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# PAKISTAN'S PATH TO PERIL: A COUNTRY IN DECLINE

Prafulla Pandey

## **INTRODUCTION**

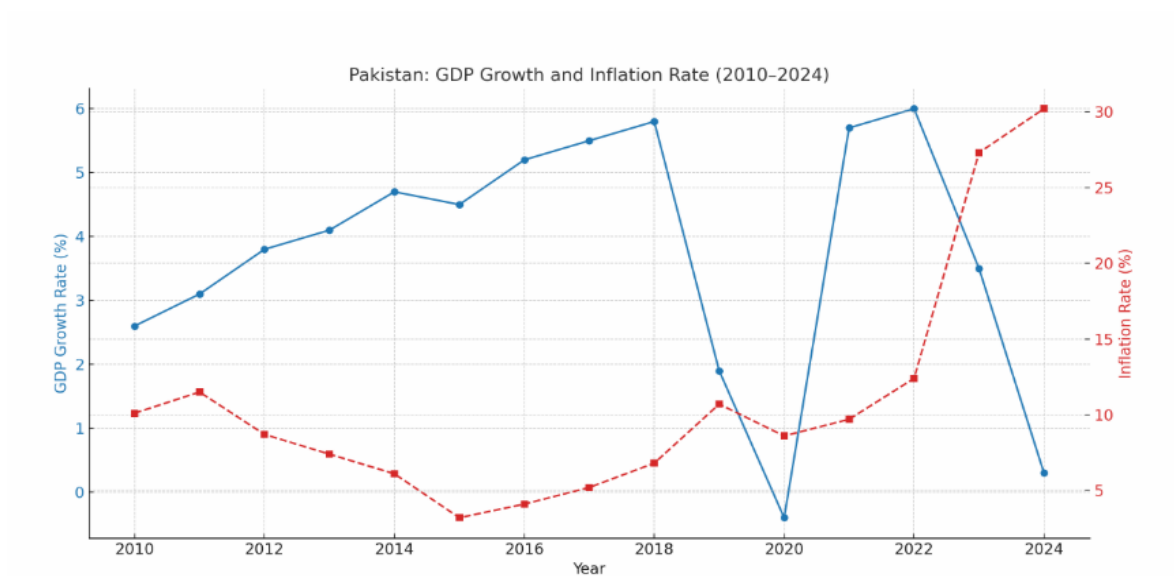
Pakistan, the land of the pure, as they say. It was divided from India on a religious basis in 1947, creating a separate muslim country for all the followers of Islam living in India based on the thought that Hindu majority country would sideline the muslim interests .the concept of muslim state was first advocated by Muhammad iqbal (philosopher, writer, and politician, in 1930s). The word Pakistan was first used by Rahamat Ali (the originator of the Pakistan movement) in 1933. Since its formation, India has been the centre of their every policy. Its entire existence on the map is because of India and the terrorist activities it conducts in India. It has always tried to divide India and disrupt its peace and progress. pakistan has no military might which has been tested on battleground in 1947,1965,1971,1999, and many more skirmishes the most recent in 2025 where pakistan suffered great losses, they knew idea of conventional war was out of the option so they chose a more potent and cost effective of using deep state actors and terrorism as an option to bleed india but now it seems the tables have turned .pakistan is more divided than ever its economy is crippled internal security crises, ethnic and religious disturbance, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, are only few factors it is a ticking time bomb only a matter of time when it explodes . in this following article we will be seeing how these issue if not addressed urgently will be the decline of pakistan.

## **ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**

Pakistan's crippling economy once seen a potential power in region has now destabilised rapidly with as the country faces high inflation, stagnant growth, increasing debt, and dwindling foreign reserves, all of these are not just economic measures these factors have cumulative effect on pakistan's overall nation image, public unrest and deteriorating global image.

## Key Causes of Economic Decline

The tax-to-GDP ratio is under 10%, among the lowest globally. Only about 2.5 million people file taxes in a country of 240+ million. A large amount of Pakistan's revenue goes into debt servicing, leaving almost nothing for development. It has a high budget deficit. 30% of the youth are unemployed, and 20% of the population lives in poverty. [Pakistan: Poverty | The Asian Development Bank](#) allocates 2.8% of its GDP to health and education, which is less than the international standard. [https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/Final%20USAID-PAK\\_2023\\_ESA%20summary\\_final\\_new.pdf](https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/Final%20USAID-PAK_2023_ESA%20summary_final_new.pdf) frequent changes in the political leadership, constant military intervention and non-continuity of development planning. The external debt of the country is **130 billion USD**, up from **\$124.296 billion** at the end of June 2023. This increase of approximately **\$5.883 billion** occurred over the first 11 months of the fiscal year 2023–24. Foreign reserves fell to **4 billion USD** in 2023. Pakistan is suffering from a severe energy crisis as well. Their heavy reliance on imported fuel has now increased the circular debt in the energy sector to **2.6 trillion PKR**. [Govt likely to pass Rs 2.6 trillion circular debt burden to consumers amid IMF pressure - Profit by Pakistan Today](#)



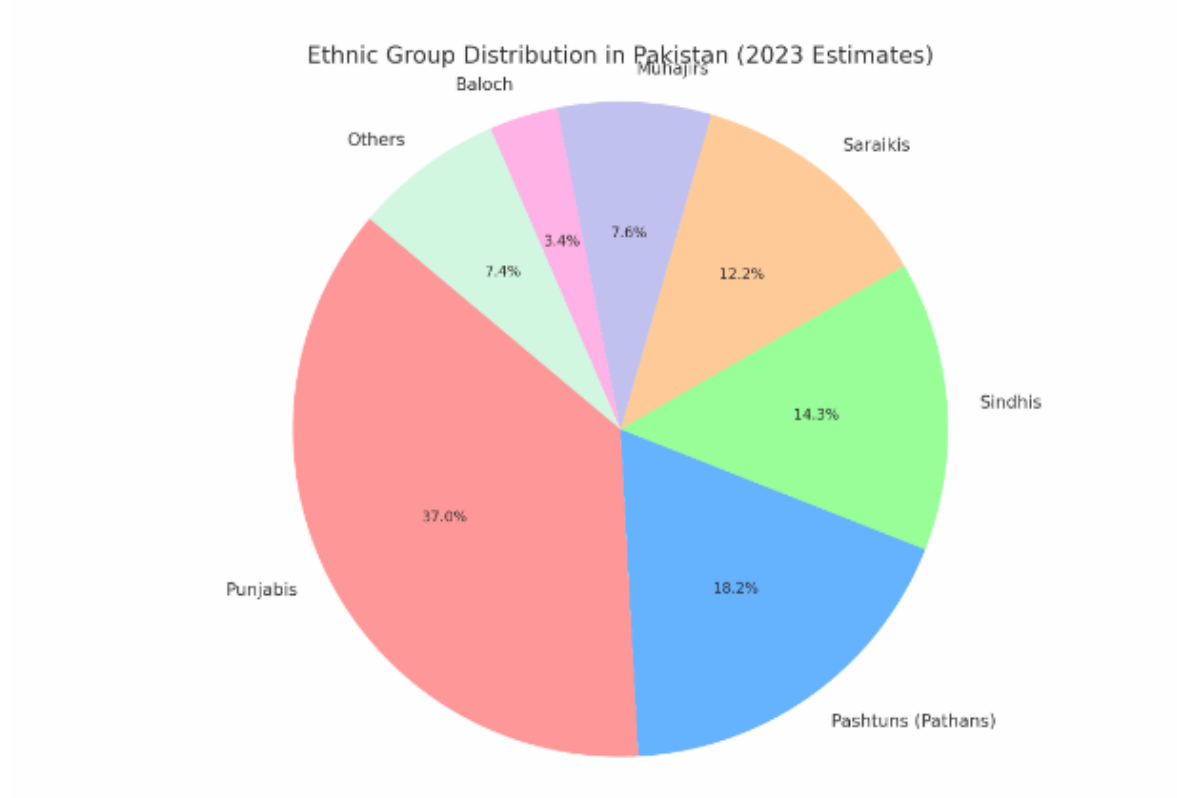
Growth and inflation rates are two critical economic indicators of the economy, as shown in the graph above. Pakistan's GDP saw moderate growth in the 2010s, peaking around 5.8% in 2018. However, post-2018, growth plummeted, dropping to -0.4% in 2020 (COVID shock) and stagnating at under 2% thereafter <https://www.pakistangulfeconomist.com/2021/11/29/gdp-growth-rate-rising-more-compulsory-steps-needed/>. Inflation surged alarmingly after 2021, peaking at 30.2% in 2023. Skyrocketing food and fuel prices hit the poorest hardest, leading to widespread discontent in the country <https://profit.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/02/01/inflation-rises-to-28-3-yoy-for-january/>

Looking into all this facts and figures it seems IMF bailouts are the only positive source of income pakistan has after terror fundings and illegal smuggling of arms and drugs into the subcontinent including black market currency trade, oil smuggling, and gold smuggling, are estimated to cost Pakistan's economy around **\$23 billion annually** <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/black-market-activities-smuggling-cost-pakistans-economy-usd-23-billion-annually-report/articleshow/104238693.cms?> Illegal trade leads to significant tax revenue losses, with estimates indicating a loss of **PKR 8 trillion**, which is about 85% the tax revenue target for the fiscal year 2023-2024

[Illicit trade estimated at 20 per cent of Pakistan's formal economy: Business council – ThePrint](#)

## SECURITY CHALLENGES

Pakistan's security faces myriad challenges today from terrorism, insurgency, sectarian and religious violence, etc. The country is divided into several states. The word PAKISTAN itself gives us a good idea about itself. P-punjab, A-afghanistan, k-kashmir, S-sindh, TAN for balochistan, these different regions and also the major ethnic groups of Pakistan, they have different languages, cultures, and areas of interest. They became different states, but not a nation; for them, their cultural identity is far more important than their national identity.



These fragmentations are way deeper than we see.

Probably the only things that are holding Pakistan are Islam, cricket and the military. But it seems they have divisions in Islam as well. There are many religious groups within Islam, **Sunni Muslim, which makes majority of Pakistan, Shia Muslims, Ahmadiyya Muslims** (declared non muslims by constitution), **Barelvi, Deobandi, Ahl-e-Hadith, Sufis, Twelver Shias,**

**Ismailis, Bohras(Dawoodi),sulaymani etc**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion\\_in\\_Pakistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Pakistan).none of them wants to live with the other which has resulted in numerous violent clashes amongst them most recent being kurram district attack,parachinar suicide bombing where the violence resulted in 182 fatalities and 234 injuries. The Shia community bore the brunt, with 79 fatalities and 35 injuries, followed by Sunni victims with 79 fatalities and 35 injuries. Pakistan had a history of giving critical support to terrorist groups, like helping in creating the Taliban and hosting foreign fighters under the banner of Islam. These groups are extremely radicalised, which has now started to bite the hands that fed them. There have been massive killings of military and civilian personnel as well by these terror groups

In 2024, Pakistan experienced 1,166 terror attacks and counter-terror operations, resulting in 2,546 fatalities and 2,267 injuries.

In 2023, approximately 1524 fatalities,2024 approx.2546 fatalities, in 2025(may)approx 1290 fatalities[https://amu.tv/147466/?utm\\_](https://amu.tv/147466/?utm_).The Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) reported a 192% increase in terrorist incidents in 2024 compared to the previous year, reversing the declining trend observed since 2014. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) which majorly comprises of Pashtuns and members of the Federally Administered tribal area (FATA) and works under the umbrella of Afghan taliban which was one created with the help of pakistan, and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) have intensified attacks, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. Baloch separatist groups, notably the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), want a separate nation for their people Baloch community has the smallest population share in the entire demography of Pakistan, only 3.4%, but holds 39.4% of Pakistan's land. They also fulfil 40% of the gas requirement. Balochistan has the world's largest untapped gold and copper reserves and an abundance of many other rare earth metals. Still pakistan has historically suppressed them with killing innocent civilians and voilation of there human rights but now baloch people have started to resist and put up a good fight against the pakistani military they have escalated their insurgency in 2024, with attacks increasing from 116 in 2023 to 504 in 2024, and deaths rising from 88 to 388 and as of the 2025 the BLA launched 78 attacks in 58 locations in just one week

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/new-updates/balochistan-independence-not-pakistans-people-why-balochistan-is-turning-to-india-amid-a->

[firestorm/articleshow/121165799.cms](http://firestorm/articleshow/121165799.cms) BLA has also attacked chinese personals working on CPEC which has further strained the relations of china and pakistan both deplomatic and economic the projet is very important for pakistan as it will pour a lot of money to pakistan and for china its more about strategic route to europe avoiding the straight of mallaca in the Indian ocean which could be a possible choke point if two nations are at war . Pakistan is also a haven for major terror outfits such as **Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Hizbul Mujahideen, Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), Islamic State – Khorasan (IS-K), Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)**, which are also a major threat to not only Pakistan but to the entire world. They have carried out several deadliest attacks on the military and innocent people around the globe. The 9/11 attack on USA killing 3000 people, 26/11 in India killink 160 people pulwama attack killing 40 CRPF personale, URI attack killing 19 indian soldiers, Lahore Suicide Bombing killing 75 people including 29 children, Quetta Hospital Attack killing 70 people,pahelgam attack killing 26 innocent civillian, Peshawar (Army Public School) killing 149 children etc. these are just a few security challenge that will ultimately be the doom of pakistan .it was Pakistan who promoted these radicalised thoughts and helped strengthen terror groups for their benefit but now it has turned towards its own and these problems have deterred foreign investment and also has strained relations with neighboring countries and involvement in regional conflicts have isolated it diplomatically, limiting its ability to get international support.

## **SOCIO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES**

***When politics becomes a game of survival, the nation becomes the casualty***

For any country to grow into a global power, it's necessary to have a harmonious relationship between the government and the people, and for that, you need a strong and stable democratic institution that looks after the interests of every section of society. Pakistan has a strong institution, but STABLE and DEMOCRATIC are the two words I would refrain from using in



Pakistan's political landscape, cause it's neither stable nor democratic, as the government is just a shadow, the real power lies in the hands of the military. It is very rightly said that *every other country has a military, but the Pakistan military has a country*. military has a significant amount of dominance over the foreign policy, national policy, and politics it has been the ones who decides who will hold the PM office so that there agenda is served both on national and international forums there have been some who tried to out manoeuvre the military there government was overthrown by the successful military coups like the ones in 1953,1958,1971,1977,1999.elections are held just for the formalities so that the country can look democratic to the outer world same as the USA where there is two party system but only deep state actors decide who will hold the oval office. The elite political dynasties like Bhutto, Sharif and now Khans have dominated the resources, politics, and bureaucracy of the country. They had one clear policy in mind was to fill up their coffers. They never cared about the country or its people, while the corruption has corroded the country beyond repair. **Pakistan ranked 135th out of 180 countries in corruption, dropping two places from its 133rd position in 2023. Pakistan scored 27 out of 100 in the corruption perception index(CPI)**, where 0 indicates high corruption and 100 signifies a very clean public sector. This marks a decline from a score of 29 in 2023. While the children of these elites study in prestigious institutions like Oxford, Stanford, King's, etc. and in their own country, the **illiteracy rate has increased to 40%**, where schools lack basic institutional infrastructure, untrained teachers, manipulative and radicalised books which teach them nothing but extremism. While there are no reports about this or any other matter that concerns their national interests on national television, except for cricket. The fourth pillar of democracy doesn't seem democratic in Pakistan. As the journalists are controlled by the government to promote only propaganda, misinformation, and state-sponsored narratives and news, while those who have tried to take bold steps to address these issues have been suppressed quietly, Journalists face harassment, abduction, and even murder. In 2024 alone, there were at least **162 confirmed attacks on media professionals**. Fundamental rights are sham in Pakistan, and all these socio-political issues have destabilised Pakistan for far too long, so maybe it's the NEW NORMAL for them.

## **ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGES**

“You cannot have peace with the Earth if you are at war with its resources” - *Dr. Vandana Shiva*

Blinded by the race of power and politics, we often forget we can't eat money and bullets for our survival. This land, the air and water are far more important than anything, and Pakistan needs to realise this quicker than any country. At the moment, **Pakistan has been ranked 3 most polluted country across the globe**, it ranked 178th out of 180 in the **Global Cleanliness Index**. **According to a World Bank survey, Pakistan's forest cover is 4.7%**, which is extremely low compared to the suggested percentage of forest cover to maintain ecological balance, which is 25%. Pakistan also faces a high water shortage. It is one of the most water-stressed countries in the world. It fulfils its water requirements from the Indus water system, glaciers and groundwater. 90% of Pakistan's water goes to agriculture, yet they have no proper planning or infrastructure for water users. Due to which 30 to 40 per cent of the water they receive is wasted. The water table has dropped because of the use of groundwater without recharging it. Lack of waste treatment infrastructure and discharge of toxins and heavy metals have polluted the water. According to the **Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources**, 80% of the water in Pakistan is not safe for consumption. Illegal mining has been a central issue in Pakistan's ecological problem. Illegal quarrying and blasting by stone-crushing plants are degrading the ecosystem. Illegal extraction continues in Pakistan till today heavy machines are illegally dredging the river beds daily destroying the aquatic habitat and mudding the downstream waters [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margalla\\_Hills](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margalla_Hills), <https://news.mongabay.com/2024/01/illegal-gold-mining-threatens-indus-river-water-and-biodiversity-commentary>. Active mines release drainage rich in iron, cadmium, sulfur, and copper into groundwater and surface water affecting the ecosystem and human health <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/4/1255>. Abandoned uranium mines have led to injudicious dumping of radioactive material openly leading to high risk of cancer, birth defects, livestock deformities. There has been sever loss of biodiversity in pakistan due to deforestation and over exploitation of the resources there is a significant loss in the rare species of the animals birds including the **asiatic cheetah, caspian pond turtle, snow leopard, white backed vulture, indus river dolphin** etc. pakistan needs some serious reform to tackle these issues policy made to protect environment needs to be implemented strictly pakistan has also got active donations from **Green Climate Fund of US \$249 million** <https://dailymailnews.pk/gcf-endorses-200-projects-in-pakistan> the IMF has also granted

**concessional loan for \$1.4 billion** to pakistan for the climate resilience facility

<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2025/05/09/pr-25137-pakistan-imf-completes-1st-rev-of-eff-arrang-and-approves-req-for-arrang-under-rsf>. But all this money has no worth as the majority of it will go in the hands of the military and funding terrorism.

## **CONCLUSION**

The above-discussed issues are just the beginning; there is more than what meets the eye. The society has so many fault lines, and the government wants to fix this under the banner of religion without first understanding its people and their problems. The Pakistani government has always forgotten that it's the people who make the nation, not the religion, not the ideologies. The above-mentioned issues are very fundamental, and without addressing these issues, a country can never be prosperous. The pakistani government has to understand that there are some serious reforms required to stabilise the country or as we can see that there is no stopping from balkanization of the pakistan public unrest, financial instability, ecological imbalance, terrorism, radicalization, religious orthodoxy, poverty, illiteracy etc are the biggest contributors in the pakistan's path to decline if not addressed properly.