

# BOOK REVIEW

## PAKISTAN: The Politics of the Misgoverned

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Reviewed by  
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### Preamble

PIDE organized a webinar of book launch in which Azhar Hasaan Nadeem launched his book titled, "Pakistan: The Politics of the Misgoverned". The book summarizes different important elements from the history of Pakistan, which makes this country difficult to govern. Author discusses all the important players of power in Pakistan and makes their interplay the subject matter of the book. Though the book handles a very difficult topic, the best thing is that as the reader goes along, the text starts offering answers to many questions that come to one's mind. Writing a comprehensive commentary in a concise write-up is the best thing about this book. Overall, this effort offers an extensive review of the prominent events that shaped the fate of Pakistan and helps the reader understand why and how we landed in our current situation.

### What the book offers on Pakistan, country's governance and the stakeholders

The author starts by discussing the events linked with the creation of Pakistan and the priorities therein, elaborating how after Quaid-i-Azam the politicians-cum-leaders deviated from the founding principles of Pakistan. The first chapter brilliantly explains how the political incompetence to resolve issues politically, paved the way for Military Rule, leaving the perpetrators (like Sikandar Mirza) with no gain. The irony of the situation is that the same events are happening yet again nowadays after 73 years where both the Government as well the opposition are looking towards the establishment despite acknowledging the role of establishment in the chains of events. This again highlights the incompetence of political parties to settle their political differences through dialog.

The second chapter vividly starts with quotes and extracts from very pertinent books of North and Acemoglu followed by discussion about events from Pakistan's history, hence presents a great synthesis of theories and events happening in Pakistan. From One unit to land reforms, from feudal elite capture to excessive centralization,

from secular to Islamic Pakistan; every critical event is accounted for and hence, implications for Pakistan's hurdles to progress are acknowledged. Extracts such as (Quote):

*"Politically, a system of indirect elections was introduced, and the key positions in all institutions of local government were given to the Civil Service of Pakistan"*

brilliantly explains the reasons for existing extended turf of bureaucracy due to their initial introduction to power instead of service in General Ayub Khan's era. Such extracts are very relevant to find answers to newly emerging questions, which PIDE is pushing hard to find answers to, in the recent time. Similarly, the chapter presents (as Quoted below):

*"The regime started patronizing a small industrial and commercial elite through direct and indirect subsidies, protectionist import controls, cheap imported machinery and raw materials through an overvalued exchange rate"*

This again truly highlights what remained wrong with Pakistan and how governance and market structures were rigged and rolled back for very marginal personal gains to remain in power. Unfortunately, Pakistan's journey of sufferings continues to date and we see similar glimpses even now in slightly different form such as overvalued currency, untargeted subsidies, ill-planned market interventions, elite capture, nepotism and mis-targeted spending priorities, to mention a few. The chapter also succinctly summarizes the rise and fall of different regimes and linked it well to certain policy decisions and external factors. The extent and details of chain of events exhibit author's deep understanding of the political economy as well as the institutions of Pakistan. Similarly, later chapters concerning Judiciary and Criminal Justice system along with other important topics also provides a commentary which takes the reader through history, highlighting all the important junctions. This, though, at time seems repetition of history, which can only be at best regretted.

The third chapter i.e. on Judiciary, though unnecessarily explains all the proceedings of Panama and subsequent cases while leaving the rest of the historical judicial blunders (like political cases including that of Zulfiqar Ali Butto's and cases regarding pure economic policy like Rekodic Case, Karkay Case, Steel Mill Case along with other minute cases during the time of Judicial Activism including sugar pricing as well as case of two bottles aside.

The time of Judicial Activism including sugar pricing as well as case of two bottles aside. The book neatly touches upon various issues that are linked to the lower judiciary in particular and the criminal justice system in general. The book does outline the overburdened courts, which hinders the speed and just recourse. The statements like, "The judicial system in *Pakistan has failed to deliver predictable and efficient justice, both on the civil as well as the criminal side. This can be judged from the fact that till June 2015, the total number of cases pending amounted to 27,639*" succinctly summarizes the situation on the ground and its gravity. Policing is another very important pillar of criminal justice system, which the chapter deeply puts light on. The chapter outlines the weak points in the induction process of officers and the interplay of elites, however, naming few individuals rather does not help in fixing the whole responsibility of the decay. The chapter elaborates the over-time decay in performance, professionalism and leadership of policy due to political interference, lack of institutional structure and lack of meritocracy resulting in connivance of higher-ups with political masters or perpetrators.

In brief, the book takes into account all the important players and circumstances, which made Pakistan hard to govern. Be it the "Rule of law and superior judiciary"; the "Criminal justice system"; the "Political parties, army and politics"; The "Local government"; The "Civil society"; "Terrorism" or be it the "Socio-economic situation in Pakistan";

All important events are covered. The book doesn't heed attention to the role of individuals who grew greater than institutions by unfair means, though the book names few of them.

There are a number of culprits, most importantly the 'Dam/KCR-building' Judiciary followed by Politicians, Establishment and Bureaucracy, who's joint play is left unreferenced to, thus reinforcing the view for those known as untouchables'.

### **Delusions and Stakeholders' Interplay**

The book is a valuable piece of writing for the students of social science, technocrats, policymakers, parliamentarians, politicians, and civil society representatives. The book doesn't hinge on the classification of institutions as merely inclusive and extractive political and economic. The author goes beyond the contours of economic orthodoxy and has included social institutions in his analysis. Social institutions, here, are defined with respect to the institutions of social control such as informal policing system, panchayat and Jirga. The intersection of formal and informal legal system describe the pluralistic legal system prevalent in the country. The book also takes a strong position in specifying public vs. private dichotomy when it comes to religious sentiment. The author's clear assertion of constricting matters of religious ethos to private domains is indicative of the fact that he is against politicization of religion, and in order to keep country's development going the bifurcation of public and private domains has to be maintained. The author is critical of intrusion of religious ethos in the political landscape of Pakistan. Similarly, ontologically, he believes viewing and achieving development beyond economic routes. Concurrently, he also lists the issues faced by the country due to pluralistic nature of both legal system and educational system prevalent in the country. In chapter on Civil Society, his critical innuendo is not sharp as it should have been because of critique on the participatory framework adopted, succumbing to the conditionalities of foreign donors, and lack of third degree of

participation. The book also speaks of building a social contract among different stakeholder who have been exerting control and power over the country's politics and shaping, reforming or de-forming Pakistan's development, ranging from judiciary, local communities, bureaucracy, politicians, etc. The social contract seems to be a lousy option as the theory is about subservicing to power without deconstructing and challenging it. Also, left to be desired was the some functional framework of aforesaid social contract.

### **Scanning the Additional Causes of Decay**

The book speaks little about the role of politicians in the way they educate their followers. Slogans like “Yes, I am living beyond means, SO.....”, or putting to rest the slogan of election rigging on 35 seats as “It was a Political Statement”, similarly, inherent inconsistency in action like following full Corona SOPs at domestic functions while asking general masses for mass gatherings. There should have been certain discussion on such inconsistencies on the part of politicians.

Lastly and most importantly, the General Public's apathy is left untouched. Citizens have given up their right to analyze and ask, practically surrendering their right to hold the so-called leaders accountable (whom in fact are their agents in the parliament). Can any democratic system deliver without electoral accountability? Despite generating very informative historical debate, the driving force, The Citizens, The Public for whom all of this is happening is missing from the central discussion. This is however by no means to suggest anything negative about the book.

Overall, we deeply acknowledge the author for doing very intensive work, which is very pertinent to the discussion today to consider and reflect upon. We need to keep touching upon such issues so that the awareness level increases, leading to restart the sustainable people-centric political ecosystem (where citizens are the driving force, not the so-called Politicians cum Leaders, Establishment, NAB or the Judiciary).