

**Political Accountability and the Role of Civil Society in Challenging Malgovernance: A Case study of Zardari Era**



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**Abstract:** *This paper examines the intricate relationship between political responsibility, malgovernance, and the significant involvement of civil society during the Zardari era, utilizing a detailed case study approach. The inquiry centers on the governance obstacles that characterized this era, encompassing concerns related to corruption and a dearth of transparency within the political sphere. This paper undertakes an analysis of the dynamics surrounding political accountability, specifically focusing on the identified era. It investigates the ways in which accountability procedures were subjected to strain and compromise, ultimately leading to the occurrence of malgovernance. This study examines the extent to which civil society may address governance flaws, focusing on the methods, activities, and lobbying employed by civil society organizations to advance transparency, accountability, and good governance. The study utilizes a comprehensive methodology, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods, in order to evaluate the influence of civil society interventions on political practices. The research findings provide valuable insights into the complexities of the Zardari era, shedding light on the difficulties encountered by civil society in ensuring political leaders are held responsible and fostering accountable governance. This particular case study not only deepens our understanding of the specific historical setting, but also offers more general insights into the interconnectedness of political responsibility, civil society, and governance in dynamic political environments. The primary objective of this research is to provide valuable insights to policymakers, scholars, and activists regarding the complexities involved in promoting accountability and addressing malgovernance. Specifically, it focuses on the effectiveness of collaborative initiatives between civil society organizations and political institutions in achieving these goals.*

**Keywords:** Malgovernance, Inquiry, Corruption, Accountability, Governance

### Introduction

At the same time, good governance will have a positive effect on the economy of any country. At the same time, the political situation of the country will remain stable. However, if the governance situation is not good, it will be detrimental to both the people and the country as

a whole. Economic development and political stability are closely related to one another. Economic growth will outpace an unstable political system if there is political stability in the country.

#### 5.1.1 Less foreign direct investment

The systematic corruption in the political system is what Pakistanis blame for their economic problems, despite the fact that the majority of people there currently have stagnating earnings. There is a claim that nations with lower levels of corruption typically attract far more foreign investment per person than those with high corruption perception index scores. Of course, there are certain exceptions, like Bangladesh, which boasts significant foreign direct investment (FDI) as well as strong GDP growth despite pervasive corruption. So, what can we infer about Pakistan from the facts on corruption and the anti-corruption drive?

Statistics from the National accountability Bureau (NAB) show that the agency had the lowest prosecution success rate in 2010 and the greatest prosecution success rate in 2016. Surprisingly, the nine-year span between 2010 and 2016 had the lowest and highest rates of GDP growth respectively. Surprisingly, the two factors have a connection of more than 88 percent. This raises a crucial question, does the fight against corruption get any more intense as

anti-corruption efforts rise, or does the fight against corruption get any more intense as anti-corruption efforts rise? Since we can take both into consideration, the question is difficult to directly answer (Mahmood F. , 2019).

**5.1.2 Political and Bureaucratic Corruption**

Worldwide, political and administrative corruption is rampant and has an influence on both developed and developing economies. One of the most popular sources of data for comparing degrees of corruption between nations is Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which assigns a ranking to nations based on "perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and entrepreneurs." On a scale from 0 (most corrupt) to 10 (least corrupt), the great majority of the 180 nations in the 2009 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) receive scores of below five (perceived to have low levels of corruption). Pakistan is ranked 139th out of 180 nations with a score of 2.4. Pakistan received a score of 2.3 and was ranked 146 in 2010 (Corruption Perception Index, 2010).

Year	Rank	Score
2009	139	2.2
2010	146	2.3
2011	134	2.5
2012	139	2.7
2013	127	2.8

**Table 1.1 Source: (Corruption Perception Index, 2009-2013 by Transparency)**

**5.1.3 Relationship between Political Instability and Economic Growth**

The victim of political unrest continues to be Pakistan's economy. Despite having abundant economic resources, the nation nonetheless suffers from significant economic stagnation as a result of the threat of political unrest. An unstable political system is the risk that prevents a country's governance, enforcement of law, and authority from operating smoothly. It is brought about by erratic political interactions that lead to the failure of political institutions to implement policies and by disobedient social conduct that influences or modifies societal decision-making

criteria. It has a negative impact on economic activity as a result, which slows down national economic growth. Therefore, political stability is essential for a flourishing and forward-thinking economy; otherwise, the nation would descend into the gloom of economic recession (Mustafa, Nawaz, & Rubab, 2019).

Considering the terms of the Pakistani regimes from 1999 to 2022, it is clear that political inequality contributed to the country's slow economic growth, rising levels of corruption, high unemployment rates, and poor levels of output. Pakistan's economy began to develop at a rate of 4.2 percent in 1999 when the military overthrew the civil government, and it reached a level of 1.7 percent by the time the military

dictatorship ended. Political unrest was to blame for this decline in economic growth, as evidenced by the political stability index, which indicates that political stability was down 2.4% in 2008 compared to -1.1% in 2000. Similar to this, from 2008 to 2013, when the PPP government was in power, the country experienced a significant rise in corruption and slow economic development due to a spike in political unrest, which grew to -2.6 percent in 2013 from -2.4 percent in 2008 (Irshad, 2022).

## **5.2 Mal governance of Zardari regime**

However, in the fourth term of the PPP government, the Zardari government implemented constitutional reforms. After the 18th amendment, the provinces were given a lot of autonomy, and Gilgit-Baltistan was given the status of a province with constitutional rights. Similarly, the NWFP was renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It faced difficulties at the economic and diplomatic level.

### **5.2.1 Lawyers' Movement**

The issue of judges' detention, which began in the last days of President Musharraf, intensified, and the government had to reinstate Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry after a long lawyers' march in 2009. The Chief Justice implemented judicial activism in the country, and the government faced tough times inside the courts.

### **5.2.2 Terrorism**

Terrorism reached its highest level in Pakistan during the Zardari era. From 2007 to November 2013, there were 358 suicide attacks in Pakistan, while the total number of terrorist incidents was 13,198. There were 1,404 terrorist attacks in Pakistan in 2012 alone, followed by 1,271 in Iraq and 1,023 in Afghanistan. 53% of these attacks took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA, while 23% took place in Baluchistan and 18% in Sindh. 17,642 people were killed between 2011 and 2013, including 2,144 law enforcement personnel. Similarly, Pakistan was blamed for the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, in which 178 people were killed. After these incidents, Pakistan faced difficulties in the international community.

### **5.2.3 Drone Attacks**

According to National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) report, there were 336 internal attacks in Pakistan during 2008–2012 in which 2282 people were killed and 658 injured, while a total of 409 drone strikes were carried out from 2004 to 2018, in which 2714 were killed and 728 injured (Economic Times, 2018). The government of Pakistan could not persuade the US to stop drone strikes or at least eliminate civilian casualties in these strikes. As a result, anger against the state and the government grew within the people of FATA, including North and South Waziristan, which led to more terrorist incidents. Similarly, on the night of May 2, 2011, US Navy SEALs flew from Jalalabad to Abbottabad in Black Hawk helicopters and killed Osama bin Laden, the founding leader of the terrorist organization Al Qaeda (History, 2011). The operation raised serious questions about Pakistan's integrity and sovereignty, but neither the government nor the military establishment could protest the incident at diplomatic level with United States of America.

### **5.2.4 Judicial Activism**

After the restoration of his post in 2011, Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry used excessive force and started dragging the government to the courts on petty issues. In 2013, the Supreme Court cancelled Tethyan Copper Limited's agreement with the government of Pakistan to extract gold from Rio Dick without consulting international law experts. When the affected company applied to the International Arbitration Court, Pakistan was fined 6 billion dollars in 2019, including interest (Hindustan Times, 2019). The PPP government failed to convince the Supreme Court of the sensitivity of the agreement, tarnishing Pakistan's image in the international community.

### **5.2.5 Corruption of Prime Ministers**

Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani was disqualified by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2012 for not writing a letter to the Swiss government and for not writing a letter to obtain the details of the money in the Swiss accounts of

Pakistanis. Later, his cabinet member and Federal Minister of Religious Affairs had to face corruption charges in Haj Kota. Later, when these allegations were proved, the son of Religious Affairs Minister Hamid Saeed Kazmi and Yousaf Raza Gilani had to go to jail. Raja Pervez Ashraf, who became the Prime Minister after Mr. Geelani, also had to face the courts on corruption cases, while the Supreme Court also ordered his arrest in Nandipur Power Project in 2013.

### **Conclusion**

Every man every woman who has to take up the service of government, must ask themselves two questions: 'Do I love my people in order to serve them better? Am I humble and do I listen to everybody, to diverse opinions in order to choose the best path?'. If you don't ask those questions, your governance will not be good (Pope Francis). I believe that as part of good governance, all agencies should be reviewing regulations and cleaning up those that maybe outdated, redundant, or unnecessary (Seth Moulton).

During the British rule, the subcontinent was called the "Golden Sparrow." During the period of the Whites, the money of the subcontinent was looted and transferred to Britain. Even after the departure of the British throne from India, the looting process unfortunately continued, involving bureaucrats and politicians who were trained by the British crown. There are three stages of governance in South Asia. First, there are corrupt governments that operate through blackmail, election rigging, misinformation, and manipulation. Second, governments block people's full access to resources, depriving the majority of people of their basic rights and political power. Thirdly, the eyes of the general public are opened when they become powerless. In 2011, the Human Development Commission in its report rated South Asia as the least well managed region. Because there is an absence of a vocal majority in the region, an uneven political system and bad financial means are prevalent. There has been a state governance crisis in Pakistan for a long time. One of the reasons for this is democratic instability. Due to weak political parties and political instability in

the country, democracy could not be strengthened. While the governance could not be improved due to the weak judicial system.

More than 50,000 cases are pending in the country, but instead of reducing the pressure of cases, the higher judiciary prefers to listen to political gossip and interfere in political and government affairs. A clear example was Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, whose tenure saw an increase in judicial activism. Without accountability, the country's governance could not be improved, and as a result, corruption spread. From 2008 to 2013, Transparency International ranked Pakistan among the most corrupt countries. Due to the increase in corruption, there are bad effects on the country, development is reduced and the country's resources are wasted. Due to mal governance, the provinces also suffered, and the provinces in Pakistan began to accuse each other that other provinces were stealing their resources and that the federal government was giving them less money than the rest of the provinces, which promoted provincialism and linguistics, and the centrality of the country was damaged. Baluchistan has been alleging that it is not getting any royalties or that it is getting much less than the actual amount.

For various reasons, democracy has weakened due to bad governance. Since the time of independence, there has been an institutional imbalance in the country. The civil bureaucracy and the military were two organized institutions, while the parliament and political parties could not be very strong. While making the objectives of the country, the political authorities had little control over the military and civil bureaucracy, which resulted in the change of 7 prime ministers in the first 10 years of the country, and the political institutions continued to be blackmailed by the civil and military bureaucracy. In 1958, General Ayub Khan imposed the first martial law in the country. The integrity of Pakistan was threatened by India from the very first day, which is why Pakistan has fought two major wars with India. Due to such a security situation, parliament and politicians were forced to strengthen the role of the army by making it stronger and giving more

share to defense in the budget, due to which the army became stronger but it interfered in the internal affairs of the country started, which proved to be a killer poison for democracy and governance, and the country had to face three martial laws. Unfortunately, the role of political parties and their leaders in the country has remained authoritarian. Heredity prevailed in political parties, and even today, the leadership of political parties is given to the children after the parents and not to the capable and senior leaders of the party. Due to this attitude, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was forced to leave the Muslim League and form his own political party. Political parties associated religion with democracy and began accepting votes in the name of religion in elections, preventing the true spirit of democracy from being established. In the name of the implementation of the caliphate and Islam, various parties were formed in the country, extremism increased in the country, and terrorist organizations like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan emerged from the bosom of such parties.

The military's own political objectives within the country undermined the democratic values, and as a result, the military establishment and the ISI started creating, breaking, and supporting political parties of their choice (political engineering). Due to how the democratic culture was lacking in the country, the law failed to make its way. Even powerful people and various political leaders keep inciting people to violate the law to achieve their personal goals. Political parties continue to riot and violate the law to get their desired decisions from the courts.

When corruption increases in any country, FDI decreases as investors withdraw their capital from the market. Similarly, due to corruption, the speed of development in the country slows down, and as a result, the country suffers from inflation and other economic problems. There is a direct relationship between economic and political instability. If one of them suffers from instability, then the other will have bad effects. On the other hand, the country may suffer from political instability due to corruption and bad governance. From 1999 to 2022, due to political inequality within Pakistan, the pace of economic

development of the country remained low. Pakistan's economy began to develop at a rate of 4.2 percent in 1999 when the military overthrew the civil government, and it reached a level of 1.7 percent by the time the military dictatorship ended. Political unrest was to blame for this decline in economic growth, as evidenced by the political stability index, which indicates that political stability was down 2.4% in 2008 compared to -1.1% in 2000. Similar to this, from 2008 to 2013, when the PPP government was in power, the country experienced a significant rise in corruption and slow economic development due to a spike in political unrest, which grew to -2.6 percent in 2013 from -2.4 percent in 2008.

Malgovernance in the country was at its peak during President Zardari's tenure. On the one hand, the movement to restore the judiciary was going on, while on the other hand, a storm of terrorism was going on in the country. Drone attacks by the United States continued on the hideouts of terrorists, in which innocent civilians also died along with the terrorists, but the government could not stop the loss of lives of ordinary people. Along with judicial activism, corruption was also on the rise. Even when a Prime Minister was dismissed by the Supreme Court for not taking steps against corruption, his predecessor as Prime Minister was also summoned to the court on corruption charges.

For all of these factors and reasons, true democracy has yet to be practiced in Pakistan, and the country has remained a victim of malgovernance, especially between 2008 and 2013.

## **Recommendations**

### **6.1 Encouraging Long-Term Political Stability**

Throughout Pakistan's chaotic political history since its founding, there has been a persistent crisis characterized by high political instability and a generalized lack of optimism for the future of the country. A smooth transfer of power between political winners and losers who have lost the public's trust degenerates into a nightmare and intensifies the political crisis. A socio-political peace will never develop as long as political parties' suspicion of one another and

the gap between them widens.

### **6.2 Long-term economic growth and stability**

According to the World Bank, sustainable economic growth is a driving factor for inclusive "socio-economic development and material wellbeing of the people." Achieving sustainability in economic growth and social development has been significantly distorted by Pakistan's turbulent political environment. The primary factors identified are a continually subpar performance in good governance, together with widespread influence from rent seekers and bureaucratic management policy manipulation. The economy was further harmed by the financial indiscipline, adhocism, and reckless fiscal/monetary policies linked to pervasive corruption (Hassan & Zeb, 2021).

### **6.3 Building the rule of law and legal order**

A strong rule of law and an effective judicial system are the most practical and essential prerequisites for economic progress and social development. It is widely held that civilizations that are capable of sustaining themselves have an efficient state and a just system that is open to all. The World Bank's good governance indicator score for Pakistan's "rule of law" percentile has never been positive. Despite the fact that the effects of the Afghan fight and the ongoing war against terrorism are the main causes, there is still much that may be done to restore the rule of law in the state.

### **6.4 Governance through Digitalization of Institutions and Services**

The civil services, or bureaucracy, are the state's most efficient instrument for carrying out its duties and carrying out public service delivery at the grassroots level. Pakistan's administrative structure at the time of partition in 1947 was the British civil services. In Pakistan's early decades, bureaucracy was viewed as the primary driver of wealth and expansion, but it has since taken on a repressive role and failed to effectively provide public services. Thus, there was a pressing need to improve the effective delivery of public services and to adopt good governance principles through the digitalization of government services. Digitalization of

government services has the potential to enhance bureaucratic systems while addressing the complex issues surrounding governance.

### **6.5 Free and Fair Elections**

Through a free, fair, and extremely transparent electoral process, political regimes can become legitimate. Early removal of elected representatives won't be possible under a transparent political system since such removal would be unconstitutional. Governments contribute to long-lasting political instability and Political credibility is illegitimate and plagued with political corruption. Instability always results in military operations. Similarly, Pakistan has been weakened by ongoing military operations and autocratic significant obstacles to the legitimacy of its governments and instability. In "controlling the ungovernable," (Husain, 2018) claims, "Empirical data implies that financial successes without great political legitimacy may prove to be difficult to attain and transitory, and they leave no enduring trace."

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