The Challenge of Governance and Public Representation in Pakistan: How Electoral System Matters?

Khalid Rahman*

Abstract

While the problems of political instability, polarization, corruption, etc., are not unique to Pakistan and continue to afflict all countries and societies, a more representative, multi-tier system of governance can resolve such problems more efficiently and effectively with genuine public participation. Pakistan is currently facing serious political and economic crises. However, these crises point towards symptoms of the problem, the cause lies in governance. The challenge of good governance can be met by reforming the electoral system, among other things. There are mainly two electoral systems in vogue in the world – the traditional ‘first-past-the-post’, and the ‘proportional representation’. This paper argues that the former only promotes individual and parochial interests, while disenfranchising majority votes. The latter one represents all segments of society besides promoting national feeling and character. The constitution of Pakistan though gives an elaborate and practicable framework for governance, it still has room for amendments in keeping with the demands of changing times. Introducing electoral reforms, improving the existing system, at national and local level, and focusing on the quality of ‘governors’ are crucial steps to achieve better governance.

Keywords: Governance, Public Representation, Elections, Electoral System, Proportional Representation.

Introduction

Currently, Pakistan is going through critical and turbulent times. Deteriorating and constantly weakening economic conditions, law and order situation,

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security issues, political turmoil and instability, and image of the country are some of the major challenges facing Pakistan. Polarization and political divisions are further aggravating the situation and leading to a stage where each group has its own truth while the real truth is not only getting lost, but the effort to find out the truth is getting difficult. Unfortunately, human energies, as happens in such situations, get diverted against each other in pursuit of individual and group priorities instead of national and collective goals.

This situation needs to be redressed. Obviously, there can be no disagreement on this. However, there could be a difference of opinion on the diagnosis and prognosis. In fact, these are the situations where a dialogue between the stakeholders helps in reaching a practical, if not an ideal, and doable solution, along with drawing a roadmap built on it.

The problems of political instability, polarization, economic management, corruption, or the breakdowns in social arena etc., are not unique to Pakistan and continue to plague all countries and societies, although the magnitude and intensity might vary. Therefore, this paper contends that a more representative, multi-tier system of governance can resolve such problems more efficiently and effectively with genuine public participation.

As the 2024 elections are approaching in next few months, it may not be practical to revamp the entire electoral system, at present, given the paucity of time and without any preparation or taking all stakeholders on board. Nevertheless, serious deliberation should be initiated as to how the electoral system can be improved and invigorated in order to make it more ‘representative’ and ‘inclusive’. The terminal point to start working towards electoral reforms could be after the new parliament is formed following these elections. The reforms should capacitate the electoral system to enable the inclusion of competent candidates, who would contribute towards strengthening governance and stabilizing the country through much-needed reforms. Therefore, this paper argues that adopting a proportional representative model could solve the governance quandary in Pakistan.

**Diagnosing the Issue**

For initiating any fruitful discourse, it needs to be realized that the situation the country is facing today is not the result of some sudden development or because of blunders in one or two areas of governance. Political and economic stability is the key to progress and sustainable development of any country.
Yet, in Pakistan, the situation is not only bleak in this regard, but has been deteriorating for the last several decades. In fact, there is a continuous and across-the-board process of decline. Specific measures are needed in all areas of governance particularly political, economic, and social sectors, etc. But most importantly, as all areas are interconnected and overlap with each other, governance, as a whole, needs to be improved.

The question is not of the dearth of human and financial resources or lack of technical expertise, rather, at the roots, are the ills of maladministration of resources, misplaced priorities, corruption, incompetence, and lack of a genuinely integrated approach, among others. Political, social, and institutional elites’ intemperance and hedonism and consequently, the formulation of policies and actions for individual and group interests, instead of national interests or observing the constitution and following the rule of law, have set a destructive cycle in motion.

It may also be noted here that moral values are being compromised in this situation, and moral degradation has a big role in the overall crisis. Though there is a hue and cry against corruption, it is still rampant and being accepted as necessary and unavoidable. While the constitution provides a framework and an institutional infrastructure for governance, the framework alone cannot guarantee an ideal system. Running any system successfully and achieving the desired positive results depend on the people who are at the helm of affairs. If there are weaknesses in them, even the best system becomes ineffective. Therefore, there is a need to consider both immediate and long-term policies focusing on the quality of ‘governors’, in addition to improving the system, to improve the quality of governance.

**Malaise is not Intractable**

Before proceeding further, it is important to reiterate that the situation Pakistan is facing, though troubling, is not unmanageable. A positive aspect of the current troubling situation is that the constitution is intact; its violations are being challenged; and an intense debate is going on regarding these violations in all concerned circles while the boundaries of the institutions are becoming clearer. Various elements responsible for the violations are getting exposed in the process. Despite bitterness, the situation is, by and large, peaceful. Indeed, this whole process plays an important role in educating the masses and reforming the system.
Learning from Other Countries

It is also important to stress that, although the magnitude and intensity might vary, issues of governance are not unique to Pakistan. Problems, big or small, related to political conflicts, economic management or the breakdowns in the social arena, exist in every country of the world. Similarly, issues of corruption, law and order situation and social and economic crimes as well as the performance of institutions vis-à-vis the delivery of justice are found in every society and country.

The United States (US) is arguably considered an epitome of democracy and democratic values. However, the rise of Trump along with the conduct of his government and politics is a cause of concern for many. Similarly, Israel is showcased as a model of democracy in the Middle East, yet it is witnessing a serious crisis in the wake of a tussle between the government and judiciary.

Likewise, India, the so-called largest democracy, is facing a crisis on many fronts. Not long ago, four judges of the Indian Supreme Court leveled allegations of partisan and selective decisions or manipulative tactics against the chief justice. And, the opposition leader Rahul Gandhi runs the risk of getting a court sentence of two years ban whereas his membership of the parliament has already been annulled. Chief Minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal, during his speech on the floor of the state assembly, leveled allegations of corruption against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Similarly, Malaysia, while it is considered as an example of progress and sustained development in the Muslim world, also grapples with the conundrum of corruption. Its former Prime Minister Najib Razak and his wife are, undergoing jail terms of 12 and 10 years, respectively.

In Scotland, the Scottish National Party (SNP) which has been in power for quite some time now, is active for an independent Scotland. Having lost the 2014 referendum for independence with a thin margin, it is again galvanizing support for the cause. SNP’s new leader Hamza Yousaf vowed to continue his party’s push to leave the United Kingdom (UK) and become a fully independent nation. Moreover, despite its long democratic tradition, Britain saw five prime ministers come and go in quick succession.

Along with a myriad of social problems, inflation and unemployment have engulfed the whole of Europe. Corruption remains a
serious concern for European Union (EU) citizens: more than a third of companies in the EU (34 percent) say that corruption is a problem when doing business. Furthermore, an important majority of companies agree that in their country close links between business and politics lead to corruption (79 percent) and that favoritism and corruption hamper business competition (70 percent).16

These are only some of the ‘representative’ crisis situations. While one can go on enumerating more, and debate about their nature, causes and consequences, it is important to note that despite all the problems, there is a sense of confidence and trust in the systems in these countries that the problems are being taken care of and would be resolved one way or the other in due course. This confidence and trust comes out of political stability and institutional framework.

System’s Consistency and Predictability

There is no reason for the Pakistani nation to feel demoralized either. In fact, most, if not all, problems can be fixed with better governance. However, the countries that seem to be moving forward on the road of progress, security and sustainable development have political stability, which sets them apart. Yet, this political stability itself was achieved over time. By designing and maintaining a generally acceptable inclusive system of change of regimes, these countries have ensured consistency and predictability in their systems. Despite the diversity in their systems, some features are common in these countries. There is little ambiguity as to where the authority and power for decision-making is rooted, how inclusivity is guaranteed, and, above all, how transparency in the process of accountability is ensured.

It would be useful, and interesting, to refer to the governance models of the two largest world powers – the US and China. These two countries represent not just different but quite opposite views on public representation and governance systems. Yet, both have well-defined processes and categorical timelines for change of government and political leadership. This provides quite a strong foundation for political stability.

In the US, elections for the House of Representatives are held every two years in the first week of November and coincide with the election of one-third of the Senate (to which a senator serves a 6-year term), and alternately coincide with the election of the president (to serve a 4-year term) who takes oath of the office after more than two months on January 20th, following
which a new administration takes control under him. In China, the Communist Party of China (CPC) convenes a week-long special session of its annual congress in the 5th year in October to elect its secretary general, whom the Chinese parliament, National People’s Congress (NPC), appoints as the president of the country, in its session that is generally held in March and continues for about two weeks. This marks the start of a tenure for the new government.

**Governance at Grassroots**

In addition, instead of addressing everything from the top, delegation of power to elected governments at the lowest level of society is ensured. With elected local governments in place, municipal affairs and development at the grassroots are no more in the domains of national legislature or administration. The domains and work left for the national (and provincial) legislature and institutions is the formulation of national policies and laws. Local governments, besides providing better governance in smaller administrative units play an important role in the political education of people, administrative training of elected representatives, and strengthening the tradition of working together. The experience and sense of participation because of these features of the governance system motivate people to exert themselves with their full potential and energy.

**Elections and Representation**

Timely elections, which are a means of accountability, are a strong tradition in these countries. Turning to the ‘governed’ i.e. public, instead of elites, and getting its endorsement every few years, compels governments and political leaderships to remain active and perform according to the public aspirations.

The electability of the individuals is an inescapable factor in the election process everywhere. Yet, the system has built-in mechanisms to ensure quality and genuineness of electability along with checking the chances of getting elected with dubious character. Capacity, credibility, and commitment towards the welfare and development of people are meant to be the parameters for elected representatives. Transparency, prudence, continuity in policies, institutional coordination, and respect for the rule of the law, become the subjects of electoral and political debates and yardsticks for evaluating the performance of governments and political parties.
Therefore, a look at the situation in Pakistan, with these features in the background, will be prudent to diagnose and prescribe a model of better governance by improving the electoral system and public representation.

**The State of Elections in Pakistan**

Elections at different tiers in Pakistan have been held intermittently. Even when national elections are held, local government elections are put on hold, or local government level elections are held to postpone or delay national level elections. Moreover, when local governments are in place, these are not genuinely empowered. And there is no doubt that it has an important role in the context of many of today’s problems. In the absence of local governments, thinking of the federal and provincial representatives and governments do not go beyond the scope that is actually the responsibility of the local governments and their representatives. A very prominent example in this regard is the ‘development funds’ that are provided/allocated to Parliament members and are practically used for personal preferences of the members rather than national development goals.  

Though national elections in Pakistan have been held continuously during the last four or so decades, the process and conduct of these elections has remained controversial. Voter turnout, which is a sign of public participation and reflects the legitimacy of elections and those who are elected, is not very high in general. A review of voter turnout from 1988 to 2018 reveals that it remained well below 50 percent in general, was at the lowest of 35 percent in 1997, and a little over 50 (i.e. 52-53) percent in the last two elections of 2013 and 2018 (see Table 1).
Table 1: Low Voter-Turnout in Elections (1988-2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total registered voters</th>
<th>Polled votes</th>
<th>Percentage Turn out</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>4,62,06,055</td>
<td>19903172</td>
<td>43.07%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>47065330</td>
<td>21395479</td>
<td>45.46%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>5,03,77,915</td>
<td>2,02,93,307</td>
<td>40.28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>56,976,073</td>
<td>19,941,625</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Lowest ever turnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>71913850</td>
<td>29972353</td>
<td>41.68%</td>
<td>Marginal increase despite the measures of reducing voter age from 21 years to 18 years and raising the National Assembly seats from 210 to 272, the turnout remained low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>80796382</td>
<td>35637072</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>86189828</td>
<td>46217482</td>
<td>53.62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>105955409</td>
<td>55086217</td>
<td>51.99%</td>
<td>Though the Election Commission was authorized to invalidate an election in a constituency if the turnout of women voters remained less than 10%, it did not change the situation. In fact, Women voters &quot;remained less than 10% in certain constituencies but the EC did not take any action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on reports and data from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and Gallup surveys.

Moreover, as a Gallup report concludes, ‘youth voter turnout is very low, much lower than usual voter turnout – only a quarter usually vote; in the last (2018) elections it was 1 in 3.’19 This is in spite of the fact that steps have been taken to improve the electoral process including the increase in the
number of directly-contested seats from 210 to 272, reduction in voting age in 2002\textsuperscript{20} and authority of the election commission to invalidate an election in a constituency ‘if the turnout of women voters is less than 10\% of the total votes polled in a constituency in 2017.’\textsuperscript{21} The lack of interest reflects indifference or dissatisfaction and mistrust among the voters towards the election process and raises questions about the extent to which the process may be regarded as a genuine basis for public representation. This is the natural result of deficiencies in both the system and conduct of elections. There is sufficient evidence available that the past elections have generally been rigged and manipulated.

The parliament that comes into being under such an arrangement cannot be self-assured. Moreover, it does not generate and consequently fully enjoy the required level of confidence in and outside the country. Thus the highest institution of governance, policymaking and legislation i.e. Parliament and the governments formed by it lack the capacity, will and self-confidence required for decision-making, be it about internal affairs or external matters.

**Impact on Governance**

Obviously, this negatively impacts the whole governance framework and implementation mechanisms. Bureaucracy, which helps in formulating policies and legislation and is responsible for implementing these decisions in their true spirit, loses the initiative. Instead of working in the national interest and priorities, it feels comfortable serving specific interests or avoiding decisions due to various pressures and fears. Contrary to providing good governance, this attitude of theirs makes the role of administration ineffective and virtually ‘on hold’.

An important aspect of good governance is the integrated government in harmony with and coordination between all state institutions at all levels. Here comes the role of the parliament which is supposed to be the supreme institution in the system. Yet, to get recognition as being truly supreme it would need capable, honest, efficient, and confident parliamentarians who can be trusted as such in the wake of their election through a fairly conducted process under a fair system of representation.

Weaknesses of the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary have severely damaged public confidence not only in the governments and institutions but also in the entire system. Its manifestations are general anxiety in public, detachment, and frustration, and sporadic aggression, hatred, and
confrontation. This is also causing damage to the image of Pakistan abroad, which becomes quite visible in Islamabad’s interactions with various capitals and international institutions. 22

In this era of hybrid warfare, such a situation makes it easy for the enemy to manipulate things in its favor. Against the background of the external challenges that Pakistan is facing, efforts on their part to not only exploit this state of instability and mistrust but also to intensify it even more, are not unexpected. Undoubtedly, this challenge will increase with each passing day if this state of mistrust in the government and the system remains unchecked.

Improving Public Representation

In this overall context and the framework of the constitution, the key goals for any reforms’ agenda should be to strengthen the parliament through improving the quality of public representation by ensuring inclusivity, integrity and transparency as well as accountability. As a result, the confidence of the people will increase in the country, its system and institutions and, consequently, they will be able to play a positive role.

It is satisfying, in a way, that the subject of election reforms remains under discussion at various forums. Several issues have been highlighted and some steps have also been taken.23 However, if the goal is to improve and strengthen the quality of public representation, the performance of political parties and, consequently, the efficiency of parliament, then reforms are not only required in the conduct of elections but also in the electoral system as a whole.

Electoral Systems around the World

Different types of electoral systems are used in different countries. As each type has its strengths and weaknesses, none of these can be adopted or rejected in categorical terms. This is also why many countries have opted for mixed or hybrid systems. Traditional ‘first-past-the-post’ system and proportional representation system are the two main electoral systems in vogue. While the former has been in practice for long in many countries, the latter is gaining currency and increased number of countries throughout the world are opting for it.24 The ‘first-past-the-post’ system – in which a country is divided into geographical constituencies and a candidate who gets the highest votes in a constituency gets a seat in the Parliament, enables a party or an alliance of
parties to form a government. However, its critics rightly argue that it practically disenfranchises the majority of voters.

The case of Pakistan is an obvious example in this regard. If we look at the last four elections in Pakistan, and the governments formed based on the outcome, no government can be considered representative of the majority of the people. Paradoxically, the number of votes received by the ruling party was never the majority of the polled votes. Even the total votes of coalition governments did not represent the majority of the people (see Table 2). This situation appears even worse when seen from the perspective that this ratio is based only on the polled votes, which is just around 50 percent in all the elections.

Table 2: Governments Established with Minority Votes (Parties’ Share in Total Polled Votes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Registered Voters</th>
<th>Polled Votes</th>
<th>Turnout %</th>
<th>Political Parties in NA</th>
<th>Votes of winning party</th>
<th>Coalition Government</th>
<th>Votes of opposition parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>71913850</td>
<td>29972353</td>
<td>41.68</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6898587</td>
<td>7818968</td>
<td>19007641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>80796382</td>
<td>35637072</td>
<td>44.11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10666548</td>
<td>18176683</td>
<td>23772845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>86189828</td>
<td>46217482</td>
<td>53.62</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14874104</td>
<td>No Coalition</td>
<td>27041654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>105955409</td>
<td>55086217</td>
<td>51.99</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16903702</td>
<td>19600313</td>
<td>32547893</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on various Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) reports.

The government formed as a result of the existing electoral process, even if it is a multi-party alliance, represents only a minority of voters: a minority of the votes cast and even a smaller minority of total eligible votes. In fact, one of the main reasons for the continued political chaos and polarization or indifference is that the large majority of citizens remain unrepresented in parliament. But this is a natural outcome of the system which is called ‘first past the post’ for this very reason. Therefore, some countries, such as France, have established a benchmark of 51 percent votes for the victory of candidates and thus ensure at least a simple majority of the winner. Some are experimenting with the ranked-choice voting system (RCV), where voters can rank more than one candidate in order of preference.
In addition to this quantitative aspect, the quality of representation also suffers in this system. The people elected actually represent the capacity and ‘successful campaigns’ of the individuals in their respective constituencies. Their victory or defeat in the constituency depends on their acceptance or rejection at the local level with factors like ethnic, tribal and/or Biradri’s or personal benefits and loyalties becoming the key parameters. The importance of capacity and ability required for policy matters and legislation gets relegated to a secondary or even lower status.

On the other hand, the proportional representation system accommodates votes to fuller lengths and thus improves public representation both quantitatively and qualitatively. In its simplest form, either an entire country is declared as one constituency or is divided into many geographical constituencies; political parties present lists of their parliamentary candidates, and the voters cast their votes essentially for parties, not individuals.

The candidates included in these lists become members of parliament according to the proportion of votes received by their parties. The main advantage of this system, as stated earlier, is that votes do not go to waste in large numbers (as they do in the existing ‘first-past-the-post’ system). Thus Parliament is more representative of all stakeholders. Yet, this is not the only advantage that gives proportional representation an edge over the existing system.

Ethnic, regional, linguistic, or religious affiliations gradually become less significant, if not totally eliminated, and shift towards national issues. However, where necessary, special measures can be taken to accommodate vulnerable sections of society (such as minorities, ethnic groups, etc.) by requiring from political parties to give mandatory representation to them in their lists.

In order to promote nationalism by encouraging nationwide parties, certain ‘threshold of votes’ is made obligatory. Only those parties can get parliamentary seats which have obtained a minimum ratio of total votes (for example, two or three or even ten percent) cast across the country or in each electoral constituency.

The above is a simple form of proportional representation. There are many variations of this system in different countries in the light of their specific conditions, social structures and democratic journey and trends. For example, sometimes entire country is declared as one multi-member constituency, but
at others it is divided into several constituencies. Sometimes, party lists are considered in the order they present their candidates (closed list), but at others, candidates from the party lists get to the parliament according to the number of votes they gain for themselves in the name of the party (open list). Making voting for all citizens mandatory is yet another feature in some countries.

**A Survey of Different Countries**

A survey including a range of countries – Turkey and Indonesia (large Muslim countries with different geographical situation), Germany (a developed Western European nation), along with Belgium, Denmark, Brazil, Australia, South Africa and Israel – provides valuable insights in the system. It is interesting to learn how these countries have evolved their electoral systems in order to best reflect the public opinion.

Some countries, as mentioned earlier, hold traditional ‘first-past-the-post’ elections but with certain additional conditions to ensure that the winner (candidate and party) really have majority votes. Many countries, such as Germany, opt for a mixed approach. Others, like Turkey and Israel, have the proportional representation system with additional condition of nation-wide threshold of certain percentage of votes. It is educative to note how some countries arrange for their expats’ votes, and while strengthening political parties, their systems provide room for independent candidates too, etc. (See Table 3 in Annexure).

**Proportional Representation Model for Pakistan**

The system of proportional representation is not new in Pakistan. At the national level, for example, elections are being held on a proportional representation basis for the reserved seats of women and minorities. The same principle has been adopted at lower levels for reserved seats in local governments. So, in the context of today’s Pakistan, the introduction of proportional representation system would not be strange, but a holistic approach for reforming the entire system is required.

As regards the objections against proportional representation that it proliferates political parties and results in weaker coalition governments, the situation in Pakistan would in fact stand to change for the better. The number of registered political parties, according to the records of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), is 164, and generally, coalition governments
are formed and, as noted earlier, none has completed its tenure (though the National Assembly (NA) has occasionally had full term).

As mentioned, there is considerable diversity in electoral models under proportional representation system around the world and a lot of room is available for variation according to the demographic conditions of a country. In this regard, the first step is to obtain a principled consensus to adopt this concept and to introduce it to the public at large, along with its constitutional recognition. A consensus-building movement is required to move for the necessary legislation by the future Parliament.

The system of proportionate representation in Pakistan may be based on the following two main conditions:

- For the national and provincial assemblies, the division might represent an electoral constituency.\(^{32}\)
- A party or alliance of parties that fails to meet the threshold of five percent of the total votes cast in the country and three/four percent of the votes cast in each province shall not be eligible for assembly seats.\(^{33}\)

Currently, there are 29 divisions in the four provinces in addition to the Federal Capital of Islamabad.\(^{34}\) These can be considered multi-member electoral constituencies according to their population size.

In order to overcome fears of unintended consequences, reforms in the electoral system could be geared in such a way as to move to the proportional representation system gradually. For a certain period, for example, Pakistan could opt for some hybrid electoral system like Germany’s\(^{35}\) – i.e. half parliamentary seats through the existing ‘first-past-the-post’ system and half through the proportional representation either with parties’ ‘closed lists’ or ‘open lists’.

**Conclusion**

The crises facing Pakistan are quite daunting, but not new. It is about time to take not only emergency measures for immediate results, but also think of long-term decisions that help determine the direction and, hence, provide sustainable solutions. Moreover, the problems are not unique to Pakistan. In fact, they offer an opportunity to undertake long-overdue reforms with self-confidence and determination along with learning and benefiting from the
experiences of countries around the world. In spite of the challenging situation and intra- and inter-institutional squabbling, the constitution is intact and its violations, in letter or spirit, are getting exposed. The constitution provides quite a comprehensive framework for governance according to the principle of separation of power between the three main organs of the state: legislature, executive (government), and judiciary. It also provides room and suggests ways and means for making amendments or adding new features to cope with the challenges of changing times. The nation and its decision-makers only need to resolve to observe the law in letter and spirit and overcome the crises by finding out solutions within the ambit of the constitution.

For better governance, reforms in the electoral system are crucial. A start in this regard could be made by introducing the proportional representation system in the country. Though this one step would not solve the whole dilemma of governance, yet it would be a step in the right direction. Good governance requires simultaneous steps in other areas too that include judicial reforms to ensure efficient and effective dispensation of justice, devolution of power, empowerment of local governments, and transparency in the system and process of accountability, etc.

There is no denying the fact that these initiatives, however, depend on the role of parliament and its character. This in turn brings the debate to the same point – i.e. electoral system reforms. The task of such reforms is, obviously, not easy. It is quite arduous and would be resisted by the beneficiaries of the existing system. But a meaningful start could be made by taking all stakeholders on board and consensus-building on electoral system reforms for good governance.
## Annexure

### Table 3: Electoral Systems Around the World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral System</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>S. Africa</th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>Israel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electoral System</strong></td>
<td>PR, Party List (Closed), D'Hondt method</td>
<td>Half (299) directly from geographic constituency, half (299) from party lists in 16 states</td>
<td>PR, District-based Party Lists, D'Hondt method</td>
<td>PR, Party Lists (Open)</td>
<td>PR, Party List (Open)</td>
<td>Direct Plurality-Majority, with 50% of vote in an electorate (with preferential voting)</td>
<td>PR, Party List (Closed)</td>
<td>PR, Party List (Open)</td>
<td>PR, Party List (Open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electoral Districts</strong></td>
<td>85 (3 for each of 27 Districts &amp; 2 for Istanbul), 1 each for Ankara and Izmir</td>
<td>16 States</td>
<td>11 Multi-member constituency + Brussels Province-based 10 constituencies + Faroe Island &amp; Greenland</td>
<td>26 districts + Brasilia</td>
<td>26 districts + Brasilia</td>
<td>15 States</td>
<td>26 districts + Brasilia</td>
<td>26 districts + Brasilia</td>
<td>26 districts + Brasilia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliament Structure</strong></td>
<td>Unit-cameral, 550 Members</td>
<td>793 (313 from Berlin, 1 each from other states)</td>
<td>79-member Folketing (parliament)</td>
<td>Bi-cameral: 81 Senators: 513 (3 each from 26 districts and Brasilia)</td>
<td>Bi-cameral: 81 Senators: 513 (3 each from 26 districts and Brasilia)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliament Term</strong></td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Senate: 8 years</td>
<td>Senate: 8 years</td>
<td>Senate: 6 years for state senators, 3 years for territorial senators</td>
<td>Senate: 5 years</td>
<td>Senate: 5 years</td>
<td>Senate: 6 years for state senators, 3 years for territorial senators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Threshold</strong></td>
<td>Nation-Wide 10%+1 D'Hondt Quotient in Districts</td>
<td>5% of the second vote (PR), or 3 constituency seats</td>
<td>5% per constituency</td>
<td>5% per constituency</td>
<td>5% per constituency</td>
<td>5% per constituency</td>
<td>5% per constituency</td>
<td>5% per constituency</td>
<td>1.5% per constituency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Note: The table above provides an overview of various electoral systems around the world, including the countries listed.*
Notes

1. Only military governments have proved to be relatively stable. But these cannot be construed to reflect true political stability. Certain regimes might have been strong, but they could not pave way for long-term stability.

2. An indication of political uncertainty and fragility is that though elections have been held continuously for the last four decades, i.e. since 1985, no government has completed its tenure. This points to both internal weaknesses of the political system or the people running it as well as to institutional wrangling.

3. That Pakistan is negotiating 23rd program with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is in itself a statement of the dismal state of affairs in this regard.

4. The constitution articulates an elaborate system for the function of the state by providing a framework for the three main pillars of the state, their relationship and distribution of power.


14. RC EW, “Rape and Sexual Assault Statistics” (Leeds: Rape Crisis England & Wales, n.d.), accessed June 1, 2023, https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/. For instance, according to official records of the UK and Wales, rape and sexual assault are on the rise. Despite high rates of rape, charging and conviction remain very low. Only 1 in 100 rapes recorded by police in 2021, resulted in a charge that same year – let alone a conviction.


See, for instance, PILDAT, “PILDAT Terms Pre-Poll Process as Unfair; Institutions must Ensure to Be Seen as Neutral” (Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2018), https://pildat.org/electoral-reforms1/pildat-terms-pre-poll-process-as-unfair


Empowerment of the Election Commission can be cited as a significant example in this regard.

Globally, around 90 countries use some form of proportional representation. In Europe, it is the most common form of the electoral system. Countries such as Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, and Turkey are using this system. Outside Europe, Argentina, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand are among those countries that are using this system.

When 51 percent of the votes are not received by a single candidate, another round of election is held between the two top candidates.

Drew Desilver, Carrie Blazina, Janakee Chavda and Rebecca Leppert, “More US Locations Experimenting with Alternative Voting Systems” (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2021), https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/06/29/more-u-s-locations-experimenting-with-alternative-voting-systems/. If one candidate receives a majority of first-choice votes, that person wins, and no subsequent rounds are needed. If no one wins a majority of first-preference votes, the last-place candidate is dropped and their votes are reallocated to those voters' second choices. If there’s still no majority winner, the process repeats with the new last-place candidate being eliminated – and so forth until someone has a majority. (This is why RCV is also called ‘instant-runoff voting.’)

The case of open list motivates candidates of political parties to make maximum efforts to mobilize voters in their favor along with their party’s. This balances the oft-cited advantage of “first-past-the-post” system where candidates play an important role in mobilizing the electorate through their individual campaigns.
For instance, in France, the winner should get absolute majority of votes cast along with 25 percent of eligible votes in the constituency; failing which there would be a second round of contest between the top two runners.

In Turkey, there were 3 million expats votes (of the total 57 million) in 2015. In Australia, expats intending to return within 6 years can vote. France has 11 seats reserved for expats. Some countries, such as Belgium, even allow non-nationals to vote in certain level elections.

Election Commission of Pakistan, GoP, “Election Commission of Pakistan-Notification” (Government of Pakistan, 2013), https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/rm.pdf. 'Elections to the reserved seats for women and non-Muslims in the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies shall be held on the basis of proportional representation system of political parties’ lists of candidates… submitted to the Election Commission on the basis of total number of general seats won by each political party.'

These objections do carry some weight, yet only larger, national-level parties remain in the foray with the passage of time and strengthening of political culture.

The reason for making ‘division’ a constituency is to guarantee territorial representation along with the representation of political parties and political groups. Due to the federal nature of the state, the country might not be considered as one constituency as a whole, or province-based constituencies (as there are large disparities in the population size of the provinces). An alternative in the form of division as a constituency seems quite workable.

This threshold in the countries included in the survey ranges from 1.5 percent (Israel) to 10 percent (Turkey).

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, GoP, “Current Position of Divisions and Districts in Pakistan with District Codes” (Government of Pakistan, 2020), https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/labour_force/publications/lfs2020_21/District_and_Country_Codes.pdf. Elections for Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) assemblies are held separately. There are 7 Divisions in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Malakand, Hazara, Mardan, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan); 9 in Punjab (Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Lahore, Sahiwal, Multan, Bahawalpur, and Dera Ghazi Khan); 6 in Sindh (Larkana, Sukkur, Mirpur Khas, Benazirabad, Hyderabad and Karachi), and 7 in Balochistan (Zhob, Sibi, Nasirabad, Makran, Kalat, Rakhshan and Quetta).

As direct elections are held for (national and provincial) assemblies and local governments, this paper mentions and envisages proportional representation system for the same institutions. However, the agenda of reforms in governance and electoral processes might also include expanding the scope to elections of the Senate as well as to the offices of the President, Prime Minister, and Chief Ministers, etc. The current system of President’s and Senate’s elections, with the assemblies as electoral colleges, has given rise to corruption and horse-trading.

Based on information available at website of the countries' parliaments. These are some select countries from different parts of the world.