing more to stimulate the economy. The government's deliberate indifference to destabilize the economy and cause chaos in retaliation for political reasons has disappointed exporters. The value-added textile export industries are shocked and utterly demoralized by the present administration's carelessness, lack of seriousness, hesitancy, and absence of any constructive vision or guidance to lead the nation out of the greatest economic catastrophe in recorded history. Due to persistent economic challenges and unsolved issues, seven million people in the industrial sector have lost their employment; four million of those individuals were employed in the textile business alone. The country's reserves have dropped to highly hazardous levels, they said, which has caused a sharp decline in textile and other commodities exports. Numerous industrial facilities have shut down, and a number of exporters plan to relocate their plants overseas. Industries are under financial stress and are unable to function to their full potential as a result of excessive production expenses.

### **POLITICAL CHALLENGES**

For a nation known for its tumultuous politics, Pakistan has had exceptionally turbulent times over the last ten weeks. On April 11, a vote of no confidence overthrew Imran Khan, and Pakistan has a new administration. The weeks leading up to the vote were dramatic and thrilling, starting with the motion's filing on March 8 and ending with the voting on April 10. An important factor contributing to Pakistan's political unrest is the impending election, which has to take place by the summer of 2023. The PDM is against holding elections before the planned date, while Imran Khan wants to. Khan has said unequivocally that he intends to use his current base of support to win the next election (Afzal, 2022). Pakistan's current government, an unwieldy multi-

party coalition led by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) party, suffered another setback in July after losing mid-month special elections for 20 constituencies in the country's heartland province of Punjab (Carothers, 2002).

Despite efforts by the PML-N coalition to retain control of the provincial government through maneuvers in the provincial assembly, a Supreme Court ruling on July 26 overturned previous precedent and required the election of ChaudhryPervaizElahi, a supporter of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, to the position of chief minister. Following Khan's removal in April, the PML-N government's efforts to regain power have been hindered by the court's ruling and previous election setbacks, casting doubt on the government's sustainability. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) found on August 2 that Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party had violated campaign finance regulations, potentially disqualifying them from seeking public office (Hussain Mirza, 2023).The resignations of just 11 PTI lawmakers were accepted by National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf on July 28, 2022, after the departing prime minister was subject to a vote of no confidence.

The party then petitioned the Supreme Court to reverse the IHC ruling on the grounds that it was "vague, superficial, and against the law." The PTI's petition is currently awaiting the Supreme Court's decision.Raja Pervez Ashraf told a PTI delegation on December 29, 2022, that the party's MPs would be contacted one-on-one to verify the resignations, since the latter insisted on their being accepted all at once (Guramani, 2023).when Imran Khan said that PM Shehbaz Sharif's determination will be evaluated by the NA's vote of confidence. The PTI made a clear commitment to return to the NA provided that the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Parliamentary Leader are all PTI members. This presents the PDM government with a big obstacle.Shahbaz Sharif's government had lost the support of 172 people at that point, and I would return to save the government depending on that. The reason I went to the assembly in small numbers was to remove Raja Riaz from his role as the leader of the opposition. If I hadn't, there would have been no representative of this National Assembly to return to it. FawadHussain, Ch. (@fawadchaudhry) January 24, 2023 (Virk.) **Invalid source specified.**Following the news that Imran Khan will be attending the assembly, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf abruptly began to accept PTI members' resignations. The speaker of the national parliament had earlier said that he would contact each member individually and accept the resignations, which led to a constitutional issue in the nation.The PTI will file a lawsuit in court to prevent the resignations from being accepted, which would lead to more issues for the nation. These politicians are just making fun of one another. Why are they suddenly accepting the resignation in violation of the constitution when all these politicians are battling for their selfish interests and have no regard for the nation? The nation is now in a state of turmoil. The nation's economy is in danger of collapsing. Such things may help politicians, but the nation gains nothing from them.

Pakistan's economy is encountering substantial obstacles as a result of many issues, such as substantial depreciation of its currency, strict regulations imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), political instability, and disagreements among political parties. According to Zaman (2023), the aforementioned issues have

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resulted in the nation being on the verge of default and facing difficulties in obtaining loans from neighboring or international nations. The elevated inflation rate, the escalation in food costs and the significant rise in fuel prices have exacerbated poverty rates, rendering it arduous for many Pakistanis to get essential commodities. The aforementioned circumstances have led to a decrease in the quality of life for several individuals, therefore constraining their ability to get healthcare, education, and other vital services. Pakistan has notable environmental problems, including the hazards of food shortages, seismic activity, and wars with neighboring nations. Farmers now have difficulties in supplying the population's food needs as a result of the reduction in agricultural productivity brought on by pollution, soil erosion, and deforestation. Furthermore, the occurrence of natural disasters may have a detrimental impact on infrastructure and the economy, which would impede the advancement of development activities. Geopolitical issues including terrorism, domestic violence, and political division impede Pakistan's progress..These problems create an atmosphere that lacks security and stability, which discourages foreign investment and raises the rate of poverty. Furthermore, the risks associated with waging war against neighboring countries over disputes over resources or territory could have a detrimental impact on the infrastructure and economics of the country (Kugelman 2022).

From April 3 to April 10, 2022, Pakistan experienced a political and constitutional crisis when Qasim Khan Suri, the deputy speaker of the National Assembly, rejected a motion of no confidence against Prime Minister Imran Khan during a session where it was supposed to be put to a vote. Suri claimed that foreign involvement in the regime change violated Article 5 of the Pakistani Constitution. A short time later, Khan said that he had advised President ArifAlvi to dissolve the National Assembly in a televised speech. Alvi acted in accordance with Article 58 of the constitution. Following Imran Khan's successful constitutional revolution, there was a constitutional crisis when the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) took suo motu notice of the state of affairs. Four days later, the National Assembly's prorogation, dissolution, rejection of the no-confidence motion, Imran Khan's suggestion to President ArifAlvi to do so, and all subsequent actions were ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) in a 5-0 decision.

The Supreme Court additionally decided that the speaker of the National Assembly must reconvene the assembly as soon as practicable on April 9, 2022, and no later than 10:30 a.m., as the assembly had not been prorogued. When the National Assembly convened again on April 9, the resolution was not immediately put to a vote. The session didn't begin with the vote until after it had gone on all day. Just before midnight, the speaker and deputy speaker both made their resignations known. The National Assembly decided to remove Khan from office on April 10, just after midnight, by passing a resolution of no-confidence with 174 votes, a majority. For the first time in Pakistani history, a vote of no confidence has resulted in the resignation of the country's first prime minister (Morlino, 2005)

Millions of Pakistanis backed Khan, and for the first time, the country's political landscape was drastically changed as a result of the opposition to military rule. On many times, Imran Khan said that a foreign plot was trying to topple his administration. In an address to the country, he asserted—without providing any evidence—that the US was "conspiring against his government". On March 30, 2022,

*the Islamabad High Court declared that publishing the contents of a diplomatic cable from the leaving Pakistani ambassador—which Khan claimed contained “threats from the United States”—would violate both the Official Secrets Act of 1923 and Khan's oath of office.*

## **ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**

*With the Strategic Neutrality of the Military and the Economic Crisis, the economy of Pakistan is in risk of shrinking, and the rupee will be the worst-performing currency in Asia by 2022. Simultaneously, the tide of political instability ingrained in the governing system is steadily gathering pace because of power imbalances that favor elected representatives of the people against unelected national elites (leaders of the judiciary and military). The most recent indication of this is the July 27, 2022, Pakistan Supreme Court decision that removed Hamza Shabaz of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) from his position as Punjab's Chief Minister. **Invalid source specified.** The recent order by the Supreme Court is related to a very contentious ruling that was rendered on May 17, 2022, disqualifying 25 "opposition" members of Parliament from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Stripped and cast a vote for Shabaz to be the prime minister.*

*The removal of cricketer-turned-politician Khan might be seen, on the one hand, as a continuation of a recurrent phenomenon in Pakistani democracy, namely the failure of elected prime ministers to serve out their mandates. However, Khan's removal also signals a fresh start for the nation's democratic past (Sajjad, 2023). Khan will be the first prime minister to fall via a "no-confidence vote" in parliament as opposed to an overt military takeover or court intervention. 2008 saw the restoration of "democracy" to Pakistan after nine arduous years of military dictatorship under Pervez Musharraf. The PML-N and PPP held power from 2013 to 2018 and 2008 to 2013, respectively. Because of their hereditary political philosophies, both parties are regarded as "traditional" major parties. This indicates that his two governing families, the Bhutto and Sharif dynasties, continued to hold the highest posts in the party. Furthermore, each time these families come into conflict with strong military stations, they are charged with "corruption"*

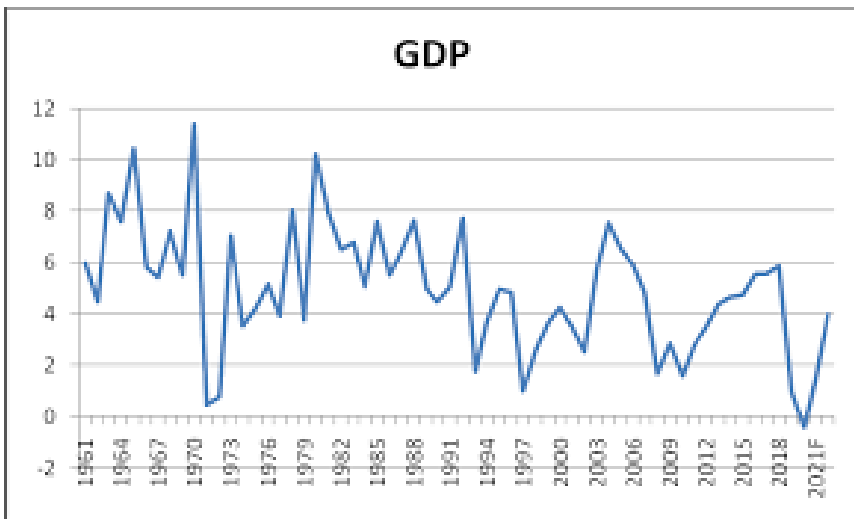
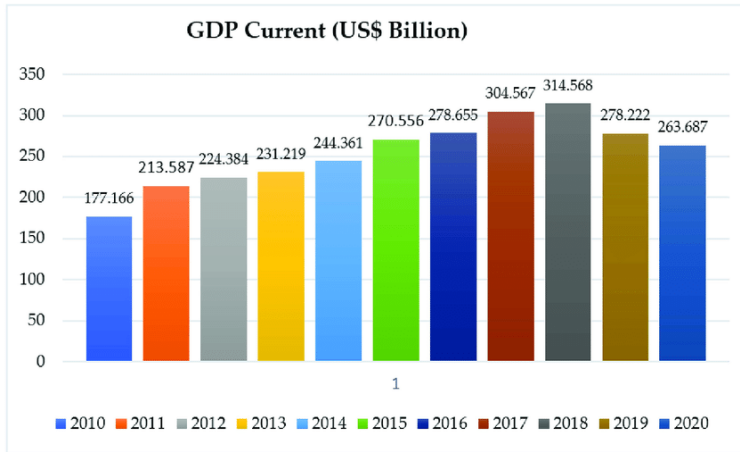
*In an effort to reconcile this paradox, the military tried a fresh experiment in 2018 with a hybrid administration headed by the PTI. Due to the PTI's (Khan) widespread popularity among military families, senior military officers have made the decision to openly back the PTI. The "soft" perception of Pakistan as a "normal" democracy the army was eager to project, assuming—or rather, hoping—that the PTI administration might alter its understanding of the fundamental "conflict" and divide it between elected civilian governments and the army. Pakistan will have the ability to raise the legitimacy of democracy throughout the world. The PPP and the PML-N, two previously elected administrations, have been blocked by the military since 2008 (Afzal, 1991). Conversely, they freely acknowledge the political and economic achievements of PTI. It has, in effect, diminished the military establishment's independent character in the eyes of the people, both domestically and internationally.*

*Thus, the PTI government's disrepute expanded to the military apparatus along with the worsening economic conditions under its administration. TIP indicates that even prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, the growth of the gross domestic product decreased from 5% to 1% and inflation rose from 4% to 11% (see Figure 1). In a similar vein, per capita income dropped by almost 20% (refer to Figure 2). In*



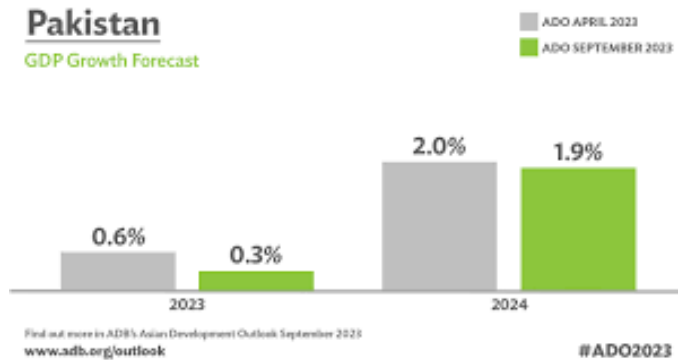
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*addition, the PTI administration has caused the value of the Pakistani rupee to decline by approximately 40%. Basic food items like wheat, sugar, and cooking oil now cost twice as much. Furthermore, Pakistan's stock market performance is still well behind its high from 2017.*



*Consequently, there has been a sharp rise in public discontent, particularly among informal sector workers, merchants, and farmers, not just against PTI but also towards hostility. Mixed-style architect: Defense establishment consequently, since the end of 2019, the military establishment has started to recalibrate its stance by making agreements with the opposition parties, the PPP and the PML-N. For instance, in spite of the PTI government's resistance, former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who is incarcerated, was "allowed" to leave the nation for medical care. As the military progressively started to strategically withdraw from the joint test in late 2019, the political landscape started to improve for the opposition parties. From PTI's perspective, things deteriorated in October 2021 when Khan disagreed with top military brass on the commander-in-chief position. Although the Army Corps Commander appointed General FaizHameed as the Commander of the Peshawar Corps, Khan desired to retain Hameed in his position as Director General of Joint*

Services Intelligence (ISI). Many people think that Khan wants General Hameed to continue serving with the ISI so that they can back him politically. In exchange, Khan is probably going to name General Hameed as the next army commander in November 2022. Khan faced increasing political pressure when General Hameed left the ISI,



### Reference:

[https://www.google.com/search?q=pakistan+GDP+growth+in+2023&sc\\_e sv=f97724a61f341e18&udm=2&biw=1366&bih=607&sxsrf=ACQVn09L9GskDtYP ALtF6ITLGvCc](https://www.google.com/search?q=pakistan+GDP+growth+in+2023&sc_e sv=f97724a61f341e18&udm=2&biw=1366&bih=607&sxsrf=ACQVn09L9GskDtYP ALtF6ITLGvCc)

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Therefore he made the bold decision to handle foreign policy to maintain the tension at the center of his thinking. Senior military officials were even more incensed by this, believing Khan was being irresponsible by politicizing the nation's international affairs. These elements taken together have strained relations between the PTI administration and the senior military brass. The way the economy is now set up actually makes long-term investments in industry and agriculture discouraged. Consequently, Pakistan's exports could face difficulties as long as the land economy maintains its low rents. Reforms in the land economy of the cities and rural areas are unlikely to happen anytime soon since elites have taken over the state

### CONCLUSION

Pakistan's democracy has always been fragile and erratic, and the military has controlled the country for an extended period of time. However, in recent years, there has been a discernible movement in favor of greater civilian dominance and democratic management. When the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was founded in 2020, the movement achieved its pinnacle..

Pakistan has substantial socio-economic, environmental, and geo-political obstacles that impede the nation's development and growth. The presence of elevated levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, in conjunction with environmental degradation and geo-political instability, has engendered a formidable milieu for individuals, hence constraining their capacity to avail themselves of vital services and prospects for economic advancement. Pakistan's political environment has always included elements such as the military's influence of politics and the politicization of the judiciary. The judicial system and the military establishment have contributed in some manner to political turmoil and instability during every term of elected civilian administration. The present political unrest started in April 2022 when Shahbaz Sharif was chosen as Speaker of the House by the Pakistani parliament, replacing

*Prime Minister Imran Khan. A quasi-constitutional mechanism that Khan and his deputy spokesman tried to use to stop a no-confidence vote was eventually dismissed by the Supreme Court. Consequently, it is anticipated that Pakistan's macroeconomic challenges, particularly the current account deficit, would persist. Not to mention that Pakistan's current economic climate is very precarious, with the working and middle classes suffering financially as a consequence of recession and inflation. In addition, the nation's sluggish export revenue and high oil prices have left it with a significant deficit of foreign currency reserves. Inflation is expected to persist for the foreseeable future due to taxes increases, a fresh round of shock treatment from the IMF, and reductions in subsidies. If neo-liberal ideology continues to rule the political process of economic recovery, economic "recovery" will be a slow and painful process, particularly for the working and middle classes. Therefore, during the economic recovery period, it is in the military's best interest to avoid following the policies of the elected government or governments. Even while a direct military takeover is less likely to occur in the near future, the likelihood of a new hybrid system emerging is still substantially greater.*



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