

Q:- Evaluate the strategic significance of Pakistan-Iran relations in the current regional context.

The Strategic Significance Of Pak-Iran Relations In The Current Regional Context

Introduction:-

Pakistan and Iran, two immediate neighbors connected by a 900-kilometer-long border, share deep civilizational, religious, and cultural ties. Their relationship has historically fluctuated due to competing geopolitical interests, sectarian divides, and external influences. In the present regional context marked by instability in Afghanistan, growing India-Israel cooperation, U.S. sanctions on Iran, and intensifying Middle Eastern conflicts—the strategic significance of Pakistan-Iran relations has multiplied. Both countries are increasingly realizing that cooperation, rather than confrontation, is

indispensable for their security, economic stability, and regional influence.

1. Border Security & Counter Terrorism Cooperation:-

The porous Pakistan-Iran border remains vulnerable to militant infiltration, smuggling, and separatist movements, particularly in Balochistan. Groups like Jaish al-Adl operate across both sides, posing risks to sovereignty.

In 2024, cross-border strikes heightened tensions, but subsequent high-level visits, including Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's peace mission to Islamabad, restored trust.

Example:

In 2025, both nations agreed to strengthen border markets and joint patrols to mitigate insurgent threats, highlighting the security centrality of their relationship.

2. Energy Security & Economic Connectivity:-

Pakistan faces a chronic energy deficit, while Iran

possesses one of the world's largest gas reserves. The Iran - Pakistan Gas Pipeline (IPGP), though delayed by U.S. sanctions, remains strategically vital for Pakistan's future energy security. Informal fuel trade already constitutes up to 35% of Pakistan's diesel consumption in Balochistan, reflecting ground-level interdependence.

Example:

In August 2025, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Masoud Pezeshkian pledged to enhance bilateral trade to \$10 billion annually, signing agreements on ICT, energy, and cross-border trade zones.

3. Geopolitical Realignments And Strategic Balancing:-

Both countries face pressure from an emerging India - Israel - U.S. axis in the region. Iran sees Pakistan as a counterweight, while Pakistan views Iran as a hedge against overdependence on Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

In 2025, a controversial claim by Iranian IRGC official Mohsen Rezaei - that Pakistan would retaliate against Israel with nuclear capability if Iran were attacked though denied officially by Islamabad, reflected the symbolic deterrence attached to this partnership.

Example:

During the Gaza crisis, Pakistan's strong condemnation of Israeli actions resonated with Iran's regional narrative, signaling growing diplomatic convergence.

4. Afghanistan Factor And Regional Stability:-

Both Pakistan and Iran are directly affected by instability in Afghanistan whether in terms of refugee influx, cross-border terrorism, or narcotic trade. While their interests often diverged in the past (Pakistan's support for the Taliban vs. Iran's support for Northern Alliance), the Taliban's return has compelled both to cooperate to avoid a

security vacuum.

Example:

Joint participation in the Moscow Format and SCO discussions on Afghanistan underscores their shared concerns about extremism and economic collapse in Kabul.

5. Multilateral Cooperation And Strategic Platforms:-

Pakistan and Iran are members of regional forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), offering avenues for security and trade integration. Both states oppose extra-regional interference in the Middle East and South Asia, emphasizing regional solutions to regional problems.

Example:

Naval drills in the Arabian Sea between Iran, Pakistan, and China highlight Tehran - Islamabad cooperation within wider multipolar frameworks.

6. Cultural And Religious Dimensions:-

The bond is not merely geopolitical; it is civilizational. Both nations emphasize Islamic solidarity and frequently invoke thinkers like Allama Iqbal and Ayatollah Khomeini as shared intellectual symbols. Pakistan's vocal support for the Palestinian cause resonates with Iran's ideological stance, further aligning their political narratives.

Example:

President Pezeshkian's 2025 speech in Islamabad invoked Iqbal's vision of Islamic unity, reinforcing soft-power diplomacy.

Conclusion:-

In the current regional context of shifting alliances, military energy insecurity, and Middle Eastern turmoil, Pakistan-Iran relations are acquiring renewed strategic significance. Their cooperation

addresses mutual security concerns, economic interdependence, and geopolitical balancing against external threats.

While challenges such as U.S. sanctions, Saudi - Iran rivalry, and sectarian undercurrents continue to complicate ties, both countries increasingly recognize that partnership outweighs rivalry.

For Pakistan, Iran is not just a neighbor but a strategic hedge in an unpredictable regional environment; for Iran, Pakistan is a gateway to South Asia and a vital partner in resisting external encirclement. Strengthened cooperation, therefore, holds the potential to transform Pakistan - Iran relations into a cornerstone of regional stability.