

SUMMARY of the article “Crisis of Governability,” by Umair Javed, Dawn, July 22nd, 2024

In the article “Crisis of Governability,” Umair Javed explores the deteriorating control of the Pakistani state over its political and economic landscape, as analyzed by scholars Adeel Malik and Maya Tudor. They predict a deepening ‘crisis of governability,’ marked by the current regime’s low societal acceptance and diminishing ability to enforce its agenda. Actions such as coercion against PTI members, Imran Khan’s continued incarceration, and manipulation of the 2024 elections have led to widespread unpopularity and mistrust in the regime, extending to the military establishment. Economically, despite some positive indicators, public perception remains grim due to plummeting real wages and limited growth opportunities, exacerbated by rising taxes and electricity tariffs. The state is perceived as only proficient in self-benefiting practices, failing to achieve sustained economic growth or meaningful reforms. The regime’s struggle is evident in its inability to manipulate election outcomes effectively, with the judiciary emerging as a site of resistance. Scholars attribute this crisis to societal changes like urbanization, a vocal middle class, and the rise of social media challenging state narratives. The article suggests that the crisis mirrors the end of Musharraf’s regime, where similar economic and political discontent was prevalent. Javed argues for a brokered negotiation involving fresh elections, removal of opposition restrictions, and restoration of parliamentary politics as a short-term solution, while acknowledging the deeper economic and public sector dysfunction that remains unaddressed.

Easy/Short SUMMARY:

The article talks about how the Pakistani government is losing control and becoming less popular. People are unhappy with actions like jailing PTI members

and controlling the 2024 elections. Economically, even though some things seem to improve, most people are struggling with low wages and high taxes. The government's main focus seems to be on benefiting itself rather than helping the economy grow. The judiciary is resisting the government's control, and social changes like more people living in cities and using social media are making it harder for the government to maintain its power. The article suggests holding new elections and allowing opposition parties to operate freely as a way to fix some of these problems, though bigger economic issues remain.

SOLUTIONS of The Problem:

Educational Programs for Parents:

Implement educational programs to raise awareness among parents about the negative impact of exposing children to violence and provide guidance on positive parenting practices.

Community Awareness Campaigns:

Launch community awareness campaigns to condemn violence and promote non-violent conflict resolution methods, involving local leaders and influencers.

School-Based Interventions:

Introduce school-based interventions focusing on conflict resolution skills, empathy-building exercises, and mental health education to address the root causes of aggression among children.

Regulation of Digital Media:

Enforce regulations on digital media to restrict access to violent content and promote age-appropriate, educational material that fosters positive values.

Access to Mental Health Services:

Ensure access to mental health services for children and adolescents, including screening for signs of violence and trauma, and providing timely interventions and support.

Role Modeling by Authority Figures:

Encourage authority figures, including leaders and public officials, to serve as positive role models by condemning violence and promoting empathy and respect in their interactions.

Community Policing and Conflict Resolution:

Promote community policing initiatives and conflict resolution programs that prioritize dialogue and mediation over punitive measures, fostering a culture of peace and cooperation.

Parenting Support Groups:

Establish parenting support groups where caregivers can share experiences, learn effective parenting strategies, and receive guidance on managing conflict and promoting positive behaviors.

Legal Reform and Enforcement:

Advocate for legal reforms to strengthen laws against violence and ensure their effective enforcement, holding perpetrators accountable and providing justice for victims.

Youth Empowerment Programs:

Develop youth empowerment programs that provide opportunities for skill-building, leadership development, and civic engagement, empowering young people to become agents of positive change in their communities.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the Article:

1. *Crisis of Governability:* A deepening crisis marked by low societal acceptance and diminishing ability to enforce the government's agenda.
2. *Political Actions:* Coercion against PTI members, Imran Khan's incarceration, and manipulation of the 2024 elections leading to widespread unpopularity.

3. *Economic Perception*: Despite positive indicators like inflation and stock market recovery, public perception remains grim due to plummeting real wages and high taxes.
4. *Judicial Resistance*: The judiciary is emerging as a site of resistance against the government's control.
5. *Societal Changes*: Urbanization, a vocal middle class, and social media are challenging the state's political control.
6. *Historical Parallels*: Current situation compared to the end of Musharraf's regime with similar economic and political discontent.
7. *Short-term Solutions*: Suggestion of fresh elections, removal of opposition restrictions, and restoration of parliamentary politics.

MCQs from the Article:

1. What is the main topic of the article?

- A. Economic growth in Pakistan
- B. The success of the 2024 elections
- C. *The crisis of governability in Pakistan*
- D. The role of social media in politics

2. What is one of the key reasons for the regime's unpopularity?

- A. Low inflation rates
- B. Successful economic reforms
- C. *Coercion against PTI members*
- D. High levels of societal acceptance

3. What is a suggested short-term solution for the crisis?

- A. Increasing taxes
- B. Strengthening military control
- C. *Holding fresh elections*
- D. Reducing public sector services

4. Which sector is mentioned as a drain on the economy?

- A. Education
- B. Energy
- C. Agriculture
- D. Technology

5. What societal change is contributing to the crisis of governability?

- A. Decreasing urbanization
- B. Rise of a vocal middle class
- C. Decline in social media usage
- D. Increased trust in the military establishment

VOCABULARY:

1. *Governability* (حکومت پذیری): The ability to control or govern.
2. *Incarceration* (تعلیق): The state of being confined in prison.
3. *Manipulation* (تعمیر و تخریب): Control or influence over a situation or person.
4. *Legitimacy* (مقبولیت): Conformity to the law or to rules.
5. *Dismay* (تذلل): Distress caused by something unexpected.
6. *Authoritarianism* (تسلط پرستی): The enforcement or advocacy of strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom.
7. *Electables* (مقبول نامزد): Politicians deemed likely to win elections.
8. *Judiciary* (قضائیت): The judicial authorities of a country; judges collectively.
9. *Resistance* (مقاومت): The refusal to accept or comply with something.
10. *Coercion* (تسلط و تخریب): The practice of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats.
11. *Urbanization* (شہریकरण): The process of making an area more urban.
12. *Narrative* (تاریخ): A spoken or written account of connected events; a story.
13. *Apathy* (بیگانگی): Lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern.
14. *Economic Indicators* (اقتصادی اشارے): Statistics about economic activities.
15. *Relentless* (مستحکم): Oppressively constant; incessant.
16. *Suppression* (تسلط و تخریب): The action of suppressing something such as an activity or publication.



17. *Bonanza* (بونا نزا): A situation which creates a sudden increase in wealth, good fortune, or profits.
18. *Appropriating* (ا پ ر پ ر ی ا ت): Taking something for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission.
19. *Vocational* (و ک ا ش ن ا ل): Relating to an occupation or employment.
20. *Periphery* (پ ر ی ف ر ی): The outer limits or edge of an area or object.

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'Crisis of governability'
Umair Javed

IN a recent piece published in the Journal of Democracy, scholars Adeel Malik and Maya Tudor provide an overview of why the Pakistani state is losing its ability to control the political landscape. In their own words, the authors foresee a 'crisis of governability' that will only deepen in the coming years.

The clearest indication of this crisis is the current regime's struggle in two

distinct arenas: the first is that it faces extremely low levels of societal acceptance for its political and economic actions. The second is that its ability to bend political and economic outcomes according to its own agenda is increasingly handicapped.

In terms of societal acceptance, actions such as coercion against PTI members, continued incarceration of Imran Khan, the 'management' of the 2024 elections, tales of 'digital fitna', and the post-election set-up cobbled together with the PML-N at its helm are all fairly unpopular. Any public opinion surveys will show the low levels of legitimacy for the current dispensation, the continued popularity of PTI, and a historic lack of trust in the military establishment that now extends well beyond the geographic peripheries.

In the economic domain, mass perception is that the regime is flailing about and the economy continues to worsen. While a few recovering indicators, such as inflation, current account numbers and the stock market, are hyped as success stories, no one really cares about these in the face of plummeting real wages and the drying up of economic opportunities given the lack of growth. The relentless assault of taxes and rising electricity tariffs in the recent budget twisted the proverbial knife and set off another wave of dismay.

The only economic area that state personnel show competence in is appropriating benefits for themselves.

Clearly, public reaction to whatever political and economic story the state is selling ranges between resigned apathy and complete mistrust. But that is not necessarily the end of it. Many governments hold power while being unpopular, especially if they have no democratic pretensions. Authoritarian regimes require some legitimacy (among key backers), sure, but the bigger priority is to bend political and economic outcomes as per their will.

This is the second distinct aspect where the current set-up is struggling. The 2024 election results indicated that large-scale election manipulation that relies on shepherding electables, legal straitjackets and extra-legal suppression

is an increasingly impossible task. Recent

decisions by the superior courts that provide relief to the PTI further show that

not everyone within the state is willing to play along. The judiciary is emerging once more as a site of active resistance.

To overcome such resistance, doubling down on even more coercion and manipulation will be required. No wonder, then, that ideas like banning the PTI and appointing ad hoc judges were floated soon after the Supreme Court's decision on the reserved seats case.

Such handicapped authoritarianism coexists with another long-standing issue: the state's inability to steer economic outcomes towards any type of sustained growth. The frequently narrated dollar bonanza from the Gulf and China has so far failed to materialise; domestic investment continues to languish; and no amount of reform rhetoric can paper over the fact that key sectors, such as energy, continue to act as a drain on the overall economy.

The only economic area that state personnel show competence in is appropriating benefits for themselves, or as Aasim Sajjad, Shahrukh Rafi Khan, and Sohaib Bodla put it succinctly, "an enhancement of their own quality of life at the expense of the rest of the citizenry".

Several analysts and scholars rightly point out that the crisis of governability is an outcome of deeper changes within Pakistani society. Urbanisation, the rise of a vocal white-collar upper middle class, the growth in dreams, aspirations, and ambitions among lower middle class segments, and the rise of a separate information universe on social media that challenges state-spun fables (and puts out its own), have all helped loosen the state's political control.

The symptom of this crisis — surging anger at a failing economy and suffocating politics — is being channelled through the figure of Imran Khan and his party. But the underlying reality is that the status quo of the past few decades is proving itself to be largely unsustainable.

In several aspects, the current moment of low social acceptance and low ability is reminiscent of the final stages of Musharraf's martial law regime. Between 2005 and 2007 too, the economy faltered, the state was unable to do anything about food and energy crises, the superior judiciary emerged as a site of activism, and opposition of all colours, from militant fundamentalism, to middle class civic action, to mainstream party-based opposition, all became active.



SUMMARY of the article Crisis of Governability, by Umair Javed

Learning from the recent past, a short-term path forward could be a brokered negotiation that at least fixes the acceptance part of the equation for the state, even if it can't do much about the ability part. A fresh election in a defined time frame, removal of restrictions on the opposition and social media, dropping of frivolous cases against party leaders, and restoration of proper parliamentary politics can act as a much-needed safety valve.

Sceptics will counter with the retort that these steps do nothing for the bigger problem of a broken economy and a dysfunctional public sector. There is certainly truth in the fact that no mainstream party in power has shown that it can harness domestic economic productivity and repair the public sector's ability to deliver services (to a population beyond itself). But to the sceptics, one asks: which version of the state has a better chance to achieve these goals, one that is mired in a crisis of both legitimacy and ability, or one that has at least one part of the equation working in its favour?

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