



# Regime Type: The Nexus Between Human Rights and Environmentalism

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## Abstract

This article explores the intersectionality between human rights and environmental protection by a cross country analysis between and within Pakistan and Indonesia. I argue that, as both former colonies progressed towards liberal democracies, the number of human rights violations significantly decreased and both countries showcased better commitment to environmentalism through various initiatives and projects. This establishes a significant positive correlation between increasing human rights protection and reversing the trends that cause environmental damage. As seen in both countries, dictatorships did not only violate basic human rights and necessities, but also further aggravated climate change and the effects of natural disasters.

**Keywords:** Environment; Human Rights; Democracy; Dictatorship; Climate Change

## Introduction

Politicians and activists in both the environmental and human rights movements are beginning to recognize that governments that deny or abuse human rights are likely to cause environmental problems as well. President Bill Clinton noted during the Presidential election campaign in October 1992, "It is no accident that in those countries where the environment has been most devastated, human suffering is the most severe; where there is freedom of expression and economic pursuit, there is also determination to use natural resources more wisely." Vice President Al Gore concurred that people must have political rights in order to fight for remedies to ecological problems (Kane, 1993). In this paper, I draw evidence from historical facts and current data to draw a comparison between the protection of human and environmental rights during dictatorships and democracies within and between Pakistan and Indonesia. These two countries are chosen because of their close geographic location, similar years of independence, and close patterns in changes in regime types. I argue that as countries become more liberal politically, they exhibit more commitment towards

environmental and human rights protection. This is witnessed in the progress of both Indonesia and Pakistan's environmentalism and humanitarianism as their governments adopted more liberalism with the dawn of democratic regimes.

## **Cross-Country Analysis**

### **Pakistan**

#### *Dictatorship (1977-1988)*

Pakistan has experienced several regime changes over a span of nearly 80 years, with thriving democracies to painstaking dictatorships. Throughout this time, the changes in human and environmental rights has also been significant. During the period of 1978-1988, Zia-ul-Haq, a four-star general became the sixth President of Pakistan after declaring martial law in 1977 (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2021). That marked the start of his tyrannical rule and the downfall of Pakistani's liberty and freedom. As does every dictator, Zia left no stone unturned in ensuring a strict, conservative state where the masses had no freedom of expression. He established an Islamic state on the basis on Shariah law which was a significant turn from Pakistan's predominantly secular law, inherited from the British. The "primary" police or "centerpiece" of Zia's government was "Sharization" or "Islamization" (Iqtidar, 2003).

One of his first and most controversial measures to Islamize Pakistani society was the replacement of parts of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) with the 1979 "Hudood Ordinance." (Wikipedia Contributors, 2021). The literal meaning of Hudood is limits or restrictions, the countless of which he imposed on the Pakistani public.

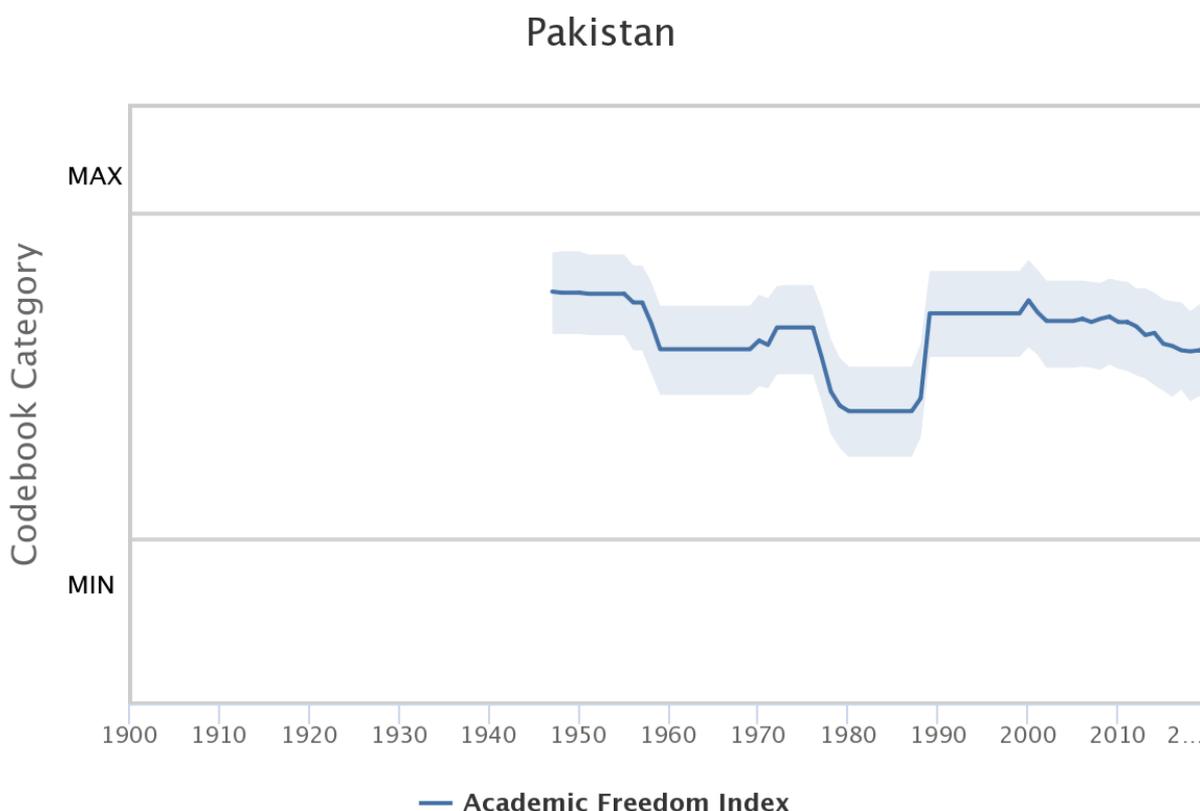
The Ordinances added new criminal offences of adultery and fornication to Pakistani law, and new punishments of whipping, amputation, and stoning to death. For theft or robbery, the PPC punishments of imprisonment or fine, or both, were replaced by amputation of the right hand of the offender for theft, and amputation of the right hand and left foot for robbery. More worrisome for human rights and women's rights advocates, lawyers and politicians was the incarceration of thousands of rape victims on charges of zina (extramarital sex). The onus of providing proof in a rape case rested with the woman herself. Uncorroborated testimony by women was inadmissible in hudood crimes. If the victim/accuser was unable to prove her allegation, bringing the case to court was considered equivalent to a confession of sexual intercourse outside of lawful marriage for which the victim received strict punishments. Despite this, the ordinance remained in force until the Women's Protection Bill was passed in 2006 (Pakistani.org, 2011).

Moreover, the order for women to cover their heads while in public was implemented in public schools, colleges and state television. Women's participation in sports and the performing arts was severely restricted. Following Sharia law, a Qanun-e-Shahadat Order (Law of Evidence Order) (Tablot, 2009) was passed in which women's legal testimony was given half the weight of men. In a report published on human rights violations during Zia's regime, Human Rights Watch complained the laws relegated women to "inferior legal status" to men. (HRW, 2021)

On the first day of Ramadan, the government used to deduct an annual 2.5% from bank accounts for the sake of Zakat (Islamic charity), irrespective of the owners' choice (Own, 2014). Among the countless other restrictions on human rights, some included the ban on peaceful protest, Western music, (Branigan, 2014) and free press. In an interview with The

Humanitarian, Afrasiyab Khattak, chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) (ReliefWeb, 2001) said, 'The rule by the generals is a problem. It is not a solution. Unfortunately, the western countries have not taken notice of this fact - that we are reaping today what was sowed by Zia-ul-Haq, the military despot - and our coming generations will be reaping what is sowed today.' \*(The Humanitarian, 2003). An advocate by profession, Khattak spent more than three years in prison for opposing martial law under General Zia-ul-Haq.

The following graph measures the Academic Freedom Index in Pakistan throughout the years by the V-DEM project. Academic freedom is understood as the right of academics, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies (UNESCO 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel). The Academic Freedom Index is designed to provide an aggregated measure that captures the de facto realization of academic freedom, including the degree to which higher-education institutions are autonomous. This time series graph shows us that the academic freedom index was at an all-time low throughout Zia's dictatorship (1977-1988) - evident of an autocrat's violation of the fundamental right of freedom of education.



Highcharts.com | V-Dem data version 11.0

Figure.1. Adapted from Country Graph | V-Dem. 2021. V-Dem.net. 2021.

When it comes to environmental protection, the only initiative taken by Zia's government was the establishment of Pakistan Environmental Protection Ordinance (Act No. XXXIV of 1997) which did no substantial work to conserve or protect the diverse geography of Pakistan. There is no record any other proposal or agenda, and this committee's work has been extremely limited in scope which questions its legitimacy and might have only been established to improve ratings and appearances. In an era where human rights violations were at its peak,

environmental activism was the last thing the public could advocate for. Needless to say, the government also had little interest towards the increasing carbon emissions and smog due to industrialization in Pakistan. Zia's era was one dominated by strict Islamic laws and regression in terms of environmental protection.

### *Democracy (2018 – Present)*

Pakistan experienced a new era of liberal democracy when Imran Khan assumed office in 2018. With his administration came new hope for a proper democracy where rights were not only granted to the masses but minorities gained protection as well. According to the Ministry of Human Rights of the Government of Pakistan, (Ministry of Human Rights, 2012) some of the key successes of Imran Khan's leadership have been polio eradication with support from Bill Gates (Tribune, 2020), depoliticization of the police, (Tribune, 2019) an upsurge in tourism (WebDesk, 2021), the return of over 200,000 children to the public school system because of improved quality (Institutional Reforms Cell, 2018), reforms across the medical system, topped off with the flagship project of the Sehat Insaf Card (Fairness in Healthcare Card) which has been provided to over 70 percent households across the province that ensures insurance cover up to Rs. 540,000 at private hospitals too. (Pmhealthprogram, 2021)

In addition to this, the government has also brought in a robust local body governance system which has seen funds devolve to district, tehsil and village level; development funds are no longer used to win loyalty amongst members of the assembly in the name of development.

Human development has been at the forefront of Khan's governance in the nation. Numerous bills and acts were introduced and passed by the parliament for the protection of human rights, which include Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Bill 2020 (Tribune, 2020), Protection of Journalists and Media Personnel Bill (Ministry of Human Rights, 2012), and the Torture, Custodial Death and Custodial Rape (Prevention and Punishment) Bill 2020 (Ministry of Human Rights, 2012). The various human rights acts include the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Ordinance 2020 (Ministry of Human Rights, 2012), the ICT Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2020) (Ministry of Human Rights, 2012), and the Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Act (Ministry of Human Rights, 2012). The Khan administration has taken various initiatives to not only protect every sector of the diverse population of Pakistan but also respond to international cries such as the letter by the Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2018), in which he promised to address with his new Human Rights Agenda. Under the Khan administration, Pakistan was elected to United Nations Human Rights Council for the fifth time (Dawn, 2020).

When it comes to the environment, Khan appointed a Ministry of Climate Change which initiated various projects that received international recognition (Ministry of Climate Change, 2021). Among these, the most renowned one was the Billion Trees Tsunami Program, which is a four-year (2019-2023) project by Government of Pakistan with a total cost of PKR 125.1843 billion. (Ministry of Climate Change, 2021). The project is being implemented across Pakistan by the Ministry of Climate Change along with Provincial and territorial Forest and Wildlife departments. Imran Khan inaugurated this program on 2nd September, 2018 during "Plant for Pakistan Day" (Wikipedia Contributors, 2021). Other projects include Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF-II) (Ministry of Climate Change, 2021), Sustainable Forest Management (Ministry of Climate Change, 2021), Pakistan Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Program (PSLEP) (Ministry of Climate Change, 2021), National Ozone Unit (Ministry of Climate Change, 2021), Climate Resilient Urban Settlements Unit (Ministry of Climate Change, 2021), and several other green policies.

In a video about his environmental policies, Khan says “Globally PTI's environment policies are being recognized, especially our green recovery program from the Covid-19 pandemic and our climate action plan.” (Tribune, 2021) The country has “pledged to source 60% of energy from renewables by 2030. It has cancelled coal projects, replacing them with hydroelectric power,” the video stated. The video went on to highlight Pakistan's creation of over 85,000 green jobs, “...from plant care to the protection of forests. It's training 5,000 young people to be nature guardians.” The WEF clip added that the Government of Pakistan was also investing on creating green spaces. “Pakistan has attracted \$180 million in funding towards the creation of 15 new national parks,” it said, adding that the country is also “launching a \$500 million ‘green Eurobond’ and will soon provide a monetary valuation of its green space making its worth clear – and easier to protect.”

The follow chart shows the dates and names of climate change related policy actions taken at the federal level. It is evident that following Zia's dictatorship and with the dawn of democracy, the number of initiatives taken to control climate change surged.

**Table 9: Brief History of Institutionalization of Climate Change in Pakistan**

Year	Accomplishment	Purpose and/or Function
1974	Environment and Urban Affairs Division established at the Federal level	Follow up to Stockholm Declaration June 1972
1983	Pakistan Environment Protection Ordinance enacted	First comprehensive environment-specific legislation
1989	Environment and Urban Affairs Division upgraded to Federal Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Wildlife	
1991–1993	National Conservation Strategy prepared  National Environmental Quality Standards adopted in 1993	It provided the broad framework for addressing environmental challenges
Year	Accomplishment	Purpose and/or Function
1995	▪ Cabinet Committee on Climate Change established	▪ Acted as policy coordination forum for climate change
1997	▪ Pakistan Environmental Protection Act enacted	▪ First environmental act of the country
2002	▪ Global Centre for Impact Studies on Climate Change established	▪ This research center on climate change functioned for 10 years as a development project
2004–2005	▪ Prime Minister Committee on Climate Change convenes National Environment Policy	▪ Includes Prime Minister, Ministers of Water and Power, Food and Agriculture, Science and Technology, Environment, Planning Commission, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister
2006	▪ National Energy Conservation Policy ▪ National Renewable Energy Policy ▪ Clean Development Mechanism National Operational Strategy	
2010	▪ 18th Amendment to the 1973 Constitution	▪ Devolution of power to the provinces
2011	▪ Ministry of Environment ceases to exist ▪ New Federal Ministry of Disaster Management established	▪ Functions transferred to the Planning Commission
2012	▪ Ministry of Disaster Management renamed to the Ministry of Climate Change ▪ National Climate Change Policy approved by Federal Cabinet ▪ Punjab and Balochistan Environmental Protection Act prepared and enacted ▪ "Green Benches" established in all High Courts and Supreme Court of Pakistan by the Chief Justice of Pakistan ▪ National Disaster Management Plan approved ▪ National Sustainable Development Strategy	▪ Elevate climate change issue to a cabinet level portfolio ▪ A dedicated policy on climate change  ▪ Deals with environmental cases; 2013 decision prioritizes environmental cases in the High Courts
2013	▪ Ministry of Climate Change downgraded to Division of Climate Change ▪ Global Climate Change Impact Studies granted autonomous status ▪ National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy approved	▪ Becomes part of Cabinet Secretariat  ▪ Serves as the secretariat for the Prime Minister Committee through "GCISC Act 2013"
2014	▪ Framework for Implementation of Climate Change Policy adopted	
2015	▪ Division of Climate Change upgraded to the Ministry of Climate Change	▪ Federal focal ministry on all climate change-related issues

Figure 2. Adapted from Climate Change Profile of Pakistan, Asian Development Bank by Qamar Uz Zaman Chaudhry. 2017. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22617/TCS178761>

This positive change in protection of environmental and human rights comes with democratization, decentralization and more accountability of the government leaders.

## **Indonesia**

### *Dictatorship (1967-1998)*

Between the years of 1967-1998, Indonesia experienced strict dictatorship by Indonesian political and military general Suharto (Wikipedia Contributors, 2021).

Suharto presided over more than three decades of military dictatorship and systematic human rights abuses, including media censorship (Schumacher, 1973), tight restrictions on freedom of association and assembly (Schumacher, 1973), a highly politicized and controlled judiciary, (Liddle, 1985), widespread torture (Roosa, 2008), attacks on the rights of minorities (HRW, 2020), massacres of alleged communists (Sciencespo, 2016), and numerous war crimes committed in East Timor, Aceh, Papua and the Moluccan islands (Tapol, 1999).

"Suharto has gotten away with murder - another dictator who's lived out his life in luxury and escaped justice," Brad Adams, Asia director of the New York-based monitor Human Rights Watch, said in a statement (ABC News, 2008). Human Rights Watch said that the lack of justice for Suharto's crimes is directly linked to the continuing impunity enjoyed by Indonesia's security forces, despite many political reforms and promises to address past abuses (HRW, 2008).

Under Suharto's "New Order" regime (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2021), Indonesian society became progressively militarized, with the Indonesian armed forces playing an increasingly prominent role as a social and political force. Throughout his rule, Suharto viciously suppressed any sign of anti-government unrest or separatist ambition. Military operations, most notably in East Timor, Aceh, and Papua, were characterized by undisciplined and unaccountable troops committing widespread abuses against civilians, including extrajudicial executions, torture, forced disappearances, beatings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and drastic limits on freedom of movement (HRW, 2006).

In the year after President Suharto took control, between 500,000 and one million alleged members of the Indonesian Communist party were killed in the year; 500,000 of his political opponents were arrested, only one thousand of whom were ever brought to trial. While between 1989 and 1993, two thousand civilians in Aceh including Children's rights and the elderly were unlawfully killed (BBC News, 2016).

In May 1998, several hundred people were killed by the security forces as police clamped down on protestors. The ethnic-Chinese were targeted and an unknown number of ethnic-Chinese women were raped (AmnestyUK, 2019).

Following his death, Amnesty International released a statement warning that the death of General Suharto should not be used as an excuse to ignore the atrocities that were conducted in his name during his 33-year reign (AmnestyUK, 2019).

Though it is well known that Suharto's era was tyrannized by atrocities and mass killings, the environment also faced devastating effects. According to a report by Development and Cooperation, by the late 1970s, Indonesia had become the world's largest exporter of tropical timber (Ascher, 1998). To meet international demand, companies with logging rights quickly cleared forests. No environmental safeguards were in place. The forests did not absorb as much carbon from the atmosphere as before and did not host as many varieties of plants and animals. Making matters even worse, the depleted forests became giant fire hazards.

In 1982/1983 the region was hit by the El Niño weather system (US Department of Commerce, 2021) a variation in winds and sea surface temperatures. The impact was a severe drought.

When farmers and plantation owners started burning trees and vegetation to clear land for planting, the fires quickly spread out of control. Among other things, they ignited the highly combustible logging waste strewn everywhere. Peat swamps and surface coal deposits burned as well. The “Great Fire of Borneo” (Henry, 2016) set ablaze 3.2 million hectares in East Kalimantan, 2.7 million of which were tropical rainforests (D+C, 2021). The Government of Indonesia (GOI) estimated that 170,000 hectares of forest was burnt (Thompson, 2001). Other more reliable estimates raise this number by a factor of 10 (Byron and Shepherd, 1998).

As it turns out, detailed surveys carried out in the 1980s by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation pointed out that: “it was not the drought which caused this huge fire, it was the changed condition of the forest . . . it is obvious that logging shortly before the fire had the most influence on the degree of damage” (Thompson, 2001). Logging transformed the fire-resistant primary rainforest into a degraded and fire prone ecosystem. Further, a satellite mapping effort, carried out with support from the World Bank during 1999, concluded that the average annual deforestation rate since 1986 has been about 1.5 million hectares, much of it “caused by forest fires, often ignited by people clearing land cheaply for plantations” (Barber & Schweithelm, 2011). The conclusion is that while El Niño made it more likely that both the quantity and severity of the fires would increase, those factors, which created the “disaster,” were human construction. (Byron & Shepherd, 1998) (Pressreference, 2014).

The Suharto government could not contain the hazards of the forest fire which grew rapidly as a result of their own deforestation schemes. The government took no initiatives to conserve or protect the environment and had to face severe economic and environmental crises following these disasters.

#### *Democracy (1998 – Present)*

Indonesian democracy has made impressive strides, particularly in light of its long repression. The rapid emergence of nongovernmental organizations focused on the defense of democracy, human rights and the environment incubated a mostly young cadre of Indonesians who have played substantial roles in assisting at the birth of Indonesia's democracy. Their vision and courage, along with that of a vibrant print and broadcast media, have provided a stable basis for its further development. Most people have enjoyed freedom of expression and opinion, freedom of information, checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches of government, and a depoliticized military (Bhakti, 2007).

Indonesia’s current democratically elected President, Joko Widodo (Wikipedia Contributors, 2021) has brought the archipelago a long way from what it used to be during the Suharto era. In a speech during an annual state of the nation address president Widodo pledged to produce policies that protect human rights and the environment, noting that speed and accuracy should not be exchanged for “carelessness and arbitrariness”. “All policies must focus on environmental friendliness and promote the protection of human rights,” he said (The Jakarta Post, 2020).

In his first term, President Joko Widodo committed to resolving cases of past human rights violations. (AA, 2019). His government established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to which deals with gross human rights violation in the past (Prasetyo, 2006). Moreover, drawing from U.N MDGs implementation (Un.org, 2015), Indonesia mainstreamed MDG’s agenda into its national development planning through populist policy in reducing public spending on fuel subsidy and enhancing budget allocation for social development programs, such as Indonesia Health Card (Kartu Indonesia Sehat) (Ivisa, 2020) and “Indonesia Smart Card (Kartu Indonesia Pintar)” (TNP2K, 2015) to give poor households better access to social healthcare and education.

The following time series chart shows the Academic Freedom Index (explained in previous section) for Indonesia. It shows a strikingly similar pattern to Pakistan; as soon as Suharto's dictatorship in 1998 ended, there was a sharp increase in the freedom for education rights in Indonesia. This further proves the hypothesis that like Pakistan, Indonesia's government too restricted access to education during its dictatorial era.

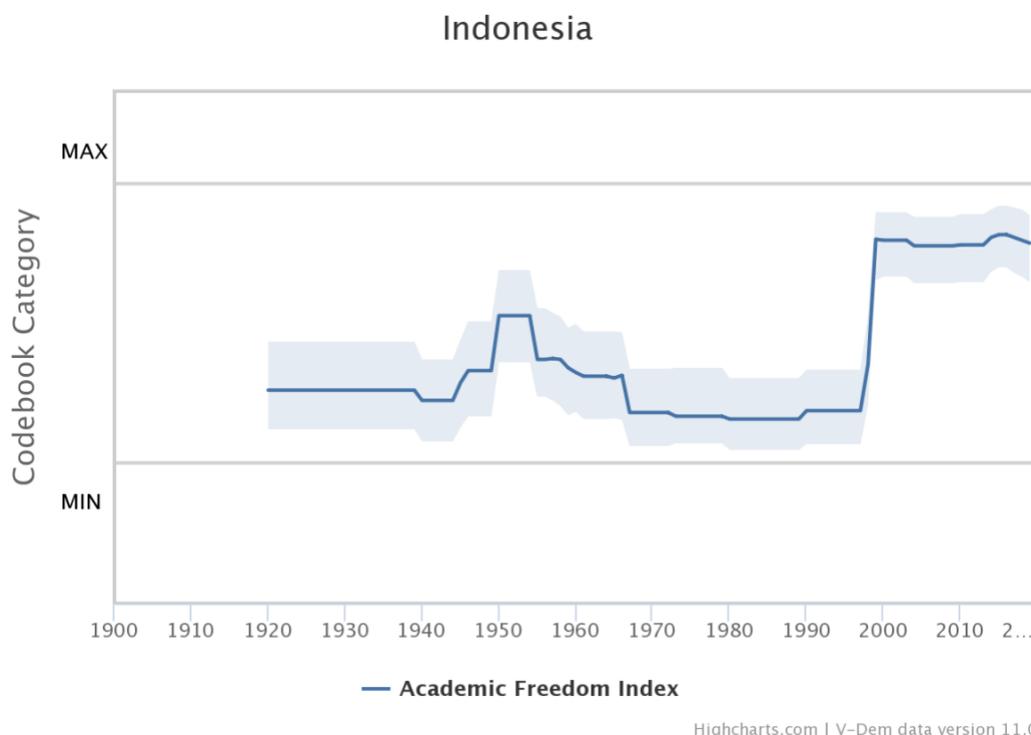


Figure.3. Adapted from Country Graph | V-Dem. 2021. V-Dem.net. 2021.

The geographical conditions in Indonesia make the archipelago very vulnerable to climate change hazards. It consists of 17000 islands and 80 percent of the natural disasters in Indonesia are caused by climate change (Measey, 2010)

Indonesia has made immense progress to recover from the Great Fire of Borneo. In June 2016, under President Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) leadership, Indonesia adopted the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Agreement which brought new hope for sustainable development and sustenance of mankind (Un.org, 2021)

“Indonesia commits to reducing emission by 29 percent below business as usual in 2030 and 41 percent with international cooperation”, President Joko Widodo said when delivering a statement on the Leader Statement Event of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Setkab, 2015). The emission reduction, according to President Jokowi, will be performed in several sectors. In energy sector, the budget to subsidize fuel oil will be diversified to productive sectors. Furthermore, the use of renewable energy will be increased by 23 percent of the national energy consumption in 2025, and the waste will be processed into energy resources.

The defining challenge of Jokowi's presidency were the devastating forest and peatland fires of 2015 burned an area the size of Macedonia, sickened half a million people, pumped an incredible amount of carbon into the atmosphere and, according to the World Bank, cost the country \$16 billion (World Bank, 2015). Jokowi responded to the disaster with various drastic but necessary measures. He declared a moratorium on peatland conversion, and then banned

new palm oil permits, notwithstanding protests from the powerful forestry lobby (Reuters Staff, 2019). He formed a dedicated agency to restore damaged peatlands, a herculean task given the competing and often renegade vested interests at play almost everywhere in Indonesia. He moved to prosecute companies for causing the fires, waging high-profile lawsuits to extract compensation from allegedly errant firms (Jacobson, 2016).

The following is a compiled list of initiatives taken by Jokowi to protect the environment and prevent climate change. The graph is obtained from a study conducted by the Asian Development Bank which does not cite any actions taken by Suharto's government for environmental conservation that have positively contributed to eradicating the climate change emergency of the 21st century.

### National Adaptation Policies and Strategies

**TABLE 8.** Key national adaptation policies, strategies, and plans

Policy/Strategy/Plan	Status	Document Access
National Medium-Term Development Plan 2020–2024	Enacted	January, 2020
National Communications to the UNFCCC	Three submitted	Latest: February, 2018
Biennial Update Report	Two submitted	Latest: 2018
Managing Peatlands Report	Submitted	2018
State of Indonesia's Forests Report	Submitted	2018
Renewable Energy Regulations	Enacted	2017 (Indonesian)
Implementing Redd+ And Sustainable Management of Forests No. 70/2017	Submitted	2017 (Indonesian)
Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) To Paris Climate Agreement	Submitted	November, 2016
National Medium Term Development Plan 2015–2019 (RPJMN 2015–2019)	Passed	2015
National Adaptation Plan	Enacted	February, 2014
Technology Needs Assessment (TNA) for Climate Change Adaptation 2012	Completed	February, 2012
National Disaster Management Plan 2010–2014	Enacted	2012
National Redd+ Strategy	Submitted	2012

Figure 4. Adapted from Climate Risk Country Profile: Indonesia. Asian Development Bank. 2021.

Like Pakistan, Indonesia too, has come a long way in protecting its citizens and the environment as the scars of Suharto's authoritarian era fade away.

## Analysis and Discussion

It is difficult to produce empirical results that encapsulate the exact relationship regime type, environmental performance, and human rights. There are several reasons for this limitation. Firstly, the term 'human rights' covers a very vast array of domains ranging from political rights, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, free media, and the right to education among many others. There is a lack of reliable data on human rights violations in countries during authoritarian rule and the numbers are often inflated or facts are altered to avoid international sanctions and criticism. While there are datasets that cover human rights as a whole by making an aggregated index such as those by Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, these indices are not much useful without having a similar index of environmental performance in both countries ranging back to the 1980s. The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) by Yale and Columbia University would be the perfect dataset to find the correlation between these three variables by using multiple regression and chi square tests. However, the dataset only dates back till 2006 and would not prove beneficial for my research. Due to the lack of

data on environmental performance and human rights violations during dictatorships, the scope of my analysis is limited and is a prompt for further researchers interested in this topic to explore this methodology if the data is available for their time range or selected countries.

My preliminary judgement for the correlation suspected is that authoritative regimes come into power by force and not by popular vote. This makes them increasingly susceptible to further takeovers by opposition parties, general strikes by the public, revolutions, or a civil war. In such a heated political climate, these autocrats focus on staying in power due to which the environment is not a priority at all. Moreover, human rights are also abused as a way of maintaining fear amongst the public to curb and potential uprisings against the autocratic ruler. With human rights and academic freedom being so restricted, NGOs and other volunteers who work on initiatives to protect the environment no longer feel safe to do so without the permission of the government in fear of risking their own life.

The study of this topic is essential in the realm of political science as it highlights an important issue that cannot be ignored given the climate change emergency the world is currently facing. It is all the more important for political scientists, policy makers, and government officials to think about how their actions not only inflict pain of the masses but also cause an irreversible damage to the environment. Given the fact that climate change is a global issue, countries can consider working as mediators to attenuate the effects of decisions made by authoritarian regimes for both the public and environment as the severity of this issue is not just limited to human rights anymore; it also impacts the chances of our existence on this planet. Several policy options to consider would be providing humanitarian assistance and asking autocratic countries to meet environmental sustainability standards in exchange for aid, trade regulations, tax exemptions, and other incentives or benefits that may reduce the gravity of the problem. Policy decisions are ultimately left to policy makers but there is no denial of the fact there is a lot left to discover regarding this topic and if this suspected correlation is proven true in other countries' analyses as well, then urgent action is also needed to prevent further destruction of human kind and the environment.

## **Conclusion**

Analyzing the trends seen in both Pakistan and Indonesia, it is valid to conclude that while an upward trajectory towards democracy does not necessarily indicate significantly better results, it certainly does show that there is a better commitment and more initiatives taken towards humanitarianism and environmentalism.

During the era of authoritarian rule where freedom of human rights was limited in both countries, the progress towards environmental conservation was minimal, maybe even in regression. In a speech soon after the forest fires, Suharto addressed the nation saying, "We truly understand that...protecting the environment, developing democracy and upholding human rights...are indeed important conditions for the growth and development of the nation," (Gordon, 1998). One might wonder why a dictator would even mention democracy or human rights -- issues that have been anathema to his rule from its very beginning -- when discussing environmental problems. That is because most world leaders acknowledge the fact that environmental concerns, democratization, and human rights are parts of the same equation.

In a study published in the Journal of Peace Research by Eric Neumayar, various variables were tested to conclude that democracies clearly show a greater commitment towards environmental conservation than their non-democratic counterparts (Neumayer, 2002). It should be noted, however, that this does not necessarily mean better environmental outcomes, at least not immediately.

Moreover, the concept of democracy is not static. It has evolved over time, with countries now moving towards a more liberal front. Addressing these issues is beyond the scope of this paper, however, it can suffice to say that in terms of environmental and human rights progression, while a democracy might not be perfect, it is surely better than an authoritarian alternative.

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