1. General situation in Pakistan

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2026

The information below is based on the following EUAA COI products: COI Update 2026, 1.; Country Focus 2026, 2.1., 6.1.7.; Country Focus 2024, 2.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

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Since the downfall of Imran Khan's PTI-led cabinet in 2022, Pakistan experiences significant political turmoil centred on the attempts of the other two largest parties, PML-N and PPP, to gain and consolidate power, the push towards a stronger influence of the Army on political life, and, ultimately, the buildup of a system designed to prevent PTI from coming back to power despite its popularity.

Pakistan's new political trajectory began with the removal of Prime Minister Imran Khan, founder and leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), through a parliamentary vote of no confidence in April 2022. He was replaced by Shehbaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N), followed by a caretaker administration ahead of the elections. During this transition, the military remained a central political actor.

A major escalation followed Khan's arrest on corruption charges in May 2023. It triggered nationwide protests, some of which became violent and involved attacks on military and government installations. The state response included mass arrests, the use of force against demonstrators, and military proceedings against civilians. Khan later received sentences in cases concerning corruption, state secrets, and marriage-law related matters. Although some convictions were later overturned or suspended, he reportedly remained detained based on new charges. The wider context also reflected reported pressure on PTI members and supporters through arrests, prosecutions, and ongoing political restrictions.

Ahead of the February 2024 elections, PTI faced significant legal and political constraints. Nevertheless, PTI-linked candidates won the largest number of seats, although not enough to form a government. A coalition led by the PML-N and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was formed, with Shehbaz Sharif returning as prime minister and Asif Ali Zardari becoming president. PTI's position weakened in 2025: although the Supreme Court initially ruled in PTI's favour regarding reserved seats for women and minorities, subsequent judicial and political

developments reallocated these seats in a manner that strengthened the governing coalition.

Political space narrowed during 2024–2026. Major PTI protests in Islamabad in November 2024 led to thousands of arrests, casualties, and internet shutdowns, while further opposition protests occurred in February 2026. Numerous PTI supporters were detained ahead of protests demanding the release of Imran Khan. Some PTI leaders were subjected to custodial torture. In May 2025, the Supreme Court authorised military trials for civilians linked to the May 2023 unrest, raising concerns regarding fair trial guarantees. In November 2025, constitutional amendments expanded the authority of the army chief and transferred constitutional powers from the Supreme Court to a Federal Constitutional Court. During the same period, the Punjab Assembly adopted a resolution seeking a ban on PTI and Imran Khan, while the PTM (Pashtun Tahafuz Movement) and the TLP (Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan) were banned.

The economic situation worsened following the COVID 19 pandemic and at times led to protests, some of them having been met with violence by the Pakistani authorities.

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