

## Consensus Building: The Necessity of a New Democratic Charter for Pakistan

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#### Abstract

In recent the years, Pakistan has faced significant challenges to its democratic processes, including political instability, social unrest and economic turmoil. Historical precedents and contemporary examples of undemocratic activities in various contexts reflect in Pakistan's unique socio-political environment. The paper argues for the need to establish a new Democratic Charter in Pakistan and to foster consensus among key political stakeholders, civil society and the electorate. The constitution of new democratic charter would serve as a foundational framework to enhance democratic governance, promote inclusivity and safeguard the rights of all citizens. It would address critical issues such as electoral reform, decentralization of power, accountability mechanisms and the protection of minority rights. By means of emphasize on association and compromise, the charter could help to mitigate political polarization and create a more resilient democratic framework. The paper examines the historical precedents, current challenges and the potential impact of the new democratic pact on Pakistan's democratic events. The establishment of a new Democratic Charter is posited as a crucial step toward sustainable democracy and national integration in Pakistan.

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## Introduction

The term "Democratic Charter" conveys an environment rooted in constitutional principles and a semblance of stability. These words suggest a collaborative effort among established political institutions to achieve a shared objective: upholding the supremacy of the Constitution and strengthening democracy in Pakistan (Shafqat, 1998). However, the nation's turbulent political landscape challenges the practical implementation of such ideals. Despite periodic electoral processes, Pakistan continues to grapple with

issues that undermine the democratic ethos, including political instability, governance inefficiencies and socio-economic disparities (Rehman, 2023).

Following the February 8 national and provincial elections, the political crisis in Pakistan has persisted. Voters, despite facing security threats and political disillusionment, demonstrated their faith in the democratic process. Out of a total electorate of 128.6 million, 60.6 million cast their votes a significant turnout considering the pervasive political unrest (Irfan et al., 2024). However, this act of democratic participation has not translated into tangible improvements for the common citizen, as challenges such as inflation, unemployment and security concerns remain unaddressed. The election results reflected a fragmented mandate, underscoring the divided political landscape. Of the 266 National Assembly seats, 264 results were declared. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by former Prime Minister Imran Khan, secured 97 seats. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), headed by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, won 76 seats, while the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) claimed 54 seats (Asrar & Lodhi, 2024).

Similarly, the results for the provincial assemblies of Punjab and Baluchistan were equally divided, making the formation of coalition governments a challenging task. Eventually, a coalition was formed under Shehbaz Sharif's leadership as Prime Minister for a second term. However, sustaining such a fragile alliance and ensuring political stability remains a daunting challenge. To address these issues, the introduction of a new democratic framework or charter becomes imperative. This framework should aim to foster consensus among political stakeholders, civil society and the electorate to prioritize democratic reforms. Drawing from the principles of inclusivity and citizen participation advocated by political theorist Robert A. Dahl, a democratic charter might lay the foundation for rebuilding Pakistan's democratic institutions and environment (Mayhew, 2015).

A new democratic charter would necessitate the active engagement of all political entities to move beyond partisan interests and focus on collective goals. Civil society must play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the state and its citizens, ensuring that democratic reforms are not only inclusive but also reflective of the people's aspirations. Furthermore, the electorate's participation should extend beyond the ballot box, empowering citizens to hold their leaders accountable and contribute to decision-making processes. By emphasizing constitutionalism, inclusivity and citizen empowerment, this proposed framework could serve as a transformative solution to enduring political challenges of Pakistan. It could provide a roadmap for addressing governance issues, fostering stability and ensuring that democracy becomes a mechanism for improving the lives of ordinary Pakistanis. In doing so, it would not only restore faith in the democratic process but also strengthen the foundations of a more equitable and resilient political system (Mahar et al., December 2023).

## **Theory and Research Foundation**

The necessity and potential of a new Charter of Democracy in Pakistan are deeply rooted in democratic theory, which serves as the theoretical foundation for this exploration. Democratic theory emphasizes that governance must reflect the will of the people, incorporating key principles such as inclusivity, political equality and citizen participation. These elements form the bedrock of a system designed to adapt

to socio-political challenges by ensuring diverse representation, balanced power structures and accountability to the citizenry. Robert A. Dahl's seminal contributions to democratic theory, particularly his focus on inclusivity and active citizen participation, are central to shaping this research's analytical framework. Dahl (2008) argued that a robust democracy is characterized by its capacity to engage citizens in decision-making processes, fostering widespread participation (Vilaman, 2024). Effective democracies, he asserted, must not only represent the majority but also safeguard the rights and interests of minorities, preventing any group from being marginalized (James, 2024). His emphasis on protecting political rights and strengthening institutions that uphold participation, equality and accountability underscores the prerequisites for sustainable governance and national unity.

In the context of Pakistan, the relevance of democratic theory is particularly pronounced. The country's political landscape has been marred by instability, democratic deficits and structural weaknesses, including the erosion of citizens' rights, unequal representation and inadequate accountability mechanisms (Rehman, 2023). These challenges have obstructed the development of an inclusive and stable democratic framework, exacerbating political polarization and societal fragmentation. This research contends that a new Democratic Charter could provide a blueprint for addressing these deficiencies, bolstering Pakistan's democratic resilience. Dahl's principles of inclusivity resonate strongly with Pakistan's diverse socio-political fabric, which is marked by ethnic, religious and political divisions. Ensuring the inclusion of all societal groups is essential for fostering national cohesion. Moreover, Dahl's understanding of citizen participation extends beyond the act of voting to encompass broader engagement in political processes such as decision-making, policy development and accountability enforcement (Fung, 2015). Within this framework, the research advocates for the involvement of diverse political stakeholders, civil society and the electorate in discussions surrounding the Democratic Charter. Such an inclusive approach could facilitate consensus building and help bridge political divides. The envisioned Democratic Charter seeks to integrate the core tenets of democratic theory into Pakistan's political system by addressing critical challenges. These include safeguarding minority rights, strengthening accountability mechanisms and promoting equitable citizen participation. Grounding these reforms in democratic principles, particularly as articulated by Dahl, could pave the way for a more sustainable and inclusive democratic structure (Sipros, 2024). This, in turn, could contribute to national integration and mitigate the persistent issues of political instability and fragmentation that have long plagued Pakistan.

## **Contextualizing of Democracy**

Since its inception, Pakistan has encountered persistent challenges in establishing a stable democratic framework. Throughout its political history spanning several decades, the country has experienced the promulgation of three constitutions, four military coups, eleven general elections and has experimented with both parliamentary and presidential systems of governance. The first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan adopted the Objectives Resolution on March 12, 1949, setting the ideological foundation for the country's constitutional development (Ahmad, 2023). On the same day, the Assembly established the Basic Principles Committee tasked with drafting a constitution based on the Objectives Resolution's principles. However, political instability delayed progress. The first draft of the constitution was

completed in 1954, but the dismissal of the Assembly by Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad further delayed the constitutional process by two years.

In March 1956, the second Constituent Assembly passed Pakistan's first constitution. However, its implementation was short-lived, as General Ayub Khan imposed martial law in October 1958, abrogating the constitution. During his regime, a second constitution was introduced in 1962, reflecting a more centralized system of governance. This constitution, too, was annulled in 1969 when General Yahya Khan assumed power. The country's third constitution emerged in 1973 under the leadership of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Unlike its predecessors, the 1973 Constitution was framed through a consensus among political stakeholders representing various federating units. It continues to serve as the legal and institutional framework of the state (Mahar et al., December 2023). Despite the creation of a consensus-based constitution, democratic development in Pakistan remained tenuous due to repeated interventions by extra-parliamentary forces. The lack of a mutually agreed understanding of constitutional roles and responsibilities among state institutions has perpetuated political instability, leaving democracy fragile and vulnerable (Fung, 2015).

### **Alliance for Restoration Democracy and Charter of Democracy**

In December 2000, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), in collaboration with several smaller political parties, established the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD) to advocate for the re-establishment of civilian governance in Pakistan. The ARD's founding resolution called for the immediate organization of "free, fair and impartial elections" to be conducted by a financially autonomous and independent Election Commission, devoid of any interference from state institutions (Zaheer, 2024). The resolution also emphasized the necessity of forming a caretaker government based on national consensus to facilitate the democratic transition and ensure the transfer of power to elected representatives without preconditions or external influences. Additionally, the resolution asserted that constitutional amendments enacted outside of established constitutional procedures or imposed under coercive influence would be deemed unacceptable (Zaheer, 2024). The ARD further resolved to "coordinate, mobilize, organize and struggle through peaceful means" for the swift restoration of democratic governance. This resolution laid the foundational groundwork for the subsequent Charter of Democracy (CoD). Five years later, building upon the ARD's collective stance, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) formally endorsed the Charter of Democracy (Parveen, 2024). This event marked a pivotal moment in Pakistan's political history, as the leaders of the country's two major national parties recognized the necessity of forming a united front against forces opposing democratically elected leadership.

Reflecting on the significance of the agreement, a member of the drafting committee highlighted that after years of intense political rivalry and the military coup of 1999, the leadership of both the PPP and PML-N acknowledged their shared responsibility toward the nation and its citizens. While maintaining their political competition, they committed to strengthening democratic cooperation through mutual understanding. This recognition led to the formulation of a code of conduct aimed at preventing political rivalry from undermining the democratic process (Shoab & Azhar, 2024). A senior PML-N politician

underscored the critical importance of the Charter of Democracy, noting that it facilitated the purging of constitutional amendments introduced by military regimes. The consensus reached through the CoD addressed one of Pakistan's most persistent political challenges limited provincial autonomy. The CoD paved the way for the 18th Amendment. Without the CoD, this significant constitutional development would not have been possible", the politician asserted (Ahmad I. , September 4, 2020).

### **Political Development post Charter of Democracy 2026-2021**

Between significant political transitions in Pakistan's history, various socio-political changes have shaped the country's democratic landscape. Evaluating the performance of political parties during these periods, particularly in light of commitments made under the Charter of Democracy (CoD), is crucial. Such an evaluation offers insights into whether political leadership remains committed to democratic ideals or diverges in practice. These developments raise questions about the likelihood of renewing commitments to democracy and aligning political strategies with the CoD framework (Mahar et al., December 2023).

### **Lawyer Movement and the Restoration of Democracy**

The military regime of General Pervez Musharraf faced unprecedented challenges due to the Lawyers' Movement, which aimed to restore Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry after his removal in 2007. This movement, initially spearheaded by the legal fraternity, soon garnered support from political parties and civil society groups, transforming it into a nationwide campaign for judicial independence and the rule of law (Ijaz, 2014). The movement succeeded not only in reinstating the Chief Justice but also in significantly undermining the authority of the military-led government, ultimately paving the way for democratic elections in 2008. The elections marked a critical juncture in Pakistan's democratic transition, with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) emerging as the leading political force. These elections symbolized a departure from military dominance and were notable for the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) accepting the results, demonstrating adherence to the principles outlined in the CoD. This acceptance reflected a maturing political culture, where parties prioritized democratic norms over traditional accusations of election manipulation (Walker & Tucker, 2011).

### **The 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment**

The collaboration between political parties reached its zenith with the passage of the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010. This amendment, which impacted nearly one-third of the Constitution, was a comprehensive effort to undo distortions introduced during successive military regimes. The PPP government, adhering to its commitments under the CoD, formed a bicameral and multi-party Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Reforms (PCCR), chaired by Senator Raza Rabbani. The committee included representatives from 17 parliamentary parties, reflecting a broad political consensus. Civil society also contributed significantly, with over 1,000 proposals examined during the amendment's formulation (Khan et al., 2021). The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment restored the 1973 Constitution to its original parliamentary character by repealing the Legal Framework Order (LFO) and the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment introduced under General Musharraf. It abolished Article 58(2) (b), which had empowered the President

to dissolve the National Assembly unilaterally, thus strengthening the parliamentary system. Additionally, the amendment expanded the definition of treason, ensuring that no court could validate acts of martial law (Ijaz, 2014). By removing the diarchal division of powers between the President and Prime Minister, the amendment reinforced the supremacy of the Parliament. Other salient features included enhanced provincial autonomy, electoral reforms and the introduction of a more transparent judicial appointment process. However, the amendment also sparked debates between centrists and federalists. Centrists argued that devolving fiscal and administrative responsibilities to provinces strained the federal government's capacity to address national challenges such as defense and debt servicing. Critics also questioned the readiness of provincial governments to manage newly devolved responsibilities effectively (Khan et al., 2021).

### **Civil Society's Expanding Role**

Over the past three decades, civil society organizations (CSOs) have emerged as critical stakeholders in Pakistan's democratic development. Natural calamities, such as the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 floods, significantly expanded their funding and operational scope. By 2010, the Asian Development Bank estimated that approximately 45,000 CSOs were active in Pakistan, employing over 250,000 individuals (ADB, 2024). These organizations have played a pivotal role in advancing democratic norms, advocating for women's rights and supporting legislative reforms. During General Musharraf's era, feminist organizations such as the Aurat Foundation and Shirkat Gah collaborated with the government to enact progressive legislation, including the Protection of Women Act (2006) (Saigol, 2016). Civil society also played a decisive role in the Lawyers' Movement, resisting media restrictions during Musharraf's emergency rule and promoting pro-democracy initiatives. However, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) regulations introduced stricter oversight of the sector, limiting the operational freedom of many organizations. Despite these constraints, civil society remains an influential force in deepening democracy and promoting human rights (Shoaib & Azhar, 2024).

### **Media Transformation and Democratic Consolidation**

Pakistan's media landscape underwent a dramatic transformation during this period, transitioning from a state-dominated monopoly to a vibrant and pluralistic industry. From a single state-owned television channel and limited radio services, the country witnessed the emergence of over two dozen private news channels, alongside a surge in FM radio stations. This media expansion played a dual role: fostering public awareness about democratic processes and holding governments accountable. However, the media's role has not been without challenges. Accusations of bias, sensationalism and undue influence from political and military stakeholders have often marred its credibility. Nonetheless, the media's contribution to democratic consolidation remains significant, as it continues to provide a platform for political discourse and public accountability (Saeed et al., 2021).

## Challenges Democracy in Pakistan

Despite these advancements, Pakistan's democratic journey faces several enduring challenges. Fiscal constraints, political polarization and weak institutional capacities hinder the effective implementation of constitutional reforms. The debate surrounding the 18th Amendment exemplifies these challenges, as centrists and federalists clash over the distribution of resources and responsibilities between the federal and provincial governments. Moreover, the military's historical dominance over civilian institutions continues to cast a long shadow over democratic governance. The periodic resurgence of authoritarian tendencies underscores the need for sustained vigilance and commitment to democratic principles. Political parties must prioritize institutional strengthening over short-term gains, fostering a culture of accountability and inclusivity (Khan M. A., February 18, 2024).

## Failure of CoD and Politics of Optics

The political landscape of Pakistan witnessed significant transformations in recent years, most notably marked by the ascendancy of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as a formidable political force. For over a decade, PTI remained a peripheral entity in Pakistan's political arena. However, the 2013 general elections signified a turning point, where PTI secured the second-highest popular vote, trailing only behind the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). This electoral performance laid the groundwork for its eventual dominance in the 2018 general elections, where it experienced an 88% increase in its vote share. PTI's historic 2018 victory disrupted nearly three decades of two-party dominance by the PML-N and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) (Shah & Sareen, 2018). Emerging as the single largest party in the National Assembly with 116 seats, PTI fell short of a simple majority by 12 seats. Compounding its challenges was the necessity to vacate six additional seats due to multiple victories by its candidates, necessitating alliances with several smaller political parties to establish a coalition government. In contrast, the PML-N and PPP secured 64 and 43 seats, respectively, highlighting a fragmented opposition.

## The Initial Period of Governance

Post-election, there were indications of a unified opposition effort. Senior leaders from the PML-N, PPP, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and Awami National Party (ANP) convened to strategize a collective parliamentary response to counter the PTI government. Analysts anticipated a formidable opposition, yet internal divisions within these parties diluted their potential. For instance, the PPP abstained from supporting the opposition's joint candidate for the leader of the house, Shahbaz Sharif and disagreements emerged regarding a consensus candidate for the presidential election. A significant blow to opposition unity occurred during the 2019 no-confidence motion against Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani. Despite numerical superiority, 14 opposition members either voted against their own resolution or invalidated their votes, reflecting deep-seated fractures within their ranks (Mahar et al., December 2023).

## **Polarization and Governance Challenges**

A highly polarized political environment has characterized the PTI government's tenure. Its focus on an accountability drive primarily targeting opposition parties exacerbated tensions, fostering an adversarial relationship between the government and the opposition. This adversarial stance harkened back to the confrontational politics of the 1990s, resulting in legislative stagnation and economic repercussions. Economic growth stalled, with the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) registering negative growth for the first time in seven decades. Legislative progress was equally hampered; the government resorted to promulgating over 68 ordinances since 2018, bypassing parliamentary debate (Sheikh, 2022). This legislative inertia was compounded by delays in forming parliamentary committees, which took nearly six months to materialize.

## **Emergence of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)**

By late 2020, the opposition sensed an opportunity to realign its efforts against the government. In September 2020, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was established during a multi-party conference convened by the PPP. The alliance unveiled a 26-point agenda, addressing both immediate and long-term objectives. Its demands included strengthening parliamentary supremacy, reducing military influence in politics, electoral reforms, provincial autonomy, and judicial independence, freedom of expression and countering inflation and extremism (Haq, 2010). Despite these ambitious objectives, the alliance faced significant hurdles. The broad scope of its agenda, intended to garner widespread support, diluted its focus. Moreover, internal disagreements on strategy and execution hindered its effectiveness. For instance, the PDM failed to sustain its momentum following a short-lived victory in March 2021, when it defeated the PTI's finance minister candidate, Hafeez Sheikh, in a Senate election. Subsequently, it could not secure the election for the leader of the house in the Senate, despite holding a numerical advantage.

## **Limitations and Strategic Missteps of the PDM**

The PDM's challenges underscored strategic and organizational deficiencies. The alliance lacked a clear prioritization of its goals and its plans, prematurely publicized, suffered from poor execution. Disagreements among member parties further eroded its unity, with leaked proceedings of alliance meetings exacerbating mistrust. Additionally, leadership struggles within the alliance further weakened its cohesiveness. The PDM's failure to sustain its initial momentum is not unprecedented in Pakistan's political history. Previous alliances, such as the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) and the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), required sustained efforts spanning several years to achieve their objectives. In contrast, the PDM's six-month existence was insufficient to consolidate its position or present a viable alternative to the government (Mahar et al., December 2023).



## **Governance amid Opposition Fragmentation**

During its initial two years, the PTI government managed to navigate governance relatively unscathed by opposition challenges. While the PDM posed the first significant challenge through rallies and sit-ins, these demonstrations did not yield substantial results. For instance, the November 2019 rallies led by the JUI-F culminated without major concessions from the government. However, governance under PTI remained marred by allegations of mismanagement and economic stagnation. Inflation and public discontent over rising living costs further strained the government's credibility (Ahmad D. I., 2023).

## **The Necessity of New Democratic Charter**

In light of evolving social and political realities, Pakistan faces an urgent need to reimagine its democratic framework through the formulation of a new social contract. This contract must be built on a broad-based consensus encompassing political parties, social groups and state institutions. The existing Charter of Democracy (CoD) can serve as a foundational reference to stimulate dialogue and develop a renewed version aimed at addressing contemporary challenges. The new updated charter must present a comprehensive, institutionally anchored reform agenda capable of facilitating gradual yet sustainable institutional transformation.

## **The Case for a Revised Charter of Democracy**

The current CoD has garnered the endorsement of political parties collectively representing a significant share of the popular vote and parliamentary seats. Both the leadership of major opposition alliances, including the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) have expressed the necessity for a new CoD to secure unanimous political agreement. The Lahore Declaration by the PDM highlights the unresolved points of the original CoD and underlines the need for a cohesive update. However, the inclusion of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in this framework remains uncertain, given its substantial electoral mandate from the 2018 elections (ICG, 2024). This lack of unanimity presents a formidable obstacle to fostering consensus on an institutional reform agenda.

## **Democratic Culture**

Agreements among political parties have historically played a pivotal role in Pakistan's democratic evolution. Legislative achievements such as the 18th Amendment and the merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) were realized through bipartisan collaboration. These successes provide a blueprint for political actors to build on this legacy and create a minimum common agenda that unites diverse political interests. The ruling party must recognize the importance of consensus building, particularly concerning constitutional amendments. Forming a multiparty committee with proportional representation from all provinces can enable the formulation and implementation of constitutional amendments within a stipulated timeframe. Pakistan's political history demonstrates the efficacy of multiparty caucuses and parliamentary task forces in achieving substantial

legislative outcomes (UNDP, December 31, 2017). Establishing such frameworks can ensure collaboration and facilitate the execution of critical reforms.

### **Strengthening Legislative Oversight and Public Engagement**

Effective legislation requires robust oversight mechanisms. The existing Senate Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation must be enhanced and replicated across parliamentary bodies to ensure proactive monitoring and evaluation of subordinate legislation. In addition, the government's proposed post-legislative scrutiny bill, tabled in January 2020, should be actively pursued to strengthen implementation processes. Parliamentary committees should also expand citizen participation through public hearings, enabling diverse viewpoints to shape policy decisions. Advertising such meetings widely can ensure the involvement of relevant stakeholders and bridge the gap between the parliament and the public. Citizen engagement is crucial for addressing contentious issues, fostering inclusivity and enhancing democratic accountability (Mugale, October 2019).

### **Reforming Governance and Federal Integration**

Meaningful governance reforms require consensus across the political spectrum, particularly in limiting the military's role in politics. A unified political front devoid of self-serving interests is essential to strengthen democratic institutions vis-à-vis military influence. Establishing the National Democracy Commission, as proposed in the CoD, can cultivate a democratic culture while building the capacity of political parties to engage effectively in policymaking. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), despite its extensive powers, struggled to assert its authority optimally during the 2018 elections (Mahar et al., December 2023). Political parties and civil society must support the ECP to ensure free and fair electoral processes. Simultaneously, the federal government must lead efforts to optimize forums such as the Council of Common Interests (CCI), the National Finance Commission (NFC) and the National Economic Council (NEC) for interprovincial coordination. Addressing fiscal challenges requires the federal government to enhance its tax-to-GDP ratio rather than imposing fiscal cuts on provinces.

### **Integrating Marginalized Regions into the National Framework**

Ensuring constitutional rights and equitable integration of erstwhile FATA and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) into the national framework is paramount. This demands increased resource allocation and the inclusion of local communities in policy formulation and resource distribution. Institutional reforms should prioritize governance models that bring administrative functions closer to the citizens, thereby enhancing accessibility and accountability (Ijaz N. , 2022).

### **Conclusion**

As Pakistan confronts its current political challenges, the interplay between governance and opposition will remain central to shaping its democratic trajectory. The path forward necessitates not only a strategic realignment by opposition parties but also a renewed emphasis on governance and economic stability by

the ruling coalition. Collaborative efforts grounded in democratic principles are imperative for addressing Pakistan's multifaceted challenges and fostering sustainable progress. The future of Pakistan's democracy rests on its capacity to adapt to emerging challenges through inclusive and sustainable reforms. To achieve this, political parties must transcend partisan divisions and cultivate a collective vision for institutional transformation. Revising the Charter of Democracy (CoD) offers a strategic avenue for promoting inter-party cooperation and engaging citizens in legislative processes. Such initiatives can establish the foundation for a resilient democratic framework.

This endeavor demands steadfast commitment but holds the promise of a stable and prosperous political future. A revised CoD could serve as a critical instrument in addressing entrenched democratic deficiencies that have historically divided political actors. For instance, guaranteeing provincial autonomy is crucial for fostering inclusivity among Pakistan's diverse regions, while ensuring judicial independence is essential for upholding the rule of law and safeguarding democratic values. Similarly, reforms in public accountability and electoral processes are vital for restoring public trust in governmental institutions and enhancing the legitimacy of the democratic system. The envisioned CoD may emphasize the necessity of political unity in tackling critical governance and state-building issues. It also serves as a vital reminder that sustainable democratic progress hinges on adherence to constitutional principles, meaningful institutional reforms and a collective commitment to prioritizing national interests over partisan agendas. The relevance of the CoD today lies in its vision for a democratic Pakistan where institutions operate within their constitutional mandates and governance is characterized by accountability and inclusivity. As Pakistan navigates its contemporary political landscape, the CoD offers a blueprint for leveraging political consensus to realize transformative change while preserving the sanctity of democratic norms.

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