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Agha Hassan
Online Batch - 82

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Mock Exam CSS-2026

G.K. - II

Pakistan Affairs

Part - II

Q.2

After General Pervez Musharraf's October 1999 coup, Pakistan entered a prolonged period of "competitive authoritarianism" and institutional flux: periods of direct/indirect military rule alternated with civilian governments, while courts, media and provinces fought to redefine powers. Constitutional changes, provisional orders and later amendments have both opened space for democratic continuity (e.g., devolution under the 18th Amendment) and enabled new modes of executive/extra-constitutional control (e.g., LFOs, emergency proclamations, and recent surveillance/appointment laws).

Evolution of the political system and political culture (1999 to present)

1. Musharraf era (1999-2007/08): Managed liberalization + legalism

Musharraf combined military power with selective political liberalization: privatized and deregulated the electronic media, held elections under legal instruments (Legal Framework Orders) and attempted to legitimize rule through controlled civil reforms. This produced a hybrid system - formal electoral politics existed, but the military and its proxies retained decisive influence over key appointments and policy. The Legal Framework Orders retrospectively validated many of Musharraf's acts and reshaped executive powers.

2. Political Contestation and judicial ~~activism~~ activism (2007-2010)

The 2007 emergency and PCO (Provisional Constitutional Order) provoked nationwide protest and the Lawyers Movement that successfully pushed for judicial independence and the reinstatement of deposed judges - a rare mass mobilization that weakened Musharraf's legitimacy and strengthened the judiciary's profile in politics. The episode left

a political culture where courts and lawyers became decisive political actors.

3. Democratic re-ordering and devolution (2008-2013)

After military exit from politics in 2008, civilian governments (PPP then PMLN) negotiated a major constitutional correction: the 18th Amendment (2010), which reversed many centralizing changes of previous decades, abolished the Concurrent Legislative list, and increased provincial autonomy and parliamentary primacy. The Amendment is the most enduring pro-democratic legal achievement of this era, reshaping centre-province relations and reducing incentives for direct military takeovers (in theory).

4. Personalization, populism and renewed instability (2013-2024+)

Politics became increasingly personalized and polarized. Radical activism continued but shifted between validating and checking different political actors; populist mobilization under Imran Khan (2018-2022)

changed political discourse toward anti-elite rhetoric. The 2022 no-confidence removal of Imran Khan exposed fragile parliamentary coalitions and deep elite cleavages. After 2022 and through 2023-24 the political culture hardened into confrontational, extra-parliamentary contestation (mass protests, legal cases, and punitive use of state institutions).

5. Institutional retrenchment and legal re-engineering (2023-2025)

Most recently, a series of laws and administrative moves (expanded surveillance powers for intelligence agencies; changes to tenure rules for military chiefs; amendments affecting judicial and prosecutorial appointments) suggest a pattern of legal engineering that can centralize power or insulate the security establishment - even while formal democratic processes (elections, assemblies) continue to function. These changes risk hollowing out institutional checks if left unchecked.

How constitutional developments have shaped democratic continuity and governance

• Positive effects (how constitutional change helped democracy)

1. Restoration of constitutionalism and judicial independence:

The lawyers' movement and later court assertiveness made the judiciary a center of accountability against executive overreach.

2. Devolution and Federal rebalancing:

The 18th Amendment materially enhanced provincial powers, reversed decades of centralization, and created institutional mechanisms (CCI, NEC) for intergovernmental negotiation, strengthening democratic federalism in form.

3. Electoral Continuity:

Despite interruptions, Pakistan developed a routine of competitive elections and alternating civilian governments (2008, 2013, 2018, 2024), which sustain

democratic practice even in a fragile form.

• Negative effects / democratic risks

1. Legalism as a cover for political engineering:

LFOs, PCOs and ad hoc statutes have been used repeatedly to legalize extra-constitutional acts, normalizing executive bypass of democratic checks.

2. Politicization of institutions:

Courts, election bodies and anti-corruption agencies have at times been instrumentalized - undermining impartial governance and public trust. The pattern of politically charged prosecutions and judicial interventions breeds uncertainty and erodes rule of law norms.

3. Security - state retrenchment through law:

Recent laws expanding interception powers and altering appointment / tenure rules risk consolidating non-accountable

power centers, weakening democratic oversight and civil liberties.

Since 1999 Pakistan's political system has oscillated between reformist constitutionalism and extra-constitutional power politics.

Q. 3

Thesis

The current economic challenges of Pakistan are primarily the result of deep-rooted structural flaws in the economy - although political-economic behavior has repeatedly amplified and locked in these structural problems. Fixing Pakistan's crisis therefore requires structural reform as the core strategy, sequenced with politically feasible measures to manage short-term stabilization and to overcome vested interests.

Why structural flaws are primary

1. Chronic fiscal imbalance:

low and narrow tax base, large exemptions, and weak tax administration mean revenues are persistently insufficient to finance development - forcing recurrent borrowing and crowding out productive investment.

2. Energy inefficient and circular debt:

Structural losses in power generation, transmission and pricing create recurring subsidies and circular debt that drain public finances and deter

private investment.

3. Weak export base and deindustrialization:

Exports are concentrated in low-value products (textiles), with low diversification and low value-added - limiting foreign exchange earnings and growth potential.

4. Financial under-penetration and low domestic saving:

low formal savings and credit to the private sector constrain productive investment; capital markets are shallow.

5. Public sector inefficiency:

large, loss-making SOEs, poor public financial management and low-quality public services reduce total factor productivity.

Policy package - ~~part~~ prioritized, sequenced, and actionable

A. Immediate (0-12 months):

Stabilization + protect the vulnerable

1. Macroeconomic stabilization
Right but predictable monetary policy to curb inflation and rebuild FX reserves.

2. Targeted social protection,
Expand and better target cash transfers (Ehsaas - style) to protect poor households during adjustment. Avoid blanket subsidies, truly vulnerable should be shielded.

3. Debt management transparency,
Debt calendar, rollover plans and contingent liabilities should be published to reduce uncertainty.

B. Short-medium (1-3 years): Core Structural Reforms

1. Tax base broadening and PFM reform

Discretionary exemptions should be phased out and the state should move towards a simpler, more progressive tax code. FBR capacity should be strengthened through automation, data matching, and sector-specific task forces.

2. Energy sector restructuring
Technical and theft losses should be reduced through smart meters, T and D upgrades and loss-making distribution companies should be privatized with performance contracts.

3. SOE reform and privatization
All major SOEs should be audited, and privatized where feasible. Hard budget constraints and independent boards can be imposed strategically.

4. Export competitiveness strategy.

5. Financial sector deepening.

6. Agricultural modernization

C. Long term (3-10 years):

Capacity building & institutional reforms

1. Human capital investment
Large, sustained public investment in basic education, TVET and primary health - tied to measurable learn-

ing and health outcomes - must be incorporated.

2. Governance and rule of law
Judicial and regulatory reforms should be implemented to reduce contract enforcement costs (commercial courts, arbitration) and corruption should be eliminated through transparency.

3. Fiscal federalism

4. Industrial policy for higher value chains.