

Question no. 2

"Pakistan's Foreign Policy is often described as reactive rather than proactive."

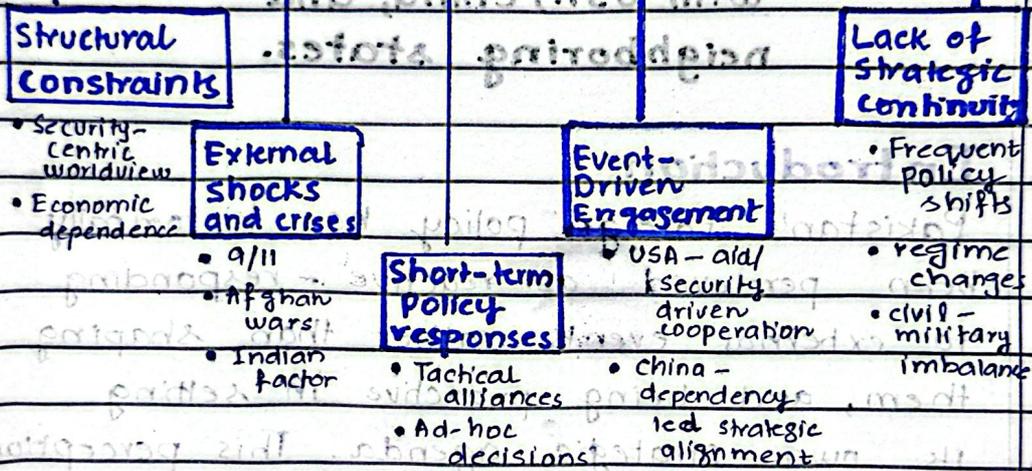
Evaluation of the statement with reference to relations with USA, China, and neighboring states.

I. Introduction

Pakistan's Foreign policy has historically been perceived as reactive - responding to external events rather than shaping them, and being proactive in setting its own strategic agenda. This perception stems from how Islamabad has often navigated: great-power rivalries, regional crises, and bilateral relations in reaction to pressures rather than through independent strategic initiatives. A classic academic insight into such behavior comes from Khurshid Mehmud Kasuri's "**Neither a Hawk Nor a Dove**", wherein he reflects that Pakistan's foreign policy has oscillated between external pressures and internal constraints, with limited room for autonomous strategic projection.

II. Pakistan's Foreign policy is Reactive Rather than Proactive :

Reactive Nature of Pakistan's Foreign Policy :



III. Pakistan-China Relations : Strategic partnership within constraints

A. Strong Strategic Alignment

Driven by Security Needs : but limited Agenda setting:

Pakistan and China share a deep "iron-clad" strategic partnership rooted in historical cooperation, defence ties, and mutual geopolitical interests. But Pakistan's engagement with China has historically been reactive to regional security pressures, particularly its rivalry with India and shifting US policies in South Asia. As noted by **Shahid Javed Burki** :

"Pakistan has often turned to China not out of choice alone, but out of strategic necessity."

This reliance, while beneficial, constrains Pakistan's diplomatic maneuverability, as foreign policy priorities become security-centric rather than innovation-driven or regionally integrative.

B. Economic Asymmetry and CPEC-related Structural Constraints:

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), valued at about USD 62 Billion, is a cornerstone of bilateral ties. While it has improved infrastructure and energy capacity, Pakistan's weak economic fundamentals limit its bargaining power. Also, the economic fragility of Pakistan restricts proactive agenda-setting and makes cooperation largely project-driven rather than policy-driven.

C. Geopolitical constraints and China's Global Balancing Strategy:

China's broader global interests also shape the limits of the partnership. Beijing avoids direct military entanglements. Consequently, China's support for Pakistan is often measured and cautious as evident in the Beijing's consistent call for **restraint** during Indo-Pak crises.

such as Puluwama - Balakot (2019). Although it supported Pakistan with real-time intelligence, advanced Chinese weapon systems and diplomatic backing in India-Pakistan Limited War 2025, but it avoids overt military backing and jumping in was. According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry's official policy papers, Beijing follows a doctrine of "Non-interference and strategic Neutrality." At the UN Security Council also, China has supported Pakistan diplomatically, but avoided actions that could escalate its tensions with global powers.

IV Pakistan-USA Relations: Reactive Engagements and Strategic Adjustments:

A. Post-9/11 and Counter-terrorism Alignments:

Pakistan's relationship with the United States has historically shifted with global security imperatives, especially after the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan. Islamabad became a frontline state in the US War on Terror. While this cooperation strengthened its role in regional security, it largely followed US strategic priorities rather than originating from Pakistan's own security vision, demonstrating Islamabad's reactive engagement.

B. Economic Diplomacy: Trade Negotiations and Strategic Adjustments

Economic engagement with the US also highlights reactive policy adjustments. In **2025**, Pakistan and US concluded high-level trade negotiations focused on reducing tariffs and enhancing market access after Washington threatened a **2.9% tariff** on Pakistani exports due to a **\$3 Billion trade surplus**. These talks were largely initiated to respond to US trade policy pressure rather than from Pakistan's strategic positioning.

C. Recent Diplomatic moves and global initiatives

Pakistan's diplomatic outreach to the United States has also been reactive to Washington's initiatives. In **January 2026**, Pakistan accepted an invitation from U.S. President **Donald Trump** to join "**Board of Peace**" for Gaza, a US-led diplomatic initiative aimed at conflict resolution. Pakistan's engagement here follows Washington's diplomatic agenda, illustrating Islamabad's responsiveness to US ventures on global issues.

V. Relations with Neighboring states: Reactive crises Management

A. Afghanistan: Border Security and Policy Adaptation

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have been dominated by cross-border security concerns, insurgency, and the Taliban's return to power in 2021. Pakistan's approach has largely been reactive in responding to cross-border militancy and attacks, such as **border Skirmishes in Khost and Paktia Province in 2025**, and adjusting diplomatic policies in response to Taliban action and US withdrawal timelines.

B. India: Security Dilemma and Reactive Posturing

Hans J. Morgenthau in his book "**Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Peace and Power**" explains how security pressures can make state's foreign policy reactive rather than proactive. The relationship between India and Pakistan is historically dominated by security concerns and mutual distrust, creating a "**Classical Security Dilemma**." Each state's defensive measures are often perceived as offensive threats by the other, forcing Pakistan into reactive postures rather than proactively shaping a

stable bilateral environment. Since partition in 1947, the two countries have fought four major wars and numerous skirmishes, most notably over Kashmir. Pakistan's foreign and defence policies have therefore been heavily influenced by India's military and strategic initiatives. Recent events illustrate this reactive posture.

C. Pakistan-Iran Relations:

Reactive crisis management

Pakistan and Iran share deep historical, cultural, and geographic ties, yet their relationship has repeatedly swung between cooperation and tension, often driven by unexpected security developments rather than long-term proactive strategy. Past incidents such as 2024 Iran-Pakistan conflict, in which Iran conducted a series of missile strikes in Pakistan, and including hit-for-tat missile strikes near the shared border, demonstrate how sudden escalations have repeatedly forced Pakistan into reactive diplomatic maneuvering rather than proactive engagement.

VI

Conclusion :

While Pakistan maintains important bilateral ties and occasionally engages constructively on global issues, its foreign policy has largely been reactive rather than proactive, shaped by external pressures, security threats, economic dependences, and global power interactions. To evolve towards a genuinely proactive foreign policy, Pakistan needs enhanced strategic autonomy, stronger diplomatic institutional capacity, and an integrated vision that aligns its regional and global interests with long-term national objectives.

QUESTION NO.1

"Pakistan's most serious threat is internal rather than external"

Analysis of the statement in the light of political instability, economic fragility, and social Polarization.

I. Introduction

According to a political theorist Samuel P. Huntington, "Internal cohesion and resilience are the real foundations of national security." A state that cannot manage its internal contradictions is inherently vulnerable to both domestic upheaval and external manipulation. In Pakistan, internal threats such as stemming from political instability, economic fragility, and deep social polarization, increasingly overshadow external threats such as interstate conflict. While border tensions and regional rivalries remain relevant, the state's ability to govern effectively ^{and} maintain economic stability is arguably Pakistan's most pressing challenge.

II. Pakistan's most serious threat is Internal rather than External: