



1.3. State structure

The 1973 constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan provides for a federal⁶⁴ parliamentary system with a bicameral legislature comprising the Senate of Pakistan and the National Assembly of Pakistan.⁶⁵ For a bill to become law, it must be passed by both houses and receive presidential assent.⁶⁶ The Senate has 96 members, who are elected by the four provincial assemblies and the federal capital territory for six-year terms; its composition includes reserved seats for women (four per province and one from the Federal Capital) and non-Muslims (one per province), as well as seats commonly categorised for technocrats/*ulema* (religious scholars) (four per province and one from the Federal Capital). Half of the house is renewed every three years.⁶⁷ The National Assembly is composed of 336 members in total. Of these, 266 are chosen through direct elections, while 60 seats are allocated to women and a further 10 are set aside for representatives of religious minority communities. The selection of members takes place under a mixed electoral framework, which integrates both regional representation and proportional representation mechanisms.⁶⁸ The National Assembly elects the prime minister,⁶⁹ while the president is elected by an electoral college, consisting of members of both houses and the provincial assemblies.⁷⁰ The president has constitutionally defined ordinance-making powers when parliament is not in session; ordinances have the force of law but are time-limited and must be placed before parliament for continuation.⁷¹

The president appoints the cabinet on the advice of the prime minister;⁷² in line with the constitution, the prime minister exercises most executive authority, while the president, as head of state,⁷³ generally performs a more ceremonial function.⁷⁴ At provincial level, executive authority is exercised by provincial governments led by chief ministers,⁷⁵ while each province also has a governor appointed by the president on the advice of the prime minister.⁷⁶ As a federal state, Pakistan also has constitutional coordination mechanisms for federation-province relations, including the Council of Common Interests⁷⁷ (which is tasked with formulating and regulating policies in specified shared subject areas⁷⁸) and the National Economic Council (which has a constitutional mandate related to reviewing the economy and advising on economic planning).⁷⁹ Despite these mechanisms, several scholars noticed the challenges provincial autonomy faces in the country.⁸⁰

Several observers further consider the military to be the most dominant actor in Pakistan's political system,⁸¹ citing its involvement in electoral processes, government formation and key policy decisions. Freedom House, for example, characterises the military as exercising 'enormous influence' across these domains.⁸² This position has been further institutionalised through the 27th constitutional amendment, which consolidated military command structures and conferred lifetime rank and legal immunity on the highest-ranking officers.⁸³ For further information on 27th Constitutional amendment, see sections [2.1. Recent political developments](#)

and [3.1.1. Pakistan Army](#).

Within Pakistan's judicial system, the Supreme Court of Pakistan remains the highest court of appeal in civil and criminal matters⁸⁴ and is headed by the Chief Justice.⁸⁵ Following the 26th Constitutional Amendment of 2024, the Chief Justice is appointed for a fixed three-year term through the vote⁸⁶ of a special parliamentary committee from among the three most senior Supreme Court judges.⁸⁷ Subordinate courts include the High Courts (one for each province and one for the ICT),⁸⁸ civil and criminal courts at district levels and a magistracy, which deals with suits by the police force.⁸⁹ The judiciary also incorporates a religious component: the Federal Shariat Court, whose primary purpose is to assess whether laws conform to Islamic principles.⁹⁰ The 27th Constitutional Amendment of 2025 fundamentally altered the judicial architecture by establishing the Federal Constitutional Court, which was granted exclusive jurisdiction over constitutional interpretation, inter-governmental disputes, enforcement of fundamental rights and the review of constitutional amendments.⁹¹ Judges of this court are appointed under a framework that increases parliamentary and executive involvement.⁹² Critics have argued that the reforms of 2024 and 2025 weaken judicial independence by expanding political influence.⁹³ For more information, see section [5.2. Major judicial and constitutional reforms](#).

- [64](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended up to 2025), 1973, [url](#), Art. 1

- [65](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended up to 2025), 1973, [url](#), Art. 50

- [66](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended up to 2025), 1973, [url](#), Art. 70

- [67](#)

Pakistan, Senate of Pakistan, Senate Elections, n.d., [url](#)

- [68](#)

Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, How the National Assembly Works, n.d., [url](#)

- [69](#)

Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, How the National Assembly Works, n.d., [url](#)

- [70](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended up to 2025), 1973, [url](#), Art. 41

- [71](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended up to 2025), 1973, [url](#), Art. 89

- [72](#)

Pakistan, Government of Pakistan, Cabinet Secretariat, Cabinet Division, Notification, 27 February 2025, [url](#), p. 1

- [73](#)

Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, How the National Assembly Works, n.d., [url](#)

- [74](#)

Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Pakistan, 2025, [url](#), section A1

- [75](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended up to 2025), 1973, [url](#), Art. 129

- [76](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended up to 2025), 1973, [url](#), Art. 101

- [77](#)

Begum, S. and Ali, A., Federalism in Pakistan: Challenges to Provincial Autonomy, 2025, [url](#), p. 909

- [78](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended up to 2025), 1973, [url](#), Art. 154; Pakistan, CCI, FAQs – CCI Secretariat, n.d., [url](#)

- [79](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended up to 2025), 1973, [url](#), Art. 156

- [80](#)

Begum, S. and Ali, A., Federalism in Pakistan: Challenges to Provincial Autonomy, 2025, [url](#) ; Jamshid, N. and Gul, S., Federalism in Pakistan, January-March 2025, [url](#); Fahad, U. and Ayaz, M., Federalism vs. Centralization: Ethnic Autonomy in Pakistan, 25 December 2024, [url](#)

- [81](#)

Guardian (The), 'A king above all': The rise and rise of Asim Munir, Pakistan's increasingly powerful army chief, 3 December 2025, [url](#); Constitution

- [82](#)

Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Pakistan, 2025, [url](#), Overview

- [83](#)

Constitution

- [84](#)

ICJ, Pakistan – Dismantling Justice: A Full-Frontal Assault on the Rule of Law, 13 November 2025, [url](#); Dawn, 'Funeral of judicial independence': How proposed constitutional changes affect structure of Pakistan's judiciary, 8 November 2025, [url](#)

- [85](#)

Reuters, Pakistan passes constitutional amendment empowering parliament to pick top judge, 22 October 2024, [url](#)

- [86](#)

Constitution

- [87](#)

ICJ, Pakistan – Dismantling Justice: A Full-Frontal Assault on the Rule of Law, 13 November 2025, [url](#); Constitution

- [88](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended up to 2025), 1973, [url](#), Art. 175

- [89](#)

Britannica, Pakistan – Government and society, last updated 30 March 2026, [url](#)

- [90](#)

Britannica, Pakistan – Government and society, last updated 30 March 2026, [url](#)

- [91](#)

Constitution

- [92](#)

ICJ, Pakistan – Dismantling Justice: A Full-Frontal Assault on the Rule of Law, 13 November 2025, [url](#)

- [93](#)

Constitution

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu