



# CHALLENGES IN SOUTH ASIA: IS PAKISTAN BECOMING THE NEW AFGHANISTAN?

<sup>1</sup>Tanya Anand, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Jyotika Teckchandani

<sup>1</sup>Post Graduate Student, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor (III)

Amity Institute of Social Sciences,  
Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh



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## ABSTRACT

South Asia has emerged as the geopolitical centre of the world. Its geography and economic opportunities make it crucial from a strategic standpoint (Anand, 2022). The region today is faced by several challenges including political instability, economic crisis, inter-state and intra state conflicts, climate issues and so on. This paper will try to analyse these challenges faced by South Asia. We will also look at a case study of Pakistan in the contemporary era. The year 2022 saw political turmoil, an economic crisis, and catastrophic flooding in Pakistan which has been exacerbated this year by terrorist attacks and the possibility of the country being partitioned into four parts. Pakistan has been dealing with challenges with Afghanistan, which is also in a state of crisis. Pakistan

and Afghanistan have a lot more common than their roots in the Indian sub-continent - this has been further aggravated in the recent times with both the countries facing their own turmoil which are different but similar. It will also explore the similarities between Pakistan and Afghanistan and try to understand if Pakistan is going down the Afghanistan route.

**Keywords:** South Asia, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual, geopolitical considerations, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Maldives, political instability, economic challenges, corruption, governance, climate change, regional tensions, conflicts, infrastructure development, public health, similarities, terrorism, insurgency, sectarian violence, security threats, extremist groups, weak central government, public disillusionment, foreign investment, crisis, inflation, trade deficit, debt, military intervention, terrorism, civil war, food insecurity, lack of opportunities, unemployment, bombings.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

South Asia is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual region of the world having a shared colonial history, boundaries, culture, and so on. South Asia is a subregion of Asia that includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, and the Maldives. This region of the world is critical to geopolitical considerations. It is home to nearly two billion people and some of the world's most dynamic economies. It has been open to influence, immigration, and economic contact from its east, west, and south. As a link between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, the region is crucial from a strategic standpoint. Also, this area has grown into a nexus for marine trade. It is a critical link to the rise of Asia in the international system. Currently, South Asia has also become a significant arena of escalating major power competition between India and China, making it more important (Anand, 2022)<sup>1</sup>

However, many South Asian countries today are facing economic hardship, political instability, and climate issues. In South Asia, five governments have changed in the last few months. Some countries are well on their way to resolve their debt issues with the IMF and the international community, and some may need to do the same, as highlighted by Shivshankar Menon, India's former National Security Advisor. Inflation and shortages caused by the COVID-19, and Russian-Ukraine war, contributed to South Asia's political and economic vulnerabilities. (Anand, 2022)

In Sri Lanka, a severe economic crisis was followed by the declaration of a state of emergency and change of government. This sparked a significant call for reforms in the Maldives and Bhutan. Bangladesh also approached the IMF to help stabilise its dwindling foreign exchange reserves. Pakistan is also heavily in debt, owing mostly to Chinese loans and investments (Anand, 2022). It is dealing with a multifaceted crisis, including political, economic, and inter-border concerns with India and Afghanistan, as well as intra-border issues and natural calamities. The Pakistani government is on the verge of losing control of its citizens and the country. It is on the risk of being partitioned into four parts. Nepal is also economically fragile because of external shocks.

Afghanistan too is in severe humanitarian crisis with takeover of Taliban there. Overall, South Asian countries are facing several challenges that need urgent solution.

## 2. CHALLENGES IN SOUTH ASIA

South Asia is a region that is home to a diverse set of countries with varying political and economic systems. It is a region of tremendous diversity, with over 1.8 billion people living in eight countries that share common historical, cultural, and economic ties. However, the region also faces a range of complex and interrelated challenges that affect the lives of millions of people. While some countries in the region have experienced rapid economic growth and political stability, others have struggled with political turmoil and economic challenges. Here are the major challenges faced by South Asian countries:

- 2.1. **Political Instability:** Several South Asian countries have witnessed political unrest in recent years, with severe implications for governance, economic development, and regional stability. In countries such as Pakistan and Sri Lanka, political instability has been characterized by frequent changes in government, weak democratic institutions, and challenges to the rule of law.
- 2.2. **Economic Challenges:** South Asia is facing several economic challenges, including low levels of economic growth, high levels of inequality, and persistent unemployment. These challenges are particularly acute in countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal. South Asia is home to some of the highest levels of economic inequality in the world, with a large proportion of the population living in poverty and facing significant barriers to accessing basic services such as education, healthcare, and clean water. In countries, income inequality has been increasing, contributing to social and political unrest. Also, most South Asian countries are in debt and struggling to meet the basic needs of citizens.
- 2.3. **Corruption and Governance:** Corruption and poor governance are major challenges in many South Asian countries, threatening economic growth, development, stability, democratic governance, and social welfare. Corruption is especially prevalent in nations such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, where it has impacted government and public faith in institutions. South Asia is confronted with governance difficulties such as inadequate institutions and a lack of transparency.
- 2.4. **Climate Change:** South Asian countries are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events like rising sea levels, and changes in agricultural productivity. Climate change is likely to have major implications for the region's economic development, food security, and public health. South Asia is experiencing environmental degradation, including air and water pollution, and deforestation. These environmental challenges are having consequences and require urgent action.



- 2.5. **Regional Tensions and conflicts:** South Asia have several ongoing conflicts and tensions between countries, including the conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan, tensions between India and Pakistan, and territorial disputes between India and China. These conflicts have significant implications for regional stability and have the potential to escalate into broader regional or global conflicts. Territorial disputes along with increasing extremism and terrorism pose a threat to the region's peace, stability, and economy.
- 2.6. **Infrastructure Development:** South Asian countries face infrastructure deficits, including inadequate transportation networks, energy infrastructure, as well as water and sanitation systems. These infrastructure deficits are a major impediment to economic growth and development, particularly in rural areas.
- 2.7. **Public Health:** South Asia faces major public health challenges, including high rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases, high levels of maternal and child mortality rate, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and limited access to essential medicines. Public health challenges are particularly acute in rural areas and among vulnerable populations such as women and children. These challenges are affecting the region's development and require urgent action to address.
- 2.8. **Unemployment:** South Asia has a large and growing youth population, but many young people in the region struggle to find meaningful employment opportunities. Youth unemployment is a significant challenge in countries such as India and Pakistan, where large numbers of young people are entering the workforce each year.
- 2.9. **Economic Integration:** South Asian countries have made some progress towards regional economic integration, including through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and other regional economic initiatives. However, progress towards economic integration has been slow, and the region still faces significant barriers to trade and investment, particularly due to inter-state conflicts.
- 2.10. **Migration:** South Asia is a major source of migration, with millions of people moving within the region and beyond in search of better economic opportunities. However, many migrants face exploitation, abuse, and discrimination, and there are significant challenges in managing migration flows and protecting the rights of migrants.

Countries currently facing significant crises in South Asia, with implications for regional stability, economic development, and public health are:

**Afghanistan:** Afghanistan has been in a state of conflict and instability for several decades, with ongoing conflict between government forces and the Taliban, as well as ongoing violence from other militant groups. The situation has been complicated by the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces in 2021, which has emboldened the Taliban and led to the collapse of the Afghan government. The Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021 and imposed policies restricting basic human rights, particularly those of women. A starving population, collapsing health care system coupled with a political and economic juggernaut have put the country in acute crisis and left

Afghanistan in a cloud of multi-dimensional problems (Anand, 2022). The crisis in Afghanistan has significant implications for regional security, with the potential for refugee flows and the spread of violent extremism.

Bangladesh: Bangladesh is facing significant economic, environmental, and social challenges. The country is one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, with rising sea levels and increased frequency of extreme weather events threatening the country's agriculture and infrastructure. Bangladesh is also facing significant economic challenges, including high levels of poverty and income inequality, as well as political tensions and allegations of human rights abuses.

Sri Lanka: There was a severe economic crisis followed by the declaration of a state of emergency and change of government in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is facing significant political and economic challenges, including tensions between the government and opposition groups, as well as allegations of human rights abuses and corruption. Sri Lanka is also facing significant economic challenges, including high levels of debt and unemployment, as well as environmental challenges such as deforestation and degradation of natural resources.

Nepal: Nepal is a landlocked South Asian country bordered by India and China. The country, which has a population of about 29 million people, is known for its diverse landscape. Despite its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, Nepal confronts a number of economic obstacles that have kept it from reaching its full potential. The Nepal's economy has a long history and saw significant growth in the 1950s, but subsequent decades saw political instability and conflict, resulting in a drop in growth and investment. The economy has made a slow but steady recovery in recent years. Despite various efforts, Nepal's economy continues to face major difficulties, including political insecurity, a lack of infrastructure, a lack of financial resources and technology, and natural catastrophes. Nepal is also vulnerable to climate change, with changing weather patterns affecting agricultural output and natural resources.

Addressing these challenges will require coordinated action from governments, civil society, and the international community. Some strategies for addressing these challenges could be strengthening democratic institutions, investing in education and skills development, improving healthcare, promoting sustainable economic growth, improving governance and accountability, addressing issues of environmental degradation and climate change, and promoting gender equality and social inclusion. It is also important to promote regional cooperation and dialogue to address shared challenges and promote regional stability and prosperity.

### 3. CRISIS IN PAKISTAN

A starving population, political unrest, rise in food, oil, and gas prices due to collapsing economy, weaker global position coupled with a flood, inter-state tensions, and the rise of terrorism have left Pakistan in a cloud of multi-dimensional problems. Pakistan's current situation is certainly the worst it has ever been. Pakistan is on the edge of civil war due to divisions among its people and some political factions. There is a higher possibility of the country being partitioned into four parts. Recently, they have been facing some major challenges with

Afghanistan. The country's economy has taken the most damage. People lack access to decent food and services, and costs are skyrocketing because of the country's lack of opportunities and employment. Political instability is another issue for the country. Even after years of independence, no Pakistani Prime Minister has been able to complete their tenure. The government's lack of responsibility, combined with the overwhelming engagement of external groups, is causing greater problems for Pakistan. In the end, it is the citizens who are suffering because they feel helpless. The rise in terrorist attacks and bombings in Pakistan has added to people's dread. Even though Pakistan's domestic problems are worsening by the day, it seems that the leaders are continuing to focus on its neighbour, particularly India. Rather of addressing their own issues, they are preoccupied with what others have done or are doing. Pakistan is in a very complex position in the world now. If we look closely at the current crisis, we can see how it is the outcome of past mistakes made by the country's leaders and those in authority, including the military. The military's involvement in Pakistan's political, economic, social, and foreign affairs as well as its role in many of the country's problems, is noteworthy.

Pakistan has recently made headlines due to its serious economic crisis. From long lines for rations to power outages, the list of difficulties in the life of a Pakistani common man is never-ending. But who is to blame for its current plight?

In Pakistan, the prices of basic or essential commodities are increasing day by day. Inflation that remains usually 4-6% has reached almost 30% at some places. Malls, markets etc are instructed to switch off their lights by 8:30 pm due to diminishing electricity. With depleting forex reserves, high inflation, and millions affected by the fallout of last year's devastating floods, Pakistan is on the brink. Pakistan is a country that has been plagued by various crises throughout its history. These crises have affected the country's political, economic, and social stability, and have often been exacerbated by external factors. In this paper, we will examine some of the current crises facing Pakistan.

### 3.1. Political Instability

In recent times, Pakistan has been dealing with notable political instability, marked by frequent changes in government and an absence of consistency in the democratic process. This instability has been driven by various factors such as corruption, inadequate governance, and feeble institutions. Ayesha Jalal, historian and professor, expressed similar views while stating that, *"Pakistan's crisis stems from a failure to establish a stable and inclusive political system, which has resulted in authoritarian rule, corruption, and violence"* (Jalal, 2014).<sup>2</sup> Apart from this, it has also been argued that the Pakistan's military has played a significant role in politics, often intervening to remove elected governments and install military-backed regimes. As argued by, Stephen P. Cohen, an American political scientist, *"Pakistan's crisis is rooted in its military-dominated political system, which has impeded the development of democratic institutions and civil society"* (Cohen, 2004)<sup>3</sup>

Ironically, Pakistan gained independence with India in 1947, yet its first democratic elections were held in 1970, after 23 years of freedom. As previously mentioned, no Prime Minister in Pakistan has completed their entire term in office. In the past year, Imran Khan was forced to step down when the current Prime Minister, Shehbaz

Sharif, along with seven other political parties, initiated a vote of no-confidence, resulting in the removal of Imran Khan's government. Many thought that this shift would result in a new and better Pakistan; however, this idea causes new economic challenges because when the government changes, so does the financial policy. To demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the prior government, opposing decisions are made that increase economic concerns. The persistent corruption in the country has too resulted in a widespread distrust of government institutions and has created a perception that they are biased towards the privileged few. The lack of transparency and accountability has further fuelled the public's anger and frustration, which has manifested itself in protests and demands for reforms. It has become a major barrier to economic and political development.

### 3.2. Economic Challenges

Pakistan's economy is facing critical challenges such as high inflation rates, a trade deficit, and an increasing burden of debt. The country heavily relies on imports, specifically for energy, resulting in a substantial trade deficit and putting pressure on foreign exchange reserves that are almost depleted. For many years, Pakistan has been relying on loans to sustain. In trade, according to the State Bank of Pakistan, country's total imports in the fiscal year 2020-2021 were \$56.7 billion, while its total exports were \$25.3 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of \$31.4 billion. Currently, Pakistan's exports are of \$23.4 billion, and imports are \$42.5 billion, according to the figures of State Bank of Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> Due to such huge gap, Forex reserves are reducing rapidly. Pakistan's GDP for the year 2021 was \$348.26 billion that increased to \$376 billion in 2022, and their loans about \$261 billion.<sup>5</sup> Pakistan is in a situation of bail-out. Interests on the loans keeps on increasing and most part of Pakistan's budget goes for these loan repayments. There's only one option to get out of it and that is taking more loans, hence, Pakistan is in a debt trap. The deteriorating economic conditions have led to a rise in the prices of essential goods and a depletion of resources, which is a big blow to the purchasing power of the working class. For providing cheap commodities, the government needs money. But Pakistan is running out of forex reserves, so, where will that money come from?

Pakistan's National Assembly has passed a finance (supplementary) bill, which has been mandated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), through a majority vote. The new tax measures proposed in the bill, also known as the 'mini budget', aim to generate PKR 170 billion (\$650 million) in tax revenue before the end of the fiscal year.<sup>6</sup> However, some experts believe that the new taxes will disproportionately affect the poor and working-class citizens. Furthermore, to address the issue of inflation, the government has proposed to allocate an additional PKR 40 billion to the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), a poverty reduction program.

### 3.3. Climate Challenges

Last year, there were droughts in many areas of Pakistan and the loss is worth \$30 billion. For already struggling country this is a huge amount.

Pakistan is in the midst of a perfect storm. Some major climate challenges faced by Pakistan:



- 3.3.1. **Water Scarcity:** Pakistan is one of the most water-stressed countries in the world, with an average annual water availability of 1,017 cubic meters per person, which is well below the international standard of 1,700 cubic meters per person. The country is heavily dependent on its rivers and groundwater resources, but these are under increasing pressure due to overuse, pollution, and climate change.
- 3.3.2. **Extreme Weather Events:** Pakistan is vulnerable to a range of extreme weather events, including floods, droughts, heatwaves, and cyclones. These events are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change, causing loss of life, damage to infrastructure, and economic losses.
- 3.3.3. **Glacier Melting:** Pakistan has more than 7,000 glaciers, which are a vital source of water for the country's rivers and agricultural lands. However, these glaciers are melting at an alarming rate due to global warming, which is leading to reduced water availability, increased risk of floods, and damage to infrastructure.
- 3.3.4. **Desertification:** Pakistan is experiencing desertification in many parts of the country, due to soil erosion, deforestation, and overgrazing. This is leading to a loss of fertile land, reduced agricultural productivity, and increased risk of dust storms and air pollution.

These climate challenges are interconnected and require urgent action from the government, civil society, and international community to mitigate their impacts and build resilience.

#### 3.4. Terrorism

Pakistan has been plagued by terrorism for many years, with extremist groups targeting civilians, security forces, and government officials. The country has been a target of both domestic and international terrorism, with groups such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda operating within its borders. The Pakistani Taliban, in particular, has been responsible for a number of high-profile attacks, including the attack on an army school in Peshawar in 2014, which killed over 140 people, mostly children; recent assault on Pakistan's police stations; Peshawar Mosque attack; and multiple attacks in Baluchistan.

The government has launched several military operations to target these extremist groups, but these operations have often been criticized for causing civilian casualties and for failing to address the root causes of extremism. In addition, the government has been accused of supporting extremist groups in the past, particularly those operating in Kashmir and Afghanistan.

#### 3.5. Inter State Border Issue

Pakistan is currently facing several inter-state issues with its neighbouring countries. The most pressing issues are with India and Afghanistan.

With India, the primary issue is the long-standing conflict over the disputed region of Kashmir. Both countries claim the territory in its entirety and have fought many wars for it. With Afghanistan, the main issue is the ongoing conflict and instability in the country. Pakistan and Afghanistan have a long history of tension and conflict, and the recent flare-up in hostilities has been fuelled by a range of factors. The border dispute between the two countries is one major factor behind the recent conflict. The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, known as the Durand Line, has never been officially recognized by Afghanistan. This has resulted in frequent cross-border tensions, with both sides accusing the other of violating their territorial sovereignty. Another factor



contributing to the conflict is the issue of refugees. Pakistan has been hosting millions of Afghan refugees for several decades, with many of them living in camps and informal settlements along the border. The presence of these refugees has put a significant strain on Pakistan's resources and infrastructure and has fuelled resentment among some segments of the population.

### 3.6. Sectarian Violence

Sectarian violence has also been a significant issue in Pakistan, particularly between the country's Sunni and Shia Muslim communities. The sectarian divide in Pakistan has been fuelled by a number of factors, including historical grievances, political manipulation, and religious extremism. The government has made some efforts to address sectarian violence, including setting up a national commission to investigate sectarian violence and increasing security measures in areas with high levels of sectarian tension. However, these efforts have been criticized for being insufficient and for failing to address the root causes of the problem.

### 3.7. Threat of division: Separatist Movements

Pakistan, a country that has been struggling with numerous internal and external challenges since its inception, is now facing a new threat of division into four parts. This potential division has emerged due to a variety of factors, including political, economic, and cultural differences between various regions of the country. Recently, protests have been taking place in Pakistan where a section of people are demanding to become a part of India. The four parts that are referred to are Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). These four provinces make up the majority of Pakistan's population and land area. Each province has its unique history, culture, and political aspirations, and there have been tensions and conflicts between them for decades.

One of the main reasons behind the threat of division is the growing sense of alienation and marginalization among different ethnic and linguistic groups in Pakistan. The country is home to a diverse range of ethnic and linguistic communities, with Punjabis being the largest group, followed by Pashtuns, Sindhis, Baloch, and others. However, many of these communities feel that they are not being adequately represented in the country's political and economic structures.

For example, the Baluchistan region in the southwest of Pakistan has been experiencing a long-running insurgency, with Baloch nationalists demanding greater autonomy and control over the region's resources. Similarly, the Pashtun community in the north-western part of the country has been demanding equal rights and an end to discrimination by the state.

Moreover, the ongoing tensions between the provinces of Punjab and Sindh, which are the two largest provinces in the country, have further exacerbated the situation. These tensions are rooted in historical and cultural differences between the two regions, as well as economic disparities. Many people in Sindh feel that the province's resources are being unfairly exploited by Punjab, which is the country's wealthiest province.

Another factor contributing to the threat of division is the country's weak and ineffective political system. Pakistan has been plagued by political instability and corruption for much of its history, with frequent changes of government and a lack of transparency in decision-making. This has eroded public trust in the government

and fuelled popular discontent with the status quo. Additionally, the country's struggling economy has also contributed to the growing sense of disillusionment among different regions. Many people feel that the country's economic policies are favouring certain regions over others, resulting in unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. This has led to a growing sense of economic alienation and frustration, particularly among youth who are facing high levels of unemployment and poverty.

The fear of division in Pakistan is a significant challenge for the country's stability and unity. The government needs to address the grievances of the different ethnic and linguistic groups and ensure that all provinces receive their fair share of resources and development.

#### **4. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN**

Pakistan and Afghanistan have a lot more common than their roots in the Indian sub-continent - this has been further aggravated in the recent times with both the countries facing their own turmoil which are different but similar. Pakistan and Afghanistan are two neighbouring countries that share a long and complicated history. Both countries have been dealing with various crises for many years, including political instability, economic challenges, and security threats. In this paper, we will examine how Pakistan is similar to Afghanistan in terms of its current crisis.

##### **4.1. Terrorism and Insurgency**

Both Pakistan and Afghanistan have been plagued by terrorism and insurgency for many years. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have been a major source of instability, and their insurgency has been ongoing for over two decades. Similarly, Pakistan has been dealing with extremist groups like the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other militant organizations for many years.

The Taliban and other militant groups operate across the porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, using the region as a safe haven to launch attacks on both countries. In addition, both countries have been accused of providing support to militant groups, exacerbating the problem.

##### **4.2. Political Instability**

Pakistan and Afghanistan have both experienced political instability in recent years, with frequent changes in government and a lack of stability in the democratic process. In Afghanistan, the country has faced significant challenges in building democratic institutions and ensuring free and fair elections. The country has faced major political instability since Taliban took control over the country in 2021.

Similarly, Pakistan has also faced significant political instability, with the country's military playing a significant role in politics. The country has also seen frequent changes in government, with accusations of corruption and poor governance.

### 4.3. Economic Challenges

Both Pakistan and Afghanistan face significant economic challenges. In Afghanistan, the country's economy is heavily dependent on international aid, and those in power has struggled to attract foreign investment. The country also faces significant challenges in building infrastructure and creating jobs.

Pakistan's economy is also facing significant challenges, including a high inflation rate, a large trade deficit, and a growing debt burden. The country is heavily dependent on imports, particularly for energy, which has led to a significant trade deficit. This has put pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves, which have been depleted in recent years.

### 4.4. Sectarian Violence

Both Pakistan and Afghanistan have also experienced sectarian violence, particularly between Sunni and Shia Muslim communities. In Afghanistan, the country has seen an increase in sectarian violence in recent years, with attacks targeting Shia Muslims, Hazaras, and other minority groups. Pashtuns are the most dominating community in Afghanistan that are responsible for the killings of the minorities, in particular, the Hazaras.

Similarly, Pakistan has been dealing with sectarian violence for many years, with attacks targeting the country's Shia Muslim community. The country has also seen an increase in attacks on other religious minorities, including Christians and Hindus.

Therefore, Pakistan and Afghanistan share many similarities in terms of their current crises. Both countries have been dealing with terrorism and insurgency, political instability, economic challenges, and sectarian violence for many years.

## **IS PAKISTAN BECOMING THE NEW AFGHANISTAN?**

Pakistan has faced a number of challenges in recent years, including security threats, economic instability, and political unrest. Some analysts have raised concerns that Pakistan may be headed down the same path as Afghanistan, with deteriorating security, weak central government, widespread lawlessness, and a growing influence of extremist groups.

There are several factors that contribute to this concern. First, Pakistan has been dealing with a significant security threat from extremist groups, particularly the Taliban and other militant groups that operate along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. These groups have carried out several attacks in Pakistan, targeting security forces, civilians, and religious minorities. Second, Pakistan's economy has been struggling in recent years, with high inflation, a growing trade deficit, and low levels of foreign investment. This economic instability has led to political unrest, with protests and strikes becoming more common. Third, Pakistan's political system has been



characterized by instability and corruption, with several high-profile cases of corruption and money laundering coming to light in recent years. The fall of Imran Khan's government, collapsing economy etc has led to public disillusionment with the political system and a growing sense of frustration with the government's inability to address the country's problems.

There are certainly some similarities between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Both countries have significant security challenges, with extremist groups operating along their shared border and carrying out attacks on civilians and security forces. Both countries also face significant economic challenges, with high levels of poverty and unemployment, low levels of foreign investment, and weak infrastructure. And both countries have struggled with political instability and corruption, with governments facing criticism for their inability to address the country's problems.

However, there are a few reasons to believe that Pakistan is not necessarily headed down the same path as Afghanistan. There are some important differences between Pakistan and Afghanistan. First, Afghanistan has been embroiled in a decades-long conflict, with multiple foreign invasions, civil wars, insurgencies, and now extremist rule. Pakistan, while dealing with its own security threats from militant groups, has not experienced the same level of conflict and instability as Afghanistan. Second, Afghanistan's economy is largely dependent on international aid and the illicit drug trade, while Pakistan has a more diversified economy, with manufacturing and services sector. While the country's economic problems are significant, there is still potential for improvement and growth. Third, Pakistan has a relatively strong military and intelligence apparatus, which has been able to contain the threat from extremist groups to some extent. The military has carried out several successful operations against militant groups in recent years and has worked closely with the United States and other countries to combat terrorism. Fourth, Pakistan's political system is still relatively stable, despite the challenges it faces. While there have been protests and political unrest recently, it has been more stable than that of Afghanistan, which has struggled with weak governance and political fragmentation.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is essential to recognize that Pakistan faces significant challenges, such as a crumbling economy, an unstable leadership, border issues, and security concerns, particularly in connection to the Taliban and other militant groups. But it is too soon to assume that Pakistan would become another Afghanistan. There are some parallels between the Pakistan and Afghanistan crises. Pakistan faces significant challenges, but it also possesses strengths and advantages that could assist it in overcoming those challenges and moving towards a more stable future. To solve the country's issues, however, the government, civil society, and the international community must work together to promote regional stability, security, and development. If the current situation in Pakistan is not addressed, it is possible that things could escalate, and Pakistan may end up like Afghanistan. Only time will tell what Pakistan's future will be.

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