

# THE THREE-YEAR POLITICAL TERM: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES, AND STAGGERED ELECTIONS IN FOCUS

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Every country adopts its own style of governance, leading to significant differences in political systems throughout the world. One of the primary differences across political systems is the length of a political term, which can vary from a few years to many decades. The majority of nations choose the more usual four or five-year political tenure, whilst just a small number embrace the shorter three-year period. This article investigates the concept of a three-year political term, examining the countries that use it and discussing any possible advantages. Alongside, it also offers an overview of the benefits of having shorter political periods, as well as the reasons for why certain countries choose to have three-year terms.

## THE THREE-YEAR POLITICAL TERM

Several nations utilise three-year political terms for different roles inside their governing bodies. A few examples are as follows:

- In the US, Congress is chosen every two years.
- Australia: The House of Representatives in Australia has a relatively short three-year tenure in comparison to other legislative systems with lengthier terms. This relatively short term is intended to maintain close communication between elected officials and the



people they represent.

- New Zealand: More frequent elections and more government accountability is made possible by the three-year term of the New Zealand House of Representatives.
- Malaysia: The three-year periods that state legislatures in Malaysia employ promote political vibrancy and regular election attendance.
- India: The periods of the legislative assembly of the Indian states of Delhi and Haryana are for three years.
- Philippines: Voters have more opportunities to voice their opinions in the Philippines since local government members, such as mayors and councilors, often hold office for three years.

## ADVANTAGES OF A THREE-YEAR POLITICAL TERM

The increased accountability that comes with a three-year political term for elected leaders is one of its key advantages. Politicians are forced to engage with the public more frequently during their shorter periods, which reduces the possibility of abuse of power and encourages better answers to public issues. This relationship might promote better communication between citizens and elected authorities. Shorter political terms allow governments to respond to changing circumstances faster. Three-year terms enable more frequent updates to plans and programmes. In a world that is changing swiftly, governments have to move quickly to meet emerging concerns.

Regular election cycles can promote more diversity and representation in political leadership. Less time means more opportunities for newcomers to the political scene and for new ideas to emerge, which helps to guarantee that the government adapts to the changing demands and values of the people. As a result, incumbents may find it harder to maintain their hold on power for an extended period of time in cases when terms are shorter. This may stimulate new faces, ideas and make politics more competitive. Longer political terms can provide incumbents a significant advantage in reelection, which can lead to apathy and a lack of rivalry. Three-year terms increase political competition by making it more difficult for incumbents to maintain a steady grasp on power.

While many countries prefer longer political periods, those with three-year terms highlight important benefits. These advantages contain higher accountability, quicker adaptability, enhanced representation, less incumbent advantage, and greater political involvement. However, the effectiveness of a three-year term depends on the particular political environment and the capacity of a nation's institutions to perform well throughout this period. The country's particular conditions and aims should be carefully considered while determining the ideal term duration.

A policy viewpoint entitled 'PIDE's Charter of Economy: Petition to all the Political Leaders/Parties of Pakistan' contains a reform proposal. PIDE has put it out for debate and discussion to develop consensus. It focuses on various socio-economic and political issues. Still, one suggestion that caught the attention of certain individuals in political circles was that the assembly term limit being reduced to three years. From the proposed point, the main message is not about having three years as the magic number that must be followed, but more importantly, that the 5-year term is too long and must be reduced to an agreeable/realistic number as all of

Pakistan's Prime Ministers had an average tenure time of just below three years – excluding interim PMs. Why are we stuck to a 5-year term, especially when it is not working?

That is thought-provoking for us to revive/reform and rethink the five-year term. It is high time to start reconsidering the 5-year political term in Pakistan. Shorter terms lead to a more responsive government as well as a government that is less likely to accumulate excessive power. Those who say that a shorter term does not allow the government to implement its plans and projects forget that these are not government projects and plans but the people and must be passed on from one to the other. No one has a monopoly on a cricket team, for instance: players change as required, and they are guaranteed no tenure.

Staggered elections, often referred to as phased or multi-phase elections, are essential in democratic countries. How they are conducted may significantly affect both the electoral process and the results. Elections that are held in different places or constituencies at various times are one such technique. This method contrasts with simultaneous elections, in which every region casts a ballot on the same day. Numerous countries like the US, Canada, Germany, and India have adopted staggered elections, and both scholarly and practical debate has focused on the benefits and downsides of this system. Comparing staggered elections versus simultaneous elections, there are a number of benefits. The advantages of staggered elections are substantial, and they include better electoral administration, lower campaign expenses, increased voter information and involvement, fewer security threats, and effective disaster management. Pakistan is likely the only country in the world where new caretaker governments are inducted both at the federal and provincial level during the election period to guard against partisan political influence on the electoral process.

It makes sense that many people, both inside and outside of state institutions, would find it challenging to mentally prepare for the prospect of elections to various assemblies occurring at various times in the near future, with all the associated financial, political, and governance implications. The provision of caretaker administrations in the constitution will be weakened, if not completely compromised, by the staggered elections.

The expected staggered elections would see caretaker governments in the two provinces but a partisan political government at the federal level with all the clout and potential to influence elections in the two provinces. In the same vein, when the National Assembly election is held later this year, there won't be caretaker administrations in Punjab or KP. This will increase the likelihood that partisan provincial administrations will affect the results of the National Assembly elections in these two

provinces, which together account for about 70% of the seats in the assembly. In the lead-up to the provincial assembly election, the ECP suspended the elected local governments in KP due to its extreme sensitivity to the risk of partisan administrations affecting the polls.

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