

**Question:** Pakistan's FP has evolved significantly since its inception, with key shifts in its relationships with neighbouring countries and global powers. Discuss the factors influencing Pak's FP in 21<sup>st</sup> century and evaluate its strategic importance in the context of regional and global geopolitics.

### A- INTRODUCTION

There have been significant shifts in the relations of Pakistan with its neighbouring countries and global powers. Historical perspectives explain the hostile relations of Pakistan with its neighbours India and Afghanistan due to various factors since its independence. The relationships also improved in certain time periods. But, currently the relations seem to be deteriorating due to foreign policy shifts for securing national interests. Pakistan's Foreign Policy is highly influenced by its security and economic interests. To improve security and achieve economic interests, Pakistan's alliance is significantly growing with China. However, Pakistan's Foreign policy should be aimed at maintaining balance between



its relations with both US and China in the increasing US-China rivalry.

## B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### 1. Pakistan - Afghanistan relations

Pakistan shared disputed relationship with Afghanistan since independence due to two major issues including the durand line and Pashtun issue. Afghanistan didn't recognize international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan and claimed territory in Pakistan.

The majority of Pashtuns in Afghanistan demanded that Pashtunistan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) of Pakistan should be returned to Afghanistan. However, Pakistan supported Afghanistan during Soviet occupation and later supported Taliban government. But, Afghanistan didn't favor Pakistan and the relations remained hostile most of the time.

### 2. Pak-India Relations

India and Pakistan are rivals from the beginning. They had always disputes which resulted in four major wars between them. The claim on Kashmir territory remained a major conflict which has still not



resolved. The division of water among India and Pakistan was a positive development but now it is also creating tensions due to India's demand of revising Indus water Treaty.

### 3. Pakistan-US relations

Their relations are marked by shifts from collaborations to rift and a specific pattern can not be observed. Pakistan joined US bloc during cold war and ~~had~~ supported US in war on Terror in Afghanistan and in return US also provided economic and diplomatic ~~extra~~ support to Pakistan. But, recently US is moving away from Pakistan due to growing India-US alliance and less ~~xxx~~ interest of US in Pakistan.

### 4. Pak-China relations

Pakistan and China have always remained friends. China provides support to Pakistan and is increasing economic integration with Pakistan through CPEC. This will boost economy of Pakistan and regional integration while China will be benefited from utilizing Pakistan's strategic location to increase access to trade routes in region.



## C. FACTORS INFLUENCING PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

### 1) Security dynamics

Recently, Pakistan's Foreign Policy has been significantly affected by the rising security concerns. Resurgence wave of terrorism and rise in insurgency in Pakistan is major threat to national security. The terrorist organization TTP involved in the increasing attacks is a security threat and the utilization of Afghan territory by TTP has increased tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan. India is also playing a negative role by using Afghan soil against Pakistan to cause instability. This will change Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan and India further deteriorating relations.

### 2) Economic interests

Pakistan's Foreign policy is highly shaped by its economic interests. Pakistan's economy has always faced challenges due to instability. Thus Pakistan's Foreign Policy is to increase economic cooperation through bilateralism and multilateralism. The development of



CPEC through BRI has improved relations between China and Pakistan, growing their reliance. Pakistan also has economic interests with US through dependency on IMF so, it needs to maintain neutral relations with US. So, Pakistan's foreign policy should be to maintain balance between US and China.

3) ~~Geopolitical relations~~ Geographical location  
Pakistan's strategic location with shapes its foreign policy to maintain its relations with neighbouring countries. Pakistan needs diplomatic engagement with the regional countries to improve its regional influence and stability. Pakistan promotes cooperation among the region through multilateral platform of multilateral organization such as SCO. The narrative built about isolation of Pakistan can be countered by such foreign policy that increases collaboration and increases Pakistan influence in the region.

"The foreign policy of a country is determined by its geography."

Napoleon Bonaparte



## D. Pakistan's foreign policy in regional and Global geopolitics

### REGIONAL GEOPOLITICS

#### 1) Pakistan's cooperation with China to promote peace in region

The instability in Afghanistan has disrupted the peace and increased security threats.

Pakistan focuses to engage Afghanistan through peace talks with the help of

China to control terrorism. Economic

integration between them will also

promote peace and stability in Afghanistan as well as the region.

#### 2) Pakistan's cooperation through platform of SCO

Despite political instability and security concern in the country, Pakistan

successfully hosted the recent summit

of SCO in Islamabad. This shows Pakistan's

commitment to increase collaboration

and achieve economic prosperity and

regional integration through multilateralism.

Pakistan aims to enhance its influence

in the regional politics.



### 3) Economic Integration through CPEC

Pakistan due to its geo-economic location plays an important role in the regional geopolitics. Pakistan provides access to trade routes and connects China with Central Asia. China's aim is to develop alternative trade routes to improve its economic activity and increase its influence in the region by reducing dependence on the West.

### 4) Pakistan's nuclear capabilities increases security dilemma in India - Pakistan rivalry

Pakistan and India, both being nuclear powers create a security dilemma. This affects their relations. Pakistan can not improve bilateral relations with India due to their hostile conduct. The recent IWT issue will further escalate tensions between them.

## GLOBAL GEOPOLITICS

### 1) Pakistan's balanced approach in US - China conflict

Pakistan and ~~Pak~~ China share good relations and their alliance is growing with increasing



Indo-US alliance. US is getting closer to India to use it as a counterweight to China and decrease its rising influence in the region. US also lacks interest in Pakistan and is growing alliance with India. But, Pakistan needs to maintain good ties with US and China both because of its economic dependence on both countries.

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## E. CONCLUSION

Pakistan's foreign policy highlights its effort to attain national interests through increasing its economic cooperation with the regional countries. Pakistan needs to maintain strategic balance between US and China. Thus, its foreign policy is important in the context of regional and global geopolitics.