

Current Affairs

Question No. 7

How Pakistan could balance its relations after the recent engagement with US and strategic partnership with China.

Introduction

Pakistan's recent engagement with US and strategic partnership with China is challenging for Pakistan, but Pakistan could balance its relations with both countries by pursuing multi-vector diplomacy, differentiating economic and security engagement, using strategic signaling to both powers, strengthening domestic resilience and reducing dependency, and avoiding taking sides in direct US-China geopolitical confrontations.

How Pakistan could balance its relations with US and China

1. Adopt a multi-vector foreign policy:

Pakistan can follow a strategy similar to 'multi-alignment', where it

engages multiple powers without over-reliance on one. This has historical precedent: during the cold war, non-aligned countries like India navigated relationships with both the US and USSR. For Pakistan:

US Engagement: Focus on defense, economic aid, counterterrorism cooperation, and technology partnership.

China Partnership: Leverage long-term strategic projects like China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), infrastructure development, and military modernization.

2. Clearly Define Strategic Interests

Pakistan needs to differentiate between areas where it can cooperate with both countries versus areas of potential conflict.

Defence and Security: Both the US and China offer military support, but Pakistan may have to diversify procurement and technology sources to avoid dependency.

Economic Development: China is more patient with long-term infrastructure investment (like CPEC), whereas US aid may be more conditional and politically tied.

Regional Diplomacy: Pakistan's role in Afghanistan, India-Pakistan relations, and the Middle East requires careful messaging to avoid alienating either the US or China.

3. Leverage Economic Complementarities

China: Focus on large-scale infrastructure, energy, and industrial projects. Maintain CPEC momentum to secure economic growth.

US: Utilize trade and investment incentives, technology transfer, and financial aid that may come with strategic cooperation.

By clearly compartmentalizing these economic engagements, Pakistan can

prevent one relationship from undermining the other.

4. Engage in Strategic Signaling

Pakistan can reassure both powers of its value while avoiding the perception of taking sides.

To China: Reinforce commitment to Belt and Road initiatives and strategic alignment.

To U.S.: Emphasize counterterrorism cooperation, regional stability, and willingness to engage on global issues like climate change and humanitarian relief.

5. Invest in Domestic Resilience:

Being overly dependent on any single external actor is risky. Pakistan can strengthen its bargaining position by:

Diversifying trade partners (e.g.

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Middle East, Europe, Central Asia).

Strengthening domestic institutions, energy independence, and human capital.

Building a self-reliant defense and technological base to avoid being caught between US-China Competition.

6. Use Diplomatic Neutrality in Regional Conflicts:

Pakistan should avoid entanglement in US-China rivalry over issues like Taiwan or South China Sea.

Focus on regional peace and security issues like that align with Pakistan's national interests (Afghanistan, Kashmir, dialogue, and Iran-Pakistan relations).

Conclusion

Pakistan could balance its relations with ~~Pakistan~~ US and China by careful diplomacy, economic strategy, and a nuanced understanding of regional security dynamics, while safeguarding its sovereignty and economic growth.