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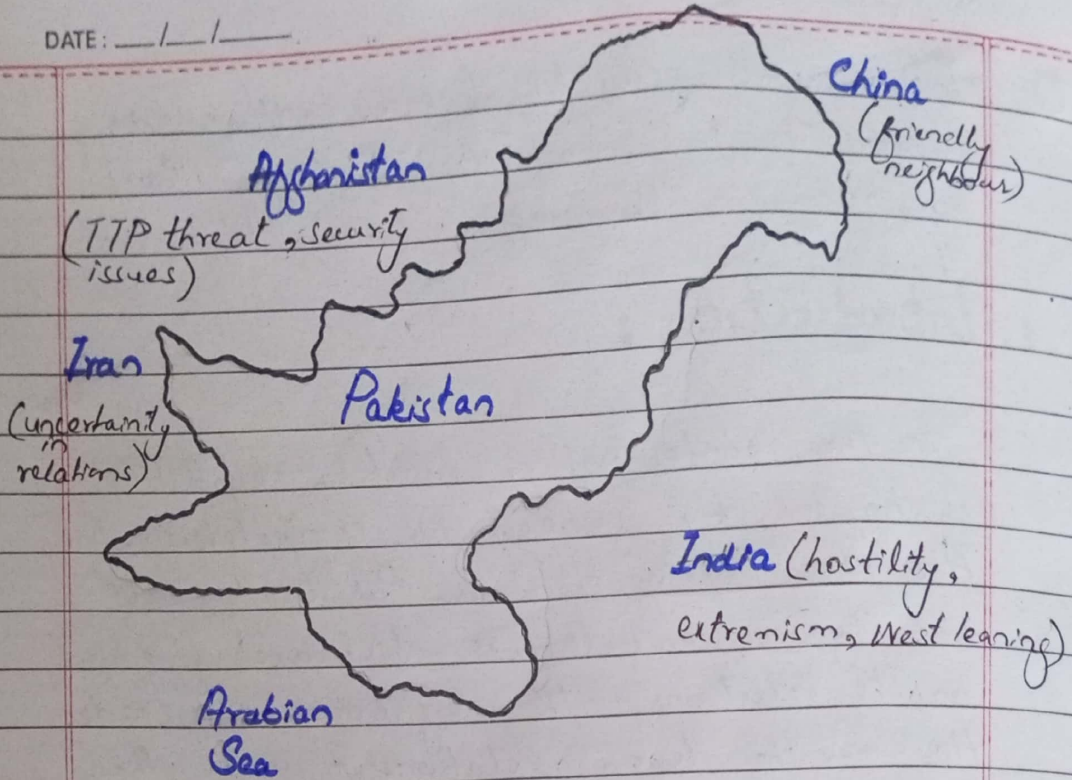
Q In current geo-political era, can Pakistan achieve its geoeconomic targets with its neighbours in the region? Comment.

## 1. Introduction:

In the contemporary world, geopolitics is shaped by geoeconomic competition. In this phase of geoeconomic, Pakistan has set some geoeconomic targets which are dependent on its relations with neighbours and <sup>bilateral</sup> trade. However, the tenuous relationship with the neighbouring countries, economic woes and political instability are hurdles in achievement of these targets. In order to fulfill its commitments, Pakistan needs to remove misconception between Afghanistan and itself and also to improve its relations with Iran and West leaning India.

## 2. Geo-economic Targets of Pakistan:

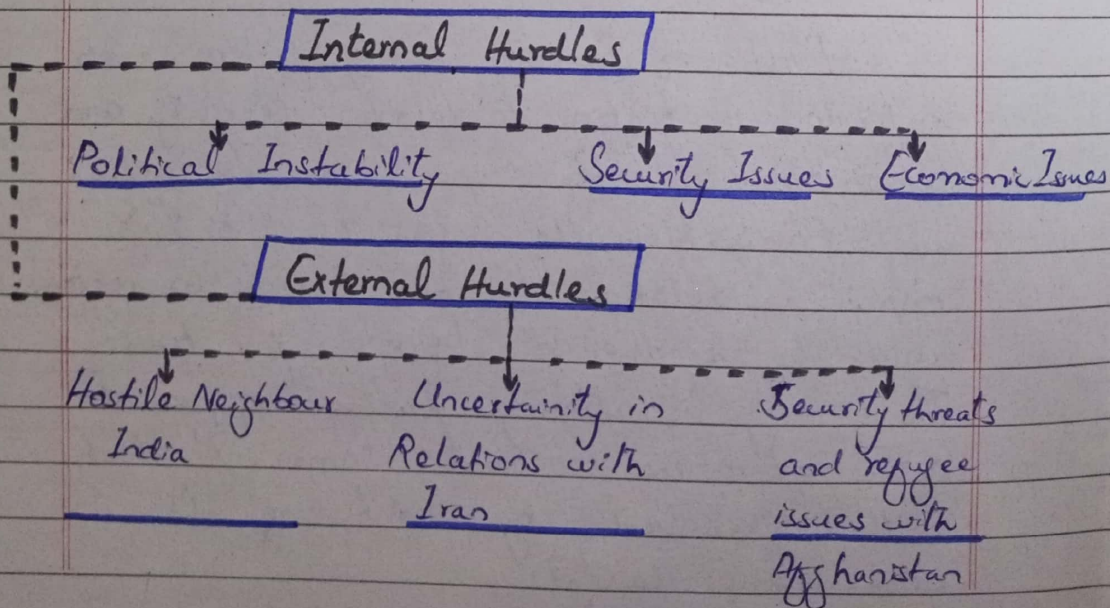
National Security Policy of 2022-26 includes shifting to human security and disempowered the empowered. The only way to achieve these targets is to improve relations in the Eurasian region, with its neighbours beyond for trade. The country is already facing different crisis ~~at~~ in the moment, some of which will be resolved by achieving its geoeconomic targets.



Map of Pakistan and its Neighbouring Countries

### 3- Hurdles in Geo-economic Targets :

At time, Pakistan is facing both external and internal hurdles in achieving its geoeconomic targets.



It is important to consider that external hurdles play a significant role in affecting geoeconomic status of Pakistan. The external hurdles are as follows:

### i. Misconceptions Between Pakistan and Afghanistan:

Pakistan and Afghanistan shared similar socio-cultural and religious ties however, their relations are marred by some real issues, but mostly misperceptions. Pakistan acts as lifeline for Afghanistan due to being a landlocked country and also due to restrictions by West. According to VOA report (Voice of America), Afghanistan has made 6.5 billion\$ mining contracts in August 2023 with companies from China, Iran and Turkey. The ongoing refugee crisis which is negatively portrayed by international media though Pakistan has been hosting 30 million Afghan refugee since 40 years. They have also blamed Pakistan for its mismanagement with Afghanistan on borders. Similarly, involvement of Afghan resident in terrorist activities in Pakistan has been confirmed by Security Forces's Data which further complicated the situation.

### ii. Uncertainty in Relationship with Iran:

Like Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan also share sociocultural and religious ties. Both

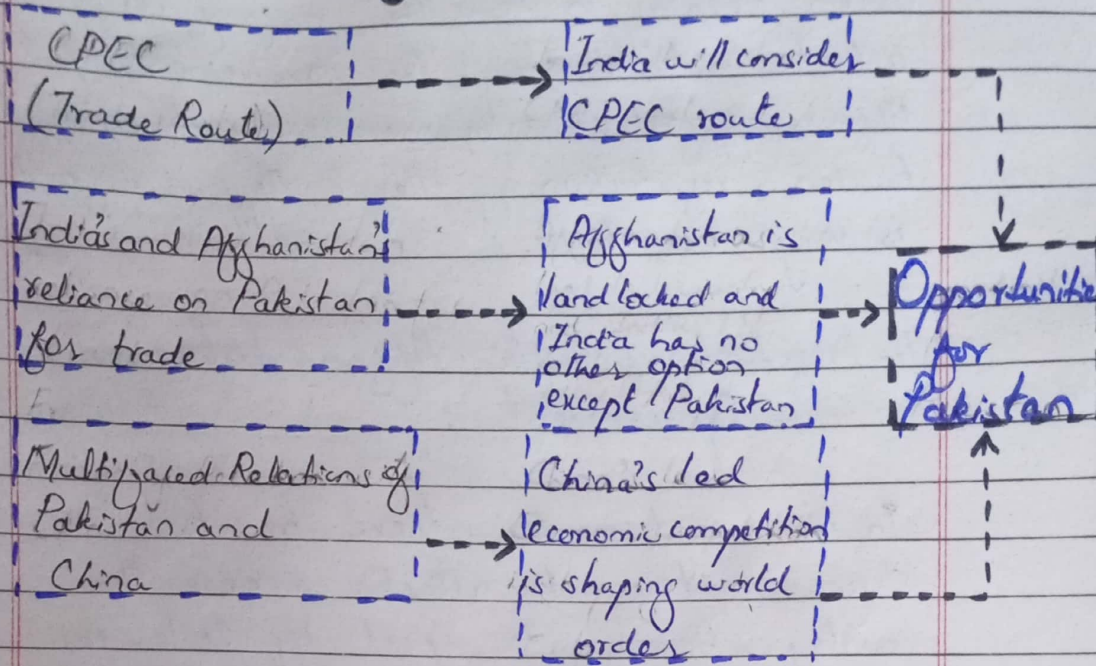
are cooperating with each other in counter-terrorism, drug trafficking and smuggling. Iran has strained its relations with West due to its nuclear program and international sanctions. The previous tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia put Pakistan in a difficult situation as it tries to maintain its close ties with Saudi Arabia. Recently, at **IRRI**, ambassador of Iran said that land of Iran would never be used against Pakistan for espionage or sabotage. Similarly, Saudi Arabia-Iran rapprochement brokered by China also provided a sigh of relief in this complicated situation.

### iii. Tenuous Relationship with Hostile India :

Pakistan remains hostage to territorial disputes with India that are embedded in the history. Due to rise of Hindu extremists party BJP in India, relationships between both countries have further deteriorated. Pakistan has tried to involve in bilateral talks with its hostile neighbour which it clearly refused. In the past, several acts of India's involvement in anti-terrorist activities in Pakistan has been confirmed even in international forums. Despite that, Pakistan is trying to maintain relationship with India for gaining peace in the region.

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#### 4- Opportunities for Pakistan :



#### 5- Remedies to Achieve Geo-economic Targets :

In spite of all the challenges, Pakistan will continue to strive for resolution of disputes with its neighbours, especially with India. Following are the remedies to achieve geo-economic targets :

##### i- Registration of Illegal Afghan Migrants :

Pakistan is hosting Afghan refugees for about forty years however, the country is depicted as non-friendly countries towards refugees by Amnesty International. Moreover, international media is also playing its part in complicating the

situation. The government of Pakistan has taken keeping in view the ongoing terrorism activities which shows the involvement of Afghan refugees. Furthermore, due to economic burden, registration of illegal Afghan migrants is very essential.

### ii- Negotiations with Afghan Interim Government :

In the recent months, there has been a surge in terrorists attacks across the country. According to report by Center for Research and Security Studies, nearly 400 army, police and other personnel have lost their lives this year. All these terrorists attacks were planned in Afghanistan. There is dire need of negotiations with Afghan government to stop their land being used for terrorism planning against Pakistan.

### iii - Need of Clear Foreign Policy for Relations with Iran :

Due to Saudi Arabia - Iran hostility in the past, Pakistan was in a complicated situation to choose one out of two. Due to its close relations with Saudi Arabia and pressure from United States, Pakistan's foreign policy about Iran was not clear. Due to Saudi-Iran rapprochement and increasing influence of China in the Middle East,

Pakistan has to revise its foreign policy with Iran.

#### iv. Striving for Resolution of Disputes with India:

Pakistan shares one of its borders with India, whom the former shares a history of conflicts. However, India disregards this conflictual situation in the wake of its relevance to US global ambitions to contain China. Another bone of content between two countries is Indian illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir. UK Professor Arshin Adibi in an interview remarked that India has Eurasian DNA but is West leaning; however, it will come back one day.

#### v. Role of China as a Mediator:

As, China has brokered the deal between two regional rivals. In the same way, it could help Pakistan in mediating its relationships with Afghanistan and Iran. China has grown its influence in both Iran and in Afghanistan. China is the first country to recognize Afghanistan as an independent country. Similarly, Iran has become member of BRICS on 1st January 2024. China holds great potential in mediating relationships of Pakistan with its neighbouring states.

## vi- Respecting Afghanistan as Sovereign Country :

The ongoing security threats in the country and geo-economic targets can be achieved by accepting Afghanistan as sovereign country. This could help Pakistan in negotiations with Afghan government on security issues.

## vii- People to People Exchanges :

Encouraging cultural and educational exchanges can build bridges between different countries. They also have the ability to foster, understand and strengthen regional ties. For instance, educational exchange programs will be highly feasible.

## viii- Role of SAARC :

India is actively engaged on different international platforms while it is not ready to engage in regional organizations like SAARC. It is important to engage all regional states in SAARC which can provide a platform for diplomatic dialogue, coordination on common issues and collaborative economic initiatives.

## Conclusion :

In a nutshell, Pakistan geo-economic objectives are dependent on its regional and global ties. Recently, the issues with India and Afghanistan need more careful consideration and diplomatic steps.