

The 1962 Constitution

Background

The 1962 Constitution was introduced by President Ayub Khan on 8 June 1962. It replaced the 1956 Constitution, which had been suspended after martial law in 1958. Ayub claimed that parliamentary democracy failed in Pakistan, so he introduced a **presidential system** based on Basic Democracies.

Main Features

The Constitution introduced a **unicameral legislature** called the National Assembly, whose members were indirectly elected. It established a **Presidential system**, where the President had the strongest role. Islam was declared the state religion, and fundamental rights were provided but could be suspended in emergencies.

Powers of the President

The President was the **head of state, government, and armed forces**. He controlled appointments, national policies, and law-making. He could dissolve the Assembly, dismiss ministers, issue ordinances, and suspend rights. This made the office of the President extremely powerful.

Positive Aspects

The Constitution ended martial law and gave Pakistan a civilian government. It provided a framework for governance, reintroduced fundamental rights, and recognized Islam as the state religion. Some political stability was seen, and the system created a controlled form of democracy.

Weaknesses and Fall

The Constitution was criticized for being **undemocratic** and authoritarian. Political parties were restricted, elections were indirect, and ordinary people had little participation. Dissatisfaction grew after the 1965 elections, leading to protests. In 1969, Ayub Khan resigned, and the Constitution was suspended by Yahya Khan.