



Pakistan: A Country Profile

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Pakistan is a country in South Asia. It has a 1,046-kilometre (650 mi) coastline along the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman in the south and is bordered by Afghanistan and Iran in the west, India in the east and China in the far northeast. Tajikistan also lies very close to Pakistan but is separated by the narrow Wakhan Corridor. Strategically it is located in a position between the important regions of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. The region forming modern Pakistan was the site of several ancient cultures including the neolithic Mehrgarh and the bronze era Indus Valley Civilisation. Subsequently it was the recipient of Vedic, Persian, Indo-Greek, Islamic, Turco-Mongol, and Sikh cultures through several invasions and/or settlements. As a result the area has remained a part of numerous empires and dynasties including the Persian empires, Islamic caliphates and the Mauryan, Mongol, Mughal, Sikh and British Empires. Pakistan gained independence from the British Empire in 1947 after a struggle for independence, led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, that sought independent states for the Muslim majority populations of the eastern and western regions of British India. With the adoption of its constitution in 1956, Pakistan became an Islamic republic. In 1971, an armed conflict in East Pakistan resulted in the creation of Bangladesh. Pakistan is a federal parliamentary republic consisting of four provinces and four federal territories. With over 170 million people, it is the sixth most populous country in the world and has the second largest Muslim population after Indonesia. It is an ethnically and linguistically diverse country with a similar variation in its geography and wildlife. With a semi-industrialized economy, it is the 27th largest in the world in terms of purchasing power. Since gaining independence, Pakistan's history has been characterized by periods of military rule, political instability and conflicts with neighboring India. The country faces challenging problems including poverty, illiteracy, corruption and terrorism. Pakistan has the seventh largest standing armed force and is the only Muslim-majority nation to possess nuclear weapons. It is designated as a major non-NATO ally of the United States. It is a founding member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and a member of the United Nations, Commonwealth of Nations, Next Eleven economies and the G20 developing nations.

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