

# New pm facing desperate challenges against new government



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Nawaz Sharif: After Pakistan Elections, New PM Facing Desperate Challenges Against New Government

Few national elections have faced as many security challenges as the recent election that took place last Saturday in Pakistan. The pre-election campaign season had seen its share of high-profile assassinations as well as terrorist attacks on public gatherings and even state-run installations. Adding to the public anxiety is the fact that this election presented a novelty to the Pakistani state: it was the first election to follow a completed term by a democratically-elected government.

This is an achievement that, despite the recent violence and its unique history of instability, should not be overlooked. That said, there exists on the political horizon at least two wild cards that will determine both the future of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government as well as the resiliency of Pakistan's democracy going forward. The first of these political wildcards is the military/civilian relationship in Pakistan. As stated earlier, this past election marks the first democratic handoff from one elected government to another in the 66-year history of the state.

Every previously elected government has succumbed to military-led coups at one point or another. While the reasons and circumstances varied from one coup to another, the common thread between each coup was a combination of a perceived level of incompetence from the civilian leadership, an overriding concern that this incompetence would invite Indian military aggression and jeopardize the state itself, and political opportunism on the part of Pakistan's military leadership.

Given the historical context of last week's parliamentary elections, it would appear that the relationship between the Pakistani military and its civilian

<https://assignbuster.com/new-pm-facing-desperate-challenges-against-new-government/>

counterparts has undergone a fundamental change — one that bodes well for Pakistan's democracy going forward. However, there remains a number of issues that could put this relationship sorely to the test. One such issue includes the rather embarrassing arrest and pending prosecution of former Pakistani president and Army General Pervez Musharraf.

While not particularly popular with either the military or the Pakistani public, such a high profile prosecution, for a capital offense no less, of a former general could serve as a precedent for further public accountability of the military to a civilian-led government. This heightened accountability would undoubtedly serve to undermine the military's highly privileged status within the country. Whether the military would endure such a change in status for the sake of " democracy" remains to be seen. Another issue that would test the military/civilian relationship is the ongoing security challenges the country faces.

These challenges include suppressing an emerging Islamist insurgency at home, offsetting Indian military hegemony in South Asia and ensuring that potentially hostile/pro-Indian proxies in Afghanistan are kept at bay. Should the security situation deteriorate further and the new civilian government be perceived, either by the public or by the military, as waffling in the face of these challenges, a political crisis involving a return to military-led rule could very well occur. The second of these political wild cards is the broad economic challenges that plague the country. While these challenges are numerous, two are particularly noteworthy.

Pakistan's annual economic growth rate is far lower than necessary to meet the employment needs of the country in general, even by the standards of

<https://assignbuster.com/new-pm-facing-desperate-challenges-against-new-government/>

an underdeveloped economy, and this sub-optimal growth rate means fewer job prospects for the country's huge youth demographic. To be sure, it is highly unlikely that Pakistan's youth will mirror those of Egypt in roiling their country's respective political system due to a lack of job prospects. For a myriad of reasons, Pakistan is far more culturally conservative than Egypt. Its social and familial structures would serve to mitigate any potential mass uprising spearheaded by the country's youth.

That said, such economic pressures will undoubtedly seek a political outlet in some form or other. Fortunately for Pakistan, this past election has provided just such an outlet; nearly half of the voting electorate was under the age of 35. Should Nawaz Sharif's government fail to improve the country's economy, growing disillusionment could bring younger people, particularly young men, to seek less constructive avenues of political expression. In this time of serious national challenges, Pakistan can ill-afford to have this happen.