

Pakistan Affairs

QNO 8

Introductory Remarks

Political economy refers to how political institutions and economic systems influence each other. In Pakistan, the political economy is shaped by elite domination, weak governance, unequal wealth distribution, and policy inconsistency. However, various reforms and strategies like, tax and land reforms, Human capital investment and empowering local governments etc. can help Pakistan move towards a more inclusive and egalitarian future.

Silhouettes of Pakistan's Political Economy

1. Historical Legacy of Inequality
2. Elite Capture
3. Taxation inequality
4. Military's Economic Role
5. Informal and Fragile Economy
6. Policy Discontinuity and Political Instability

Explanation

1. Historical Legacy of Inequality

Pakistan inherited feudal structures from colonial rule. Large landowners continue to dominate politics and policymaking, blocking reforms that could benefit the poor.

2. Elite Capture

A small elite controls major resources and state institutions. Political power is often used for personal gain, rather than public welfare.

3. Taxation Inequality

Pakistan's tax system is regressive. The rich often evade taxes while the burden falls on the middle class. "Only 1% of Pakistanis pay income tax".

- EBR Report, 2023

4. Military's Economic Role

Military enterprises like Fauji Foundation and DHAs hold large economic stakes. This civil-military imbalance impedes fair economic planning.

5. Fragile and Informal Economy

Over 70% of Pakistan's economy is informal. Workers in this sector lack job security, benefits, or rights.

6. Political Discontinuity and Political Instability

Frequent government changes disrupt economic policies, delaying development programs and investment reforms.

Approaches to Build an Egalitarian Society

1. Tax and Land Reforms
2. Human Capital Investment
3. Empower Local Governments
4. Gender Equality Measures
5. Reducing Military's Economy
6. Promote Small Businesses

1. Tax and Land Reforms

Tax the rich fairly, including agriculture and real estate sectors. Redistribute large land holdings and support small farmers. Moreover, use technology for tax collection transparency.

2. Human Capital Investment

Increase spending on education and health. Provide free vocational training for youth. Also, WNDP ranks Pakistan 161/191 in human development. (2023)

3. Empower Local Governments

De-centralize decision making and funds to local bodies for effective service delivery and public accountability.

4. Gender Equality Measures

Ensure equal job opportunities and wages for women - Provide support for female entrepreneurs through micro finance - "No Society can rise with half of its population left behind - Malala Yousafzai."

5. Reducing Military's Economic Footprint

Ensure transparency in military's businesses - Maintain a balanced budget with more focus on human development.

6. Promote Small Businesses

Provide credit, training, and infrastructure for small and medium enterprises. Also, shift industrial growth to less developed areas for job creation.

Conclusion

Pakistan's political economy stands at a critical point. Elite domination, weak governance and inequality have prevented progress toward a just society. But, the path to egalitarian society lies in social justice and a shift in power from few to many. These changes can transform Pakistan's future for better.

② NO 2.

Introductory Remarks

Nuclear technology has redefined global and regional security in the modern era.

For Pakistan, the nuclear program emerged from strategic necessity into a powerful deterrent.

While international concerns persist over safety and proliferation, Pakistan's nuclear capability remains central to its defense, diplomacy, and role in shaping the regional balance of power.

Objectives of Pakistan's Nuclear Doctrine

Pakistan follows the principle of Minimum Credible Deterrence, aiming to:

- Deter Indian aggression.
- Maintain Strategic balance.
- Avoid a full-scale arms race.

Unlike India's declared "No First Use" policy, Pakistan maintains deliberate ambiguity to enhance deterrence.

"We don't want war, but we are prepared for it."

- Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Safety and Security Measures

Pakistan has developed a multi-layered safety structures including:

- National Command Authority (NCA) -

Supreme nuclear command.

- Strategic Plans Division (SPD)

Operational safety and handling.

- Personnel Reliability Program (PRP)

Psychological and loyalty checks

- Physical protection Systems and IAEA Collaboration

- Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA)

Oversees civilian nuclear facilities.

International Concerns and Criticism

Despite safety reforms, concerns persist, including:

a. Risk of nuclear material falling into terrorist hands.

b. History of proliferation.
e.g. A.Q. Khan case.

c. Insider Threats

d. Pakistan's non-signature to NPT and CTBT.

e. Opposition to Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) due to regional imbalance.

Impact on Regional Strategic Dynamics

Pakistan's nuclear capability ensures deterrence stability in South Asia:

- a. Prevented war post-Kargil, Balakot.
- b. Checked India's conventional superiority.
- c. Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs) introduced = for battlefield deterrence.
- d. Maintains strategic parity with India.

"Nuclear deterrence in South Asia is real and effective."

- Stephen Cohen.

Pakistan's Role in Changing Regional Apparatus

The nuclear umbrella has enhanced Pakistan's strategic value :

- a. Resists India's hegemony and encirclement (QUAD, Indo-US alliance).
- b. Elevates Pakistan's geopolitical significance in Indo-Pacific dynamics.
- c. Empowers Pakistan in diplomatic negotiations on Kashmir and water disputes.
- d. Serves as a tool of deterrence diplomacy.

Conclusion

Pakistan's nuclear program is a product of strategic necessity and regional imbalance. While it has invited global scrutiny, Pakistan has built a credible safety regime. The program contributes to maintain regional balance, preventing war and strengthening states role in an evolving regional apparatus.

Q No. 6

Introductory Remarks

A country's sovereignty rests not just on borders or weapons but on the unity of its people. In Pakistan's case, ethnic harmony and national integration are vital for internal peace and external security.

Ethnic tensions, if ignored, can turn into separatist movements, creating space for foreign interferences.

Thus, solving ethnic issues is Pakistan's foremost national interest.

Ethnic Discontent as a Threat to Sovereignty

Ethnic grievances have often led to serious challenges =

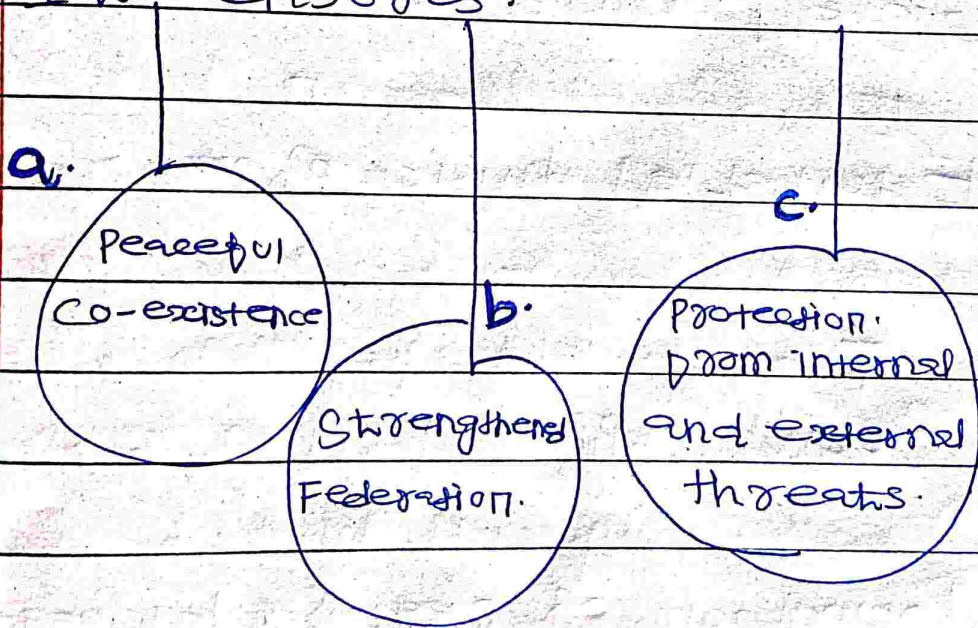
- a. Baloch Insurgency demanding separation.
- b. Ethnic clashes in Karachi among Muhajirs, Pashtuns, and Sindhis.
- c. Foreign interferences, especially by India, using ethnic fault lines to destabilize Pakistan.

"A house divided against itself cannot stand." -
Abraham Lincoln

National Integration: Key to Unity and Stability

National integration means bringing all ethnic groups under a shared identity while respecting their uniqueness.

It ensures:



"We are now all Pakistanis, not Balochis, Pathans, Sindhis, Bengalis, Punjabis..."

- Qaid-e-Azam

Pakistan's Efforts to Resolve Ethnic Issues

Pakistan has taken important steps:

1. 18th Amendment

Gave provinces more autonomy.

2. NFC Awards

Equitable division of resources.

3. Ehsaas and BISP (Benazir Income Support Program)

Social support for poor regions.

4. Media and Culture

Promotion of regional language and traditions.

These have reduced some ethnic tensions but gaps still exist.

Challenges to Integration

Despite efforts, hurdles remain:

1. Political use of ethnicity for votes.
2. Economic disparity among provinces.
3. Weak and local government in remote areas.
4. Curriculum lacking national unity messages.

According to UNDP, Balochistan and South Punjab still rank low in development indicators.

① Empower
local governments.

② Address past
injustices with
truth and reconciliation.

Way Forward

③ Educate
youth about
national
harmony.

④ Promote
inclusive
development.

⑤ Stop
foreign
propaganda
dividing ethnic
groups.

"Integration of ethnic
groups into mainstream
politics is essential for
national peace." - ICCG

Concluding Remarks

Ethnic unity is backbone of national sovereignty.

Without integration, Pakistan remains vulnerable to both internal unrest and external manipulation. Only, a inclusive and united Pakistan can stand strong against today's challenges.

Q No 3.

Exordium

Regional cooperation is a powerful tool to boost peace, growth of economy and mutual understanding among neighbouring states. South Asia and surrounding regions host platforms like SAARC, ECO and SCO, each built on different goals and strategic interests. Pakistan plays a central role in all three but with varying levels of success and engagement.

Objectives of SAARC, ECO and SCO

A. SAARC (South Asian Association For Regional Cooperation) Objectives

1. Promote peace, stability, and economic growth in South Asia.
2. Strengthen regional identity and cultural exchange.
3. Reduce poverty and enhance social development.
4. Improve trade through South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

B. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Objectives

1. Promote sustainable economic development.
2. Enhance trade and investment among member States.
3. Improve regional transport, energy, and communication networks.
4. Build stronger ties among Muslim-majority countries.

C. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Objectives

1. Strengthen regional peace, security and stability.
2. Combat terrorism, separatism and extremism through RATS.

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3. Promote economic cooperation and connectivity.

4. Support multipolar world order and regional diplomacy.

Achievements of SAARC, SCO and ECO

A. SAARC Achievements

1. Establishment of SAARC Development Fund.

2. South Asian Free Trade Area signed but poorly implemented.

3. Cooperation in health and education sectors.

4. Limited success due to India-Pak tensions.

B. ECO Achievements

1. ECO Trade Agreement signed.
2. Regional rail and road projects launched. e.g., Islamabad - Tehran - Istanbul train.
3. Vision 2025 for trade and infrastructure planning.

Still low intra-regional trade (under 8%)

C. SCO Achievements

1. Conducted multiple joint counter-terrorism exercises.
2. Established Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure.
3. Inclusion of India and Pakistan broadened its scope.
4. Supporting regional dialogue, particularly through China-Russia Initiatives.

Pakistan's Role in SAARC, SCO, and ECO

A. In SAARC

1. Founding member (1985)
2. Advocate for regional connectivity and people-to-people ties.
3. Hosted Summits and meetings.

Progress hindered by Indo-Pak rivalry.

B. In ECO

1. Active promoter of trade, transport and energy links.
2. Key player in regional corridors like CPEC as a future ECO route.
3. Hosted major SCO Summits.
4. Strong cultural and historical ties with ECO states.

C. In SCO

1. Full member since 2017
2. Supports anti terrorism and security cooperation.
3. Strategic alignment with China and Russia through CPEC.
4. Participates in military exercises and diplomatic forums.

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SAARC, ECO and SCO serves different purposes like, social uplift, economic integration and security cooperation. Their success varies due to political, structural, and strategic differences. Pakistan can benefit greatly by improving regional ties, and overcoming internal policy gaps.