



# **CSS PAKISTAN AFFAIRS 2025 SOLVED PAST PAPER**

**Federal Public Service Commission | Competitive Examination 2025**

Complete Solved MCQs (Part-I) with Verified Answers  
and Model Answers for Part-II Essay Questions  
General Knowledge-III (Pakistan Affairs) — BS-17 Federal Government Recruitment

Prepared for CSS, PMS & Competitive Examination Aspirants

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*Note: Correct MCQ answers are highlighted in green with a check mark (✓). All original answer options are retained unchanged as per the official question paper.*

## PART-I — MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (SOLVED)

### 1. What is the total length of Pakistan's coastline?

(A) 758 km

(B) 1058 km

(C) 1258 km

✓ (D) None of these

*Explanation: Pakistan's coastline is officially about 1,046 km (CIA World Factbook / Pakistan government sources), which does not match any of the given figures.*

### 2. The Tashkent Agreement was signed on:

✓ (A) January 10, 1966

(B) February 10, 1966

(C) March 10, 1966

(D) None of these

*Explanation: The Tashkent Declaration between Pakistan and India, brokered by the Soviet Union, was signed on 10 January 1966 to end the 1965 war.*

### 3. The Indus River originates in China, near:

(A) Tianchi Lake

(B) Lugu Lake

✓ (C) Mapam Lake

(D) None of these

*Explanation: The Indus River originates on the Tibetan Plateau near Lake Mapam (Mapam Yumco), close to Mount Kailash.*

### 4. The second five-year plan in Pakistan was introduced in:

(A) 1957

(B) 1958

✓ (C) 1960

(D) None of these

*Explanation: Pakistan's Second Five-Year Plan ran from 1960 to 1965, following the First Plan (1955-60).*

### 5. Who was the first governor of East Pakistan?

(A) Noor ul Amin

(B) A. K. Fazlul Haq

(C) Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman

✓ (D) None of these

*Explanation: The first Governor of East Bengal (later East Pakistan) was Sir Frederick Chalmers Bourne, appointed on 14 August 1947 — not among the listed options.*

### 6. What was the population of Pakistan at the time of independence in 1947?

(A) 70 million

(B) 50 million

(C) 60 million

✓ (D) None of these

*Explanation: Pakistan's population at independence is generally estimated at around 32-34 million, which does not match any of the listed figures.*

### 7. A Free Trade Agreement between Pakistan and China was signed on:

(A) 24 October 2006

✓ (B) 24 November 2006

(C) 24 December 2006

(D) None of these

*Explanation: The Pakistan-China Free Trade Agreement (Phase I) was signed in Islamabad on 24 November 2006 and came into force on 1 July 2007.*

**8. The third Khilafat conference was held in 1921 in:**

- (A) Dhaka  
(C) Istanbul
- ✓ (B) Karachi  
(D) None of these

**Explanation:** The All-India Khilafat Conference held in Karachi in July 1921 (the 'Karachi Khilafat Conference') is the well-known 1921 session that resolved Muslims should not serve in the British Indian Army.

**9. Objective Resolution was presented in the Constituent Assembly by Liaquat Ali Khan on:**

- (A) February 7, 1949  
(C) April 7, 1949
- ✓ (B) March 7, 1949  
(D) None of these

**Explanation:** Liaquat Ali Khan moved the Objectives Resolution in the Constituent Assembly on 7 March 1949; it was adopted on 12 March 1949.

**10. Pakistan and Tajikistan are separated by:**

- (A) Durand Line  
(C) Amu Darya
- ✓ (B) Wakhan Corridor  
(D) None of these

**Explanation:** The narrow Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan separates Pakistan from Tajikistan.

**11. Pakistan conducted its nuclear tests in Chaghi in:**

- ✓ (A) 1998  
(C) 1999
- (B) 1997  
(D) None of these

**Explanation:** Pakistan conducted its nuclear tests (Chagai-I and Chagai-II) in the Chaghi district of Balochistan on 28 and 30 May 1998.

**12. The Geneva Accords were signed on:**

- (A) 14th May, 1988  
(C) 14th June, 1988
- ✓ (B) 14th April, 1988  
(D) None of these

**Explanation:** The Geneva Accords on Afghanistan were signed on 14 April 1988 between Pakistan and Afghanistan, guaranteed by the US and USSR.

**13. What is the approximate area covered by Pakistan's forests?**

- (A) 9%  
✓ (C) 5%
- (B) 7%  
(D) None of these

**Explanation:** Pakistan's forest cover is commonly cited at around 4.5-5% of total land area, one of the lowest in the region.

**14. Who is the author of, "Pakistan: A Modern History"?**

- (A) Anatol Lieven  
(C) Lawrence Ziring
- ✓ (B) Ian Talbot  
(D) None of these

**Explanation:** "Pakistan: A Modern History" is authored by Ian Talbot, a leading historian of South Asia.

**15. Gwadar Port is operated by:**

(A) Gwadar Port Authority

✓ (B) China overseas port holding company

(C) Port of Singapore Authority

(D) None of these

**Explanation:** Since February 2013, Gwadar Port has been operated by the China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC), a Chinese state-owned firm, under a 40-year concession.

**16. Afghanistan - Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) was signed on:**

(A) 28th July, 2008

(B) 28th July, 2009

(C) 28th July, 2010

✓ (D) None of these

**Explanation:** APTTA was formally signed on 28 October 2010 (after a July 2010 MoU); none of the given July dates match the actual signing date.

**17. Who is the author of Diplomatic Footprints?**

(A) G.W. Chaudhry

✓ (B) Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

(C) Shuja Nawaz

(D) None of these

**Explanation:** "Diplomatic Footprints: A Memoir" was written by Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

**18. When did Pakistan join SEATO?**

(A) 1953

✓ (B) 1954

(C) 1956

(D) None of these

**Explanation:** Pakistan signed the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty (Manila Pact) in September 1954, becoming a founding member of SEATO.

**19. What is the range of the latest Shaheen-III missile?**

(A) 3750 km

✓ (B) 2750 km

(C) 1750 km

(D) None of these

**Explanation:** Shaheen-III, Pakistan's longest-range ballistic missile, has a range of 2,750 km, first tested in March 2015.

**20. The lower age limit for a candidate contesting senate elections is \_\_\_\_\_ years.**

✓ (A) 30

(B) 35

(C) 25

(D) None of these

**Explanation:** Under Pakistan's Constitution, the minimum age to contest Senate elections is 30 years.

## PART-II — ESSAY QUESTIONS (MODEL ANSWERS)

**Q.No.2****20 Marks**

**Question:** *How did the Indus Waters Treaty (1960) affect water distribution and relations between Pakistan and India?*

**Answer.** The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), signed in 1960 between Pakistan and India under World Bank mediation, is one of the most durable water-sharing arrangements in the world. It divided the six rivers of the Indus basin between the two countries and has profoundly shaped both irrigation development and bilateral relations for over six decades.

### Key Provisions of the Treaty

- Pakistan was allocated the three western rivers - Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab - for unrestricted use.
- India was allocated the three eastern rivers - Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej - with limited non-consumptive rights reserved for Pakistan.
- India retained rights for limited irrigation, hydropower generation (run-of-the-river), and domestic use on the western rivers, subject to design restrictions.
- The treaty established the Permanent Indus Commission, with commissioners from both countries, to oversee implementation and resolve technical disputes.

### Impact on Water Distribution

- Pakistan gained assured access to nearly 80% of the Indus system's flow, underpinning its extensive canal irrigation network essential to agriculture.
- The loss of the eastern rivers necessitated massive replacement works, including the construction of the Mangla and Tarbela dams and link canals to reroute water to areas previously fed by the eastern rivers.
- The treaty provided a predictable long-term framework that enabled large-scale agricultural planning despite the partition of a previously unified river system.

### Impact on Bilateral Relations

- The IWT has functioned as one of the few consistently implemented agreements between Pakistan and India, surviving three wars (1965, 1971, 1999) without formal suspension.
- It has also been a recurring source of friction, particularly over Indian hydropower projects on the western rivers such as Baglihar, Kishanganj, and Ratle, which Pakistan has contested through the Permanent Indus Commission, neutral experts, and the Court of Arbitration.
- Periodic Indian statements about reviewing or leveraging the treaty during periods of heightened tension have raised concerns in Pakistan about the durability of the arrangement.
- The treaty is widely cited internationally as a model of successful water diplomacy, despite the deep political mistrust between the two states.

### Ongoing Challenges

- Climate change, glacial melt variability, and rising water demand in both countries are increasing pressure on the shared resource beyond what the treaty's original framework anticipated.
- Disputes over the design specifications of Indian run-of-the-river projects on the western rivers remain a persistent irritant.
- The absence of a mechanism to address groundwater and broader basin-wide environmental issues limits the treaty's scope for addressing contemporary water security challenges.

**Conclusion:** *The Indus Waters Treaty successfully established a durable and mostly implementable framework for dividing shared river resources, safeguarding Pakistan's irrigation-dependent economy while surviving decades of political hostility. However, growing water stress, climate pressures, and recurring disputes over upstream projects indicate that the treaty's framework, though resilient, faces significant twenty-first century tests.*

**Q.No.3****20 Marks**

**Question:** *Examine the causes and consequences of the 1971 separation of East Pakistan, highlighting the role of regional and international players.*

**Answer.** The separation of East Pakistan in December 1971, resulting in the creation of Bangladesh, was the culmination of long-standing political, economic, and cultural grievances between the two wings of Pakistan, compounded by a failure of political accommodation and decisive external intervention.

### Political Causes

- Denial of due political representation to East Pakistan despite its larger population, exemplified by the delayed and unequal application of the 'one man, one vote' principle.
- The refusal to transfer power to the Awami League after its landslide victory in the 1970 general elections, in which it won a majority of National Assembly seats.
- Breakdown of talks between Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and President Yahya Khan in early 1971 over the transfer of power and provincial autonomy.

### Economic Causes

- Persistent economic disparity between West and East Pakistan, with a disproportionate share of national resources, industrial investment, and foreign exchange earnings directed to the West wing despite East Pakistan's larger export contribution through jute.
- Perceived neglect of East Pakistan's infrastructure and development needs, deepening a sense of economic exploitation.

### Cultural and Linguistic Causes

- The 1948 and 1952 language controversy over imposing Urdu as the sole national language, sidelining Bengali despite it being spoken by the majority of Pakistan's population, fuelled Bengali nationalism.
- A broader sense of cultural marginalization of Bengali identity within a state dominated administratively and militarily by West Pakistan.

### Immediate Trigger: Military Action and Civil War (1971)

- The launch of military operation in East Pakistan in March 1971 following the breakdown of political negotiations led to widespread violence and a mass exodus of refugees into India.
- The Mukti Bahini insurgency, backed by India, escalated the conflict into a full civil war over subsequent months.

### Role of Regional and International Players

- India provided training, arms, and sanctuary to the Mukti Bahini, and its direct military intervention in December 1971 was decisive in the swift defeat of Pakistani forces in the East.
- The Soviet Union extended diplomatic and military backing to India, including vetoing UN Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire favourable to Pakistan.



- The United States and China expressed diplomatic support for Pakistan but did not intervene militarily, limiting practical assistance to Islamabad.
- International media coverage of the humanitarian crisis and refugee flows into India shaped global opinion against Pakistan's military response.

### Consequences

- The war ended with the surrender of Pakistani forces in Dhaka on 16 December 1971 and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state.
- Pakistan suffered a significant loss of territory, population, and international prestige, along with the trauma of a major military defeat.
- The Simla Agreement (1972) between Pakistan and India sought to normalize relations and establish a framework for resolving future disputes bilaterally.
- Domestically, the crisis triggered political change, including the rise of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government and a period of national reassessment of federal structure and civil-military relations.

**Conclusion:** The 1971 separation resulted from decades of political exclusion, economic disparity, and cultural alienation of East Pakistan, compounded by a failure to accommodate the 1970 election mandate. Indian military intervention, backed by Soviet diplomatic support, proved decisive, while limited external assistance to Pakistan underscored the country's diplomatic isolation at that critical juncture, leaving lasting lessons for federal governance and civil-military relations.

**Q.No.4****20 Marks**

**Question:** Explore the significance of CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) for the economic development of Pakistan. What are its potential challenges and opportunities?

**Answer.** The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), launched in 2015 as a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative, envisions a network of roads, railways, energy projects, and industrial zones connecting Kashgar in China to Gwadar Port on Pakistan's Arabian Sea coast, with the potential to reshape Pakistan's economic trajectory.

### Significance for Economic Development

- Addressing Pakistan's chronic energy shortage through CPEC energy projects, which added substantial new generation capacity to the national grid, helping reduce load-shedding.
- Infrastructure development, including the upgrading of the Karakoram Highway and construction of new motorways, has improved connectivity between major cities and trade routes.
- Development of Gwadar Port and its associated free zone aims to position Pakistan as a regional trade and logistics hub linking China, Central Asia, and the Middle East.
- Special Economic Zones under CPEC are intended to attract industrial relocation and foreign investment, supporting Pakistan's long-term industrialization goals.

### Opportunities

- Enhanced regional connectivity could position Pakistan as a transit and trade corridor for landlocked Central Asian states and western China.
- Employment generation in construction, energy, and logistics sectors during project implementation phases.
- Long-term potential to diversify Pakistan's export base through industrial zones and improved trade infrastructure.
- Deepening of the strategic and economic partnership with China, Pakistan's largest trading and investment partner.

### Challenges

- Rising external debt linked to CPEC-related loans has raised concerns about debt sustainability and repayment obligations in foreign currency.
- Security threats to Chinese personnel and CPEC infrastructure, particularly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, have required substantial dedicated security arrangements.
- Provincial concerns, especially from Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, about the equitable distribution of CPEC benefits and the routing of the corridor.
- Slow progress on industrial cooperation and Special Economic Zones compared to the pace of energy and infrastructure projects.
- Lack of transparency in some project agreements has drawn domestic and international scrutiny over financing terms and procurement practices.

- Global geopolitical tensions, including US-China rivalry, have added external pressure and scrutiny to CPEC-related engagements.

### Way Forward

- Diversifying CPEC's focus toward agriculture, industrial cooperation, and social sector development (CPEC's so-called 'second phase') to broaden its economic impact.
- Ensuring transparent, competitively negotiated financing terms to manage debt sustainability risks.
- Strengthening provincial consultation mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution of CPEC-related opportunities across all provinces.
- Enhancing security cooperation to protect both Chinese and Pakistani personnel working on CPEC projects.

**Conclusion:** CPEC holds substantial potential to address Pakistan's energy and infrastructure deficits while enhancing its role as a regional connectivity hub. Realizing this potential fully will require managing debt sustainability, ensuring security, and translating physical infrastructure gains into genuine industrial and export growth, alongside equitable provincial participation in the corridor's benefits.

**Q.No.5****20 Marks**

**Question:** *Analyze the demographic and cultural diversity of Pakistan and its impact on national integration and policymaking.*

**Answer.** Pakistan is a demographically and culturally diverse federation comprising multiple ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian communities spread across four provinces and several administrative territories. This diversity has been both a source of national richness and a persistent challenge to political integration and coherent policymaking.

### **Dimensions of Diversity**

- Ethnic diversity spans Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, Baloch, Saraikis, Muhajirs, Hazaras, and various smaller communities, each with distinct historical and cultural identities.
- Linguistic diversity includes Urdu as the national language alongside major regional languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, Saraiki, and Brahui, plus dozens of smaller languages.
- Religious and sectarian diversity, while predominantly Muslim, includes Sunni and Shia communities as well as religious minorities such as Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis.
- Regional socio-economic disparities exist between urbanized Punjab and Sindh and comparatively underdeveloped regions of Balochistan and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### **Impact on National Integration**

- Grievances over resource distribution and provincial autonomy have historically fuelled nationalist movements, most notably in Balochistan and, prior to 1971, in East Pakistan.
- Center-province tensions over control of natural resources (such as gas royalties from Balochistan and Sindh) have periodically strained the federation.
- Linguistic politics, from the 1950s Bengali language movement to ongoing Sindhi-Muhajir tensions in urban Sindh, illustrate how language remains tied to identity and political mobilization.
- Efforts at national integration through a shared Islamic identity and the Urdu language have had mixed success, sometimes perceived as favouring dominant groups over regional identities.

### **Impact on Policymaking**

- The 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010) significantly enhanced provincial autonomy, devolving several federal subjects to the provinces in response to long-standing demands for greater regional control.
- The National Finance Commission (NFC) Award mechanism seeks to address inter-provincial equity in resource distribution, though disputes over the criteria for allocation persist.
- Policy on Balochistan and the merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa requires distinct developmental and security approaches given their unique historical and administrative contexts.
- Minority rights protections and quota systems for religious minorities in legislative bodies reflect efforts to accommodate Pakistan's religious diversity within the constitutional framework.

### **Way Forward**

- Strengthening genuine fiscal and administrative decentralization beyond the 18th Amendment to address persistent provincial grievances.
- Promoting multilingual education policies that accommodate regional languages alongside Urdu and English.
- Ensuring equitable development spending across provinces to reduce economic disparities that fuel separatist sentiment.
- Fostering an inclusive national narrative that accommodates diverse ethnic and cultural identities within a shared constitutional framework.

**Conclusion:** *Pakistan's demographic and cultural diversity is a defining feature of its national character, requiring policies that balance unity with recognition of provincial and ethnic identities. While measures such as the 18th Amendment represent meaningful progress, sustained national integration will depend on continued efforts toward equitable resource distribution, genuine provincial autonomy, and inclusive governance that accommodates Pakistan's plural society.*

**Q.No.6****20 Marks**

**Question:** *Critically evaluate the impact of Bhutto's nationalization policy on the economy of Pakistan.*

**Answer.** Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government (1971-1977) introduced sweeping nationalization measures targeting major industries, banks, insurance companies, and educational institutions, framed as a socialist response to wealth concentration under the preceding Ayub-era economic model. The policy's economic legacy remains a subject of considerable debate.

**Background and Rationale**

- Nationalization was presented as a corrective to the concentration of industrial wealth among a small number of families during the Ayub Khan era, famously highlighted by the '22 families' critique.
- It formed part of Bhutto's broader Pakistan Peoples Party manifesto promising 'Roti, Kapra aur Makan' (bread, clothing, and shelter) through greater state control of the economy.
- Nationalization proceeded in phases from 1972 onward, covering heavy industries, banking, insurance, and later, in 1976, agricultural processing units such as cotton ginning and rice husking mills.

**Positive Aspects**

- Nationalization of banks and insurance brought financial institutions under greater public oversight, expanding access to credit in some underserved sectors.
- It reduced the extreme concentration of industrial ownership among a handful of families, addressing a genuine equity concern of the period.
- Some public investment was redirected toward heavy industries such as steel (Pakistan Steel Mills), laying the foundation for state-led industrial capacity.

**Negative Consequences**

- Nationalization severely undermined private sector confidence, triggering capital flight and a slowdown in private industrial investment that persisted for years afterward.
- State-run enterprises frequently suffered from inefficiency, overstaffing, and politically motivated management appointments, eroding profitability and productivity.
- The 1976 nationalization of small-scale agro-based industries (rice and cotton ginning mills) was particularly damaging, disrupting rural agro-processing capacity built by small entrepreneurs.
- Many nationalized industries became a fiscal burden on the state, requiring continuous subsidies rather than generating revenue.
- The policy contributed to a broader perception of policy unpredictability that discouraged both domestic and foreign private investment for years after Bhutto's tenure.

**Subsequent Reversal**

- Beginning in the 1990s, successive governments pursued privatization to reverse the inefficiencies associated with state-run enterprises, reflecting an implicit acknowledgment of nationalization's shortcomings.

- Many nationalized industries were eventually privatized, though some, like Pakistan Steel Mills, continued to struggle with chronic losses well into the 2000s and 2010s.

**Conclusion:** *Bhutto's nationalization policy achieved some short-term redistributive goals but imposed substantial long-term economic costs through reduced private investment, inefficiency in state-run enterprises, and fiscal strain. Its subsequent reversal through decades of privatization reflects a broad consensus that the policy, however well-intentioned, ultimately hindered rather than helped Pakistan's economic development.*

**Q.No.7****20 Marks**

**Question:** *The Kashmir dispute is an unfinished agenda of the 1947 partition. Evaluate Pakistan's Kashmir policy for the solution of the problem.*

**Answer.** The Kashmir dispute, arising from the contested accession of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947, remains one of the world's longest-running unresolved territorial disputes and a central pillar of Pakistan's foreign policy. Evaluating Pakistan's approach requires examining its diplomatic, military, and multilateral strategies over more than seven decades.

### Historical Background

- The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India in October 1947, amid tribal incursions from Pakistan's side, triggered the first Indo-Pakistani war and led to UN involvement.
- UN Security Council resolutions of 1948-49 called for a plebiscite to determine the wishes of the Kashmiri people, a commitment that has never been implemented.
- The Line of Control, established after the 1949 ceasefire and modified after the 1971 war (as the Line of Control under the Simla Agreement), continues to divide the region.

### Pakistan's Policy Approaches Over Time

- Diplomatic internationalization: Pakistan has consistently raised Kashmir at the United Nations and other multilateral forums, framing it as an issue of unresolved self-determination.
- Bilateral engagement: Under the Simla Agreement (1972) and subsequent composite dialogue processes, Pakistan has pursued periods of direct bilateral negotiation with India.
- Support for the Kashmiri political and resistance movement, particularly after the outbreak of the indigenous uprising in the late 1980s, combined with diplomatic advocacy for Kashmiri rights.
- Post-2019 response: Following India's revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370, Pakistan intensified diplomatic efforts, downgraded diplomatic relations, and sought renewed international attention to the issue.

### Achievements of Pakistan's Kashmir Policy

- Kept the Kashmir issue on the international diplomatic agenda despite India's efforts to characterize it as an internal matter.
- Maintained the Line of Control as a live ceasefire arrangement (formalized in the 2003 ceasefire agreement) that has generally limited large-scale conflict since 2003, notwithstanding periodic violations.
- Built sustained international awareness of human rights concerns in Indian-administered Kashmir through diplomatic channels and multilateral forums.

### Limitations and Criticisms

- Despite decades of advocacy, Pakistan has not secured implementation of the UN-mandated plebiscite, and international appetite for intervention has diminished considerably.
- Periods of military confrontation (1965, 1999 Kargil conflict) generated diplomatic costs without altering the territorial status quo.



- Pakistan's Kashmir policy has at times been constrained by the broader trajectory of India-Pakistan relations, with progress on dialogue frequently derailed by unrelated bilateral tensions.
- Limited leverage in an evolving global order where major powers prioritize strategic and economic partnerships with India over supporting Pakistan's position on Kashmir.

### Way Forward

- Sustained diplomatic engagement through the UN and bilateral channels to keep the issue internationally relevant while avoiding military escalation.
- Building broader international coalitions around human rights and self-determination principles applicable to the Kashmiri population.
- Pursuing confidence-building measures with India to create space for eventual substantive dialogue on the dispute's resolution.

**Conclusion:** Pakistan's Kashmir policy has succeeded in sustaining international recognition of the dispute as unresolved but has not achieved its central objective of self-determination for the Kashmiri people. A combination of persistent diplomatic advocacy, avoidance of military escalation, and pursuit of substantive bilateral dialogue offers the most viable, though still uncertain, path toward eventual resolution of this enduring legacy of partition.

**Q.No.8****20 Marks**

**Question:** *Is media a curse or blessing? Critically evaluate its role in shaping public opinion and influencing political events in Pakistan in the 21st century.*

**Answer.** The rapid expansion of electronic and social media in Pakistan since the early 2000s has transformed the country's political and social landscape, serving simultaneously as a powerful tool for democratic accountability and a source of misinformation, polarization, and manipulation.

### Media as a Blessing

- The liberalization of electronic media under the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) from 2002 onward enabled the rise of independent television news channels, breaking the state's earlier monopoly on information.
- Media coverage played a central role in the 2007-09 Lawyers' Movement, mobilizing public opinion in support of judicial independence and against General Musharraf's suspension of the Chief Justice.
- Investigative journalism and talk shows have exposed corruption, governance failures, and human rights abuses, strengthening public accountability mechanisms.
- Social media has empowered citizen journalism, enabling real-time reporting on natural disasters, humanitarian crises, and local governance issues that traditional media might overlook.
- Media has facilitated greater political awareness and voter engagement, particularly among younger, urban populations.

### Media as a Curse

- Sensationalism and ratings-driven coverage have at times prioritized entertainment value over factual accuracy, particularly during breaking news events and political crises.
- The proliferation of unverified information and fake news on social media platforms has fuelled misinformation on sensitive religious, political, and communal issues, occasionally inciting violence.
- Political polarization has intensified as media outlets have become associated with specific political factions, undermining the media's role as a neutral information source.
- Trial-by-media practices have sometimes compromised due process in high-profile legal and criminal cases before courts have reached verdicts.
- Concerns over media ownership concentration and susceptibility to both government and non-state pressure have periodically constrained genuinely independent reporting.

### Influence on Political Events

- Media coverage significantly shaped public discourse during major political transitions, including the 2008 elections, the 2014 sit-in protests, and subsequent electoral cycles.
- Social media platforms have become central battlegrounds for political mobilization, campaign messaging, and opposition activism in recent general elections.
- Media scrutiny of accountability processes (such as NAB cases against political leaders) has shaped public perceptions of corruption and governance, for better or worse depending on perceived impartiality.

### Balancing the Assessment

- The overall impact of media depends significantly on regulatory frameworks, professional journalistic standards, and media literacy among the public.
- Strengthening self-regulation, fact-checking mechanisms, and journalist training can help maximize media's democratic benefits while minimizing its potential for harm.

**Conclusion:** *Pakistan's media landscape in the 21st century has proven to be neither a pure blessing nor an unqualified curse, but rather a powerful and double-edged instrument whose net impact depends on the professionalism of its practitioners and the strength of its regulatory environment. Strengthening media literacy, journalistic ethics, and institutional accountability remains essential to ensuring that media serves as a genuine pillar of democratic governance rather than a source of division.*