

PART- II

Question 3

Civil Service reforms and Governance outcomes in Pakistan

The civil service is the backbone of the state's administrative machinery. In Pakistan, it is the primary vehicle for policy implementation and service delivery. Civil service reforms are deliberate interventions intended to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of public officials to achieve better governance outcomes such as economic stability and social equity.

Role of CSR in improving governance outcomes

Effective reforms serve as a catalyst for good governance as defined by the World Bank and UNDP.

Enhanced service delivery

By streamlining business processes and adopting E-governance, reforms reduce the "cost of transaction" for the citizens.

Economic stability

Professionalizing the economic cadre ensures better fiscal management and reduces the circular debt.

Rule of law

Strengthening the executive at the district level (e.g., the revival of executive magistracy) helps in maintaining internal security and regulatory compliance.

Meritocracy and professionalism

Shifting from "seniority-based" to "performance-based" promotions ensures that the most competent officers lead key strategic positions.

Why repeated reform effort yielded limited success?

Despite over 20 major reform committees since 1947, the results remain marginal due to:

Institutional resistance (status quo).

The bureaucratic elite often resists changes that threatens their discretionary powers or the existing generalist dominance over specialists.

Poor sequencing and overambition

As noted by Dr. Ishrat Hussain, reforms often fail because they attempt to overhaul federal, provincial, and district levels simultaneously without proper sequencing.

Lack of constitutional protection

Reforms like Devolution Power Plan 2001 failed because they lacked permanent constitutional backing

and were easily reversed by subsequent regimes.

Financial constraints

Inadequate living wages (as highlighted in the PIDE Report) lead to low morale and high corruption, neutralizing the impact of structural changes.

Impact of political interference and Patronage networks

Political interference remains the single greatest impediment to public sector performance in Pakistan.

Erosion of meritocracy

Patronage networks (clientelism) prioritize loyalty over legality. Appointments to lucrative postings (Sifarish) are often made based on political affiliation rather than domain expertise. The International Crisis Group (ICG) Report highlights that "postings and promotions are increasingly made on the basis of personal contacts, undermining the integrity of the service."

Security of tenure and "The Transfer" weapon

Frequent transfers are used as a tool for political victimization. When a civil servant refuses to comply with an illegal political order, they are often made "Officers on Special Duty" (OSD). This creates a culture of

fear and sycophancy, where officials prioritize pleasing their political masters over public interests.

Fragmented accountability

Patronage creates a shield for corrupt officials. When an official is part of a political network, internal accountability mechanisms like the Efficiency and Discipline (E & D) rules become redundant, as the official enjoys protection from the top.

Critical analysis: The way forward

For reforms to succeed, Pakistan must move toward New Public Management (NPM) principles, focusing on:

1) Specialization

Creating a National Executive Service to bring in technical experts.

2) Decentralization

Empowering local governments to handle grassroots service delivery.

3) Digitalization

Reducing human interface through E-office to curb "Petty corruption."

Conclusion

Civil service reform in Pakistan is not merely a technical

adjustment but a political challenge. While structural changes like performance-based KPIs and E-Governance are essential, they will remain cosmetic unless the umbilical cord between the political elite and the bureaucracy is severed through institutional autonomy and protected tenures.

Question 5

Impact of 26th and 27th Amendments on Governance and Intergovernmental relations

1) **Structural Transformation: The New Judicial Hierarchy**

The 26th and 27th amendments fundamentally altered the "Separation of Powers" doctrine.

Establishment of the Federal Constitution Court (FCC)

The 27th amendment removed constitutional adjudication from the Supreme Court, vesting it in a newly created FCC. This impacts intergovernmental relations by providing a dedicated forum for federal-provincial disputes.

Constitutional benches

Under the 26th Amendment, constitutional benches were created in High Courts. This was intended to

expedite public service delivery by preventing general litigation from clogging constitutional matters.

Political role in appointments

The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) was reconstituted to include a higher ratio of parliamentarians, effectively giving the executive a veto over judicial appointments.

2) Impact on intergovernmental relations and federalism

Intergovernmental relations in Pakistan are often a tug-of-war between the centers and provinces.

Centralization of authority

Critics argue that the 27 Amendment's creation of the FCC, where the first batch of judges is appointed by the President on the PM's advice, weakens provincial judiciary autonomy.

Fiscal Federalism (NFC award)

There is ongoing debate that these amendments lay the groundwork for revisiting the 18th Amendment, specifically the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, as the federal government seeks to regain fiscal space from provinces to manage national debt.

Administrative Friction

The power to transfer high Court Judges across provinces without their consent (introduced by the 27th Amendment) is seen by the provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a tool for federal interference in the provincial judicial matters.

2) Public service delivery: Efficiency vs. Politicization

The amendments have a dual-edged impact on how the state serves its citizens.

Positive (Efficiency)

The specialization of courts (FCC for constitution, SC for appellate) is theoretically designed to reduce the backlog of 60,000+ cases. Faster adjudication of commercial and civil cases could improve the "Ease of Doing Business".

Negative (Politicization)

With the judiciary more aligned in the executive, the writ of the state may become more robust but at the cost of protecting fundamental rights. If judges feel their tenures depend on political favours they may be less likely to rule against the government in service delivery failures.

Environment and rights.

The 26th Amendment's inclusion of Article 9A (Right to a clean environment) provides a new legal ~~and~~ lever for citizens to demand better public services regarding pollution and climate change.

4) Impact on Policy Formulation

Policy formulation is now more insulated from Judicial Activism.

End of Swo Mobo Dominance

By curtailing the Supreme Court's original jurisdiction (Article 184(3)), the amendments ensure that executive policies (on economy, privatization, or security) are not suddenly overturned by the bench.

Hybrid governance formalized

The 27th Amendment's creation of the Chief of Defense Forces (CDF) and the expansion of Article 243 formalize the military's role in policymaking structure, particularly in national security and economic planning (via SIFC).

5) Critical Assessment : A Governance Paradox

Aspect	Pre 26 th /27 th Amendment	Post 26 th /27 th Amendment
Power Center	Judicial overreach (Suo Motu)	Executive / Military Consolidation.
Inter-governmental	Strong political autonomy (18 th Amendment)	Creeping centralization.
Accountability	Judicial review of executive actions	Limited review, FCC under political influence
Efficiency	High backlog Slow adjudication	Faster Specialized adjudication.

Conclusion

The 26th and 27th Amendments represent the "corrective" shift to end the era of judicial dominance, yet they risk creating an Executive Autocracy. While they offer a path to improved governance efficiency and policy consistency, the erosion of judicial independence and the potential roll-back of provincial autonomy could destabilize the federation in the long run. Success depends on whether the FCC functions as a neutral arbiter or a political tool.

Question 7

Digital Transformation and Governance in Pakistan: Challenges and Reforms

E-Governance is the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to transform the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of government. While Pakistan has made strides with initiatives like the Pakistan Citizen Portal (PCP) and Digital Pakistan Policy 2021, the transition from automation to transformation remains incomplete due to structural and cultural bottlenecks.

Why E-Governance initiatives have not achieved full potential?

Despite the proliferation of apps and portals, the impact on the common man is limited due to :

The Digital Divide (Urban-Rural Gap)

With only approx. 49% internet penetration and a massive gender gap in mobile ownership, e-governance remains an 'elite' tool. Residents in remote areas of Baluchistan and KP often lack the infrastructures to access these remedies.

Bureaucratic resistance (The 'Analogy' Mindset)

Public officials often view digitalization as a threat to their discretionary powers (rent seeking). The slow adoption of the E-office system in the federal ministries is a prime example of "institutional inertia".

Fragmented system

There ~~are~~ is a lack of interoperability. Data in NADRA, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), and provincial Land records often do not "talk" to each other, leading to redundant processes.

Legal and regulatory gaps

The absence of robust "Data Protection Law" and clear protocols for data sharing, creates trust deficits and security vulnerabilities.

Digital monitoring and evaluation: The weakest link

In Pakistan's policy cycle, M&E is often an afterthought. Digital M&E is weak because:

Manual Data collection

Most digital dashboards still rely on manual data entry at the grassroots levels (e.g; school teachers filling a digital form) which is prone to manipulation (window dressing).

Lack of real-time integration

Policy decisions are often made because of historic data (e.g., Census 2023 or old PSLM surveys) rather than realtime digital feeds.

Output vs. outcome orientation

Digital systems in Pakistan focus on outputs (number of laptops distributed) rather than outcomes (impact on literacy or employment), making performance management superficial.

Absent theory of change

Many digital tools are launched without a clear "Theory of change," leading to technology for technology's sake rather than solving a specific policy problem.

Impact of weak digital M&E on performance management

Feature	Impact on Performance
Accountability	Without digital audit trails, it is easy to shift blame in the bureaucratic maze.
Transparency	Hidden discretionary files prevent citizens from tracking the status of their application.
Efficiency	Decisions delayed by weeks due to physical file movement despite of E-office presence.

Proposed reforms for evidence-based policy making

To move towards a data-driven state, following reforms are essential.

1) Mandatory E-Office adoption

Link the Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs/PERs) of civil servants to their active use of digital platforms.

2) National Data Exchange Portal

Create a unified platform where all government departments can share and verify data in real-time (API-based integration).

3) Third Party digital audits

Use satellite imagers (GIS) and AI-driven analytics for monitoring infrastructure projects to eliminate "Ghost Projects".

4) Digital Literacy for the frontline

Shift the focus from top tier officials to training the street level bureaucrats (Police constables, health workers) who are the primary data entry points.

5) Evidence-based budgeting.

Introduce performance-based budgeting where funds are released only after digital verification of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).

Conclusion

Digital transformation is not a silver bullet but a tool. In Pakistan, e-governance has stayed at "informational stage" rather than moving to "transactional" or "transformational" stage. Success requires a shift from Weberian red-tape to a Digital-first culture, where data is treated as a strategic national asset rather than a departmental secret.

Question 2

Impact of Donor Funding on Governance Reforms in Pakistan

External assistance from multilateral (WB, IMF, ABD) and bilateral (USAID, DFID) donors has been a permanent feature of Pakistan's administrative landscape. In the context of GPR, this relationship is characterized by Conditionality-led Reforms where financial bailouts are tied to structural adjustments. While intended to modernize the state, these reforms often struggle with the "Isomorphic Mimicry" (copying the form but not the functions of successful institutions).

Strengthening vs. Weakening: A critical Dichotomy

How external assistance strengthens state's institutions

=> Technical modernization

Donors have been pivotal in introducing E-governance, Digital Land Records, and Public Financial Management (PFM) reforms like PLFRA (Project for Improvement of Financial Reporting and Auditing).

=> Capacity building

Projects like the "Public Sector Capacity Building Project" have funded the training of thousands of civil servants and the restructuring of institutions like the National School of Public Policy (NSPP).

=> Policy innovation

Donors bring global best practices. e.g., the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) heavily supported by the World Bank and ~~DF~~ DFID, is internationally recognized as a successful model of a transparent social safety net.

How external assistance weakens state's institutions

=> Erosion of Policy ownership

When reforms are perceived as imposed by the "IMF" or World Bank (e.g., power tariff hikes or tax-base expansion), they face stiff political and

bureaucratic resistance, leading to half-hearted implementation.
⇒ Creation of parallel bureaucracies

Donors often setup Project Implementation Units (PIUs) staffed by highly paid consultants. This brain drain from a regular civil service to PIUs creates a dual track system that demoralizes career bureaucrats and weakens the core departments.

⇒ Short termism vs. Sustainability

Donor projects are usually three to five years long. Once funding dries up, the reform often collapses because they were integrated into the regular provincial or federal budget.

Why Donor-driven reforms yield limited success?

Political economy constraints

Donors often treat governance as a "technical" problem, ignoring the deeply entrenched patronage networks that profit from the status quo.

Fragmented Aid

In 2024-2025, over 30 donor agencies operated in Pakistan. Lack of coordination leads to reform fatigue and overlapping jurisdictions.

The Dutch Disease of Reforms

Constant reliance on external consultant prevents

the local civil service from developing indigenous problem solving capabilities.

Proposed Reforms for sustainable governance

To shift from 'Donor dependency' to 'state-led reforms', Pakistan must:

1) Institutionalize reforms

Instead of PIUs, donors should work through existing departmental structures to ensure long-term sustainability.

2) Demand-driven assistance

Reforms should be based on Local Theory of Change rather than "One-size fits All" global template.

3) Abolish Dual Salary scales

Regulate the pay gap between donor-funded consultants and civil servants to prevent the hollowing out of the public sector.

Conclusion

Donor-funding in Pakistan has acted as a double-edged sword. It has modernize the hardware of governance (IT systems, infrastructure) but has often failed to upgrade the software (political will, institutional culture). For external assistance to be truly transformative, it must move beyond conditionalities and focus on building endogenous state capacity, allowing the state to eventually govern without the crutches of aid.