

Q no. 2

Critically evaluate the evolution of Pakistan political system and culture after 1999.

Military rule in Pakistan often use reforms as justification for authoritarianism. But reforms imposed without accountability weaken, rather than strengthen the state.

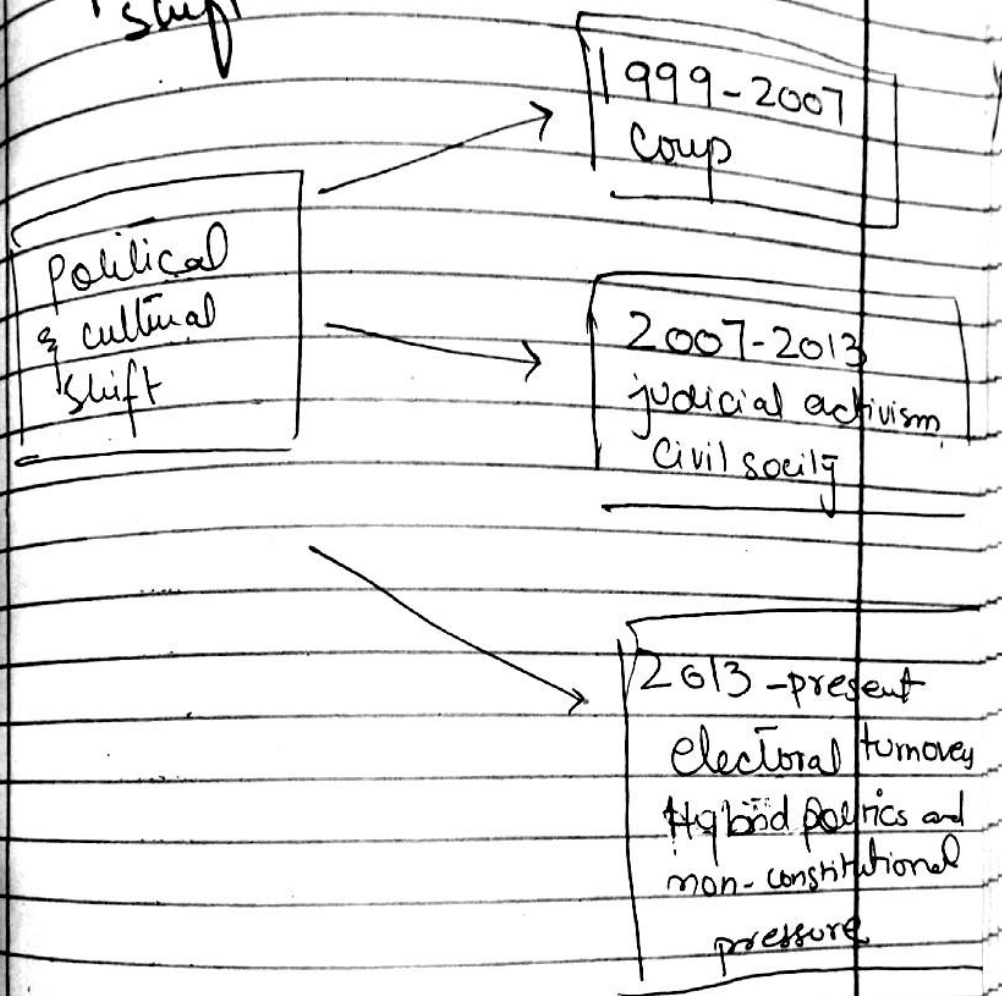
Ayesha Jalal,

(Democracy and authoritarianism in South Asia)

The period from 1999-2008 in Pakistan political history is characterised by peculiar mix of military authoritarianism, economic liberalization, external alignment and institutional confrontation. This decade began with military coup and ended with restoration of civilian rule, but in between Pakistan experience one of the transformational yet polarizing era. General Pervez Musharraf rule, legitimized

by judiciary and the west,
promised enlightenment, moderation
and economic recovery. However,
reality was far more complex.
It was era of political manipulation,
judicial suppression and regional insurgency.

Political and Cultural Shift



1. 1999-2007 coup: General Pervez Musharraf

Pervez Musharraf's 1999 coup replaced civilian rule with military backed administration

The regime used the legal framework order (2002) and later 17th amendment (2003) to rework the constitution, strengthening presidential powers, restricting parliamentary autonomy and shaping a controlled return to electoral politics in 2002 general elections that favored pro-establishment actors. This period normalised political engineering, patronage networks and weak policy development.

2. 2007-2013: judicial activism and civil society rollback:

The 2007-2009 lawyers movement and public protest forced the restoration of judges and helped catalyze a more assertive judiciary and civil society. After Musharraf's exit successive civilian governments negotiated constitutional redress culminating in the 18th amendment (2010) which reversed many presidential powers, abolishing concurrent list, and devolved key functions to provinces a major decentralization reform.

3 Era of hybrid democracy (2013 - present)

✓ Successive elections in 2013, 2018, and 2024 ensured procedural continuity. However, influence of military persisted behind the scenes. Politics became highly polarized, with civil-military friction, judicial interventions and unstable coalition shaping the system.

Major constitutional developments

17th amendment and LFO

→ These amendments legalized Musharraf's rule, empowered president to dissolve assemblies → curtailed parliamentary authority, entrenching executive dominance

18th Amendment

→ It reversed earlier distortion, strengthened the prime minister and parliament, abolished the concurrent list and enhanced provincial powers, making shift toward genuine federation.

~~The Impact of~~ Impact on democratic continuity and Governance

1. Restoration of Parliamentary democracy

The 18th Amendment returned
some constitutional primacy to
elected institutions and reduced
formal presidential/extra-
constitutional tools for unseating
governments.

2. Provisional empowerment:

Devolution broadened political
space at provincial/local
levels and created incentives
for substantial capacities are
strengthened

3. Rise of civil society

The larger
movement, media activism and
civil society showed extra-
constitutional power can be
contested and partially
reversed.

4. Persistent military influence:

Despite formal constitutional
limits, military retains major
influence over security and
high politics; constitutional gains

did not produce full civilian control over the security establishment. The result is hybrid democratic form with constrained civilian sovereignty.

5. Weak political Institutions:-

Political parties often revolve around personalities and transactional coalitions rather than programmatic competitions; constitutional changes cannot by themselves build strong party systems needed for stable governance.

6. Implementation gaps in devolution:

The 18th amendment's promise depends on fiscal federalism and administrative capacity. Provinces still face resource constraints and central bottlenecks, limiting effective governance outcomes.

Constitutional reforms since 1999 have produced meaningful legal correction (18th amendment) that strengthen parliamentary and provincial roles. Yet democratic continuity remains fragile because constitutional text alone could not eliminate deep-rooted informal power structures.

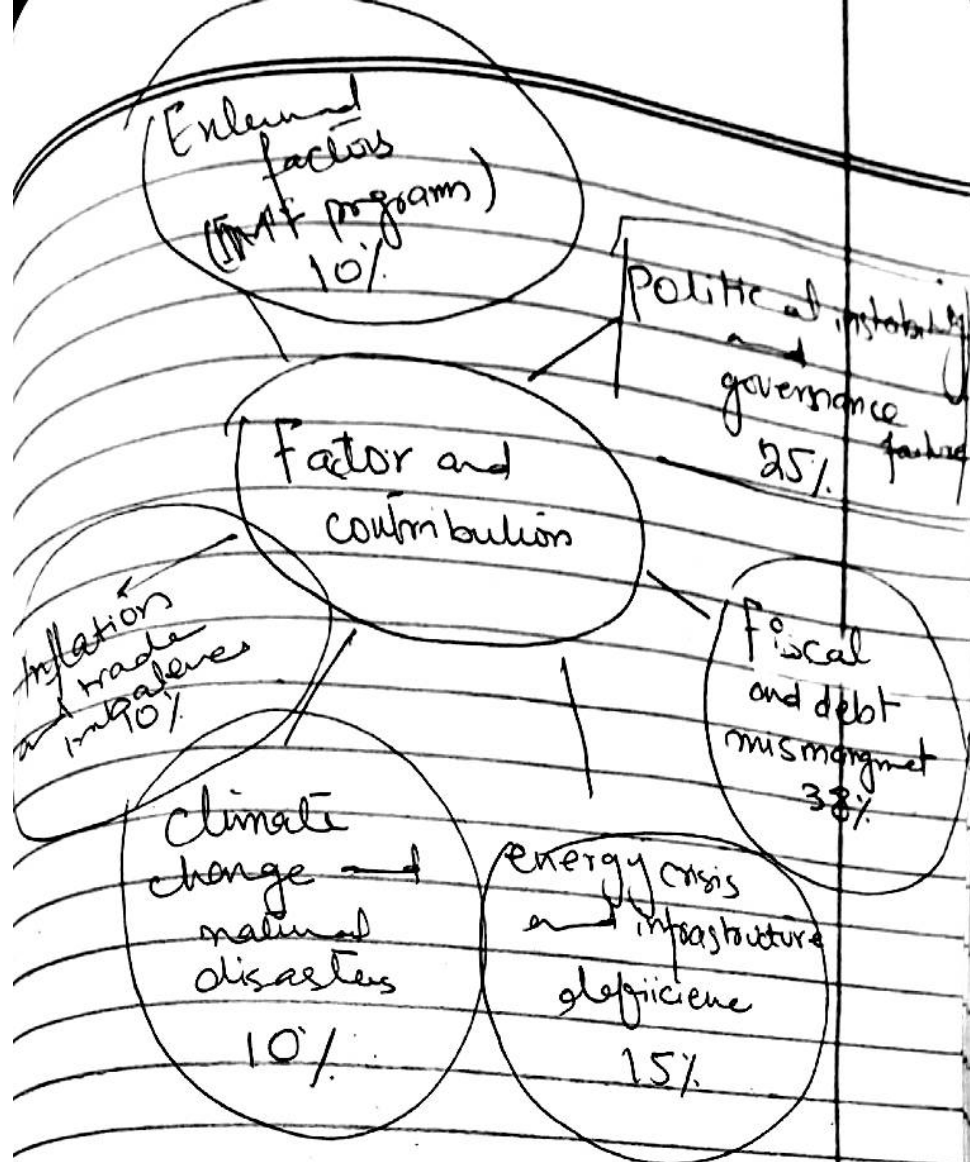
Qno:3

The current economic challenges...

The current economic challenges are deep-rooted in structural flaws in our economy. Pakistan's existential economic crisis 2023-24 has reached a tipping point, driven by unsustainability debt, runaway inflation and chronic political instability. International reports have painted a grim picture, the IMF and World Bank identified Pakistan's external debt surpassing \$130.179 billion (by May 2024) with reserves plummeting to critical levels. Inflation topping 38%, has severely impacted basic necessities like food and energy. Moreover climate related disasters like 2022 floods have compounded economic pressures.

Without immediate and comprehensive reforms, Pakistan's economic recovery will remain elusive, threatening long-term stability and development.

(International analyst from World Bank).



Factors that contribute to challenges.

1. Chronic debt and fiscal imbalance

Pakistan has heavily relied on external borrowing to finance its growing budget deficits. Instead of investing borrowed funds into productive sectors, much of the borrowing has been used for debt servicing and meeting recurring expenditures. This has created a vicious cycle where the country borrows

more to pay off previous loans
leading to unsustainable debt
levels

2. Political Instability and Governance

Pakistan's political instability has been a key factor behind its economic crisis. Frequent changes in government, military coups and weak democratic institutions have led to inconsistent economic policies. Poor governance have fuelled corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies, delaying reform and hurting investor confidence.

3. Energy crisis and infrastructure

Pakistan has ^{been} grappling with chronic energy crisis for decades due to inadequate infrastructure and inefficient management in the energy sector where payments due between energy producers, distributors and consumers go unsettled, causing to rise further limiting the government's ability to finance energy ~~sector~~ imports or invest in sustainable energy.

products

4. Inflation and trade imbalances:-

Pakistan has struggled with persist trade deficits due to low export competitiveness and high imports. The country imports almost majority of its oil, gas and machinery which are vital for its economy while exports mainly textiles have not kept pace. currency depreciation further exacerbates the problem by making imports more expensive, driving inflation higher.

5. Impact of climate change and natural disasters.

Pakistan is one of most vulnerable countries to climate change, with rising Temperatures, irregular rainfall, and increased incidences of natural disasters like flood and draughts. These events have devastating effects on agriculture, infrastructure and communities draining public resources and reducing economic productivity.

Suggestive measures

Measures.

Possible Impact

1. Fiscal Reforms and Tax diversification

It will help improve revenue collection and reduce reliance on external debt.

2. Strengthening governance and anti-corruption

Help increase investor confidence and public service delivery and improve economic efficiency.

3. Investment in Renewable energy infrastructure

Reduce energy import dependency and low energy cost, helps in job creation.

4. Enhancing Agricultural productivity

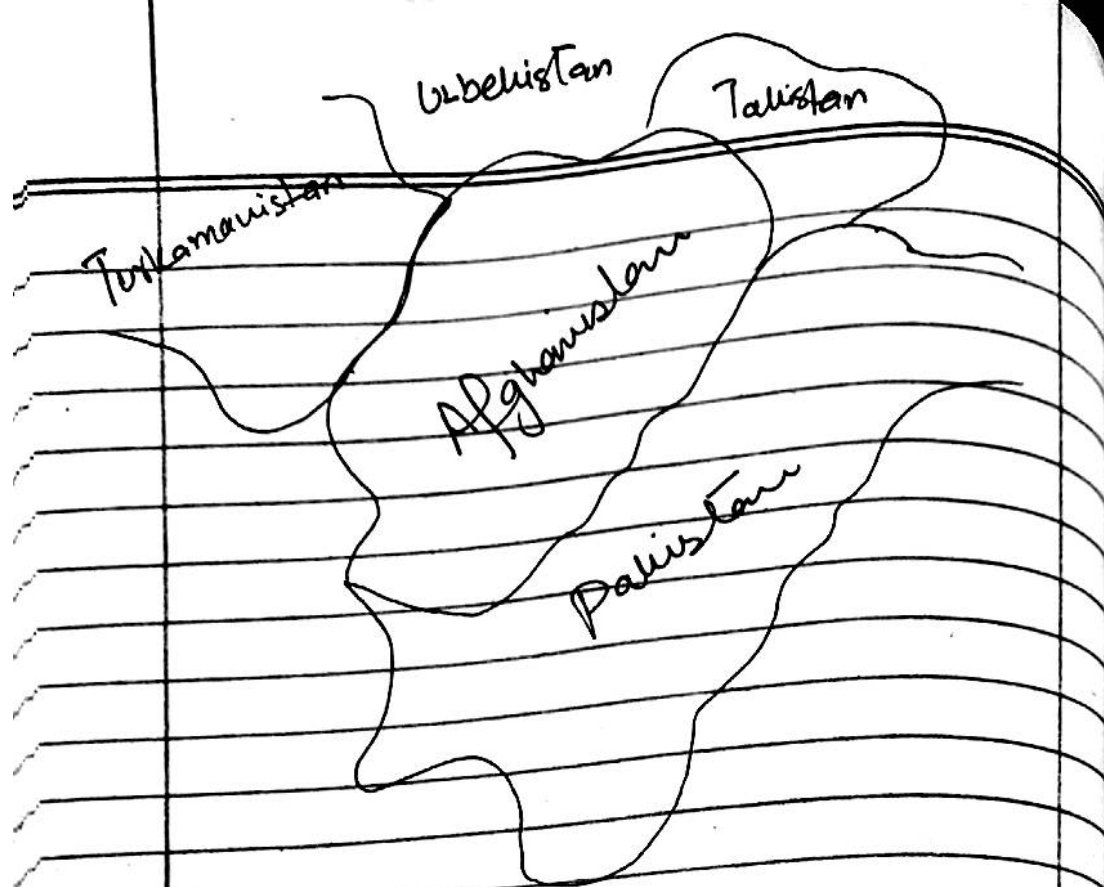
Promote agricultural innovation through research and Technology. It will also help reduce rural poverty.

Pak-Afghanistan relations

• Afghanistan stability is not just a foreign policy concern for Pakistan; it is an existential imperative. Without peace on our western border, we cannot fully focus on our economic revival or strategic positioning in the region.

Dr. Moeed Yusuf
(former national security advisor and policy analyst).

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have remained focal point of South Asian geopolitics marked by periods of cooperation and conflict. The relationship is deeply rooted in shared geography, culture and history yet marked by mistrust and geopolitical divergence. The bilateral relations between Pak-Afghan, as the two nations grapple with overlapping security concerns, economic dependencies and cultural affinities.



The post-2021 US withdrawal from Afghanistan has dramatically reshaped the region the rise of Taliban government ushered a new opportunities and challenges. Reports by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) highlight the fragility of Afghanistan's governance structures, while think tanks like the Pakistan Institute for peace studies (PIPS) report a worrying 50% increase in cross-border militant activity in 2023-24. This upsurge in violence underscores the urgency of addressing bilateral irritants for regional stability.

Present key irritants or factors-

"The turmoil in Afghanistan is not an isolated issue; it directly impacts Pakistan's internal security. Ignoring this connection will only allow militancy and extremism to grow on both sides of border."

Zahid Hussain
(Senior journalist and author)

Post-2021, relations have been further strained by multiple factors, including security concerns, economic hardships, and unresolved border disputes. The following issues represent major challenges in 2024-25.

1. Cross-border Terrorism:

The resurgence of TTP, which operates from Afghan territory, represents a significant threat to Pakistan's security. According to PIPS 2024 report, over 1200 fatalities linked to TTP violence in 2023-24 and the recent cross-border clash in October 2025 is a sharp increase from previous years. Pakistan reportedly called on

Taliban regime to honor its commitments under the Doha agreement to prevent Afghan soil from being used for terrorism. However, the Taliban's reluctance to act against the TIP has deepened tensions...

2. Refugee Crisis:-

Pakistan hosts approximately 3.7 million Afghan refugees of whom more than 1.5 million are undocumented. Economic pressures and national security concerns have led to strict border policies and deportation campaigns in 2024 straining bilateral relations.

The refugee situation is exacerbated by Afghanistan's economic collapse, with the World Bank reporting that over 90% of Afghan households face food insecurity.

3. Border disputes and Skirmishes:

The Durand line remains a flashpoint for conflict. Pakistan's efforts to fence the border, intended to curb illegal crossings and smuggling, have

been opposed by Taliban, which does not recognize the line as an international boundary.

Incidents such as Cham on Border clash (2023) and temporary closure of Torkham Border (2024) disrupted trade and heightened tensions.

4- Economic and Trade Challenges:

Bilateral Trade, which once reached \$2 billion annually, has plummeted due to border closure and political instability. Smuggling through informal channels further undermines formal trade mechanisms.

Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan for access to ports and essential goods adds a layer of economic interdependence that could either exacerbate tensions or pave the way for cooperation.

5- Water Resource management and disputes:-

The Management of transboundary water resources, particularly the Kabul River, has emerged as a contentious issue. The Kabul River, which originates in Afghanistan and flows into

Pakistan, is a crucial water source for both countries.

→ Afghanistan's plan to build dams such as proposed Shatoot dam with Indian collaboration have raised concerns in Pakistan about reduced downstream water flows. Pakistan fears that such projects could adversely impact its agriculture and energy sectors, which heavily depend on Kabul River system.

→ Lack of formal water sharing treaty between two countries exacerbate mistrust. Pakistan has called for dialogue on this issue, but progress remain slow due to political instability and mutual suspicion.

In 2024, reports indicated that Afghanistan complete the initial feasibility study for another dam on Kabul river with foreign assistance. Pakistan expressed concern about potential unilateral action, warning of adverse impacts on its water security.

6. Influence on Internal power:-

The involvement of external actors like China, India and the US has further complicated Afghan-Pakistan relations.

India's engagement in Afghanistan, including the investment in infrastructure projects, is viewed by Pakistan as an attempt to encircle it strategically. Pakistan alleges India uses its presence in Afghanistan to support anti-Pakistan elements including TTP and Baloch insurgents.

Conversely, Afghanistan perceives Pakistan's growing ties with China as a geopolitical move to limit Afghan sovereignty. Afghanistan remains cautious about becoming overly dependent on Chinese investment that Pakistan facilitates through initiatives like CPEC.

→ Suggestive measures to improve Afghan-Pakistan relations

A Stable Afghanistan is a buffer for Pakistan against external pressures. Conversely, an unstable Afghanistan is an invitation to foreign meddling in Pakistan's 'backyard'.

1. Joint Economic Zones (JEZs):

Establish border-based economic hubs with shared management to promote trade and investment. It will boost formal trade, reducing smuggling. It will create employment opportunities for both countries.

2. Joint Counter Terrorism Task force

Create dedicated bilateral task force for intelligence sharing and joint operations against militants operating across borders. It will enhance trust through cooperation. It also reduces terrorism and cross-border infiltration.

3. Cultural exchange programs:

Initiate programs focusing on art, sports, education and youth interaction to bridge cultural gaps and foster good will. It builds mutual understanding and reduces mistrust. It also engages the younger generation for long-term relations.

4. water-sharing agreements:-
Formulate a formal water sharing
treaty on Kabul river water usage
including provisions for joint dam
construction and irrigation projects.
It will help resolve key irritants
and ensures equitable resource usage.
It will also encourages long term
cooperation on shared assets.

5. Regional connectivity projects:
prioritize collaborative efforts
in projects like TAPA, CASA-1000,
and road networks linking
Pakistan, Afghanistan and central
Asia.

By focusing on these recommendations
both Pakistan and Afghanistan
will have mutual peace behind
borders and in future there
will be less tension between
both brotherly countries.