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QNo 2: Critically evaluate Gaza Peace plan
& its potential impacts

Answer :

Introduction

In September 2025, U.S President Donald Trump unveiled a 20-Point Gaza Peace Plan, aiming to end nearly two years of war between Hamas and Israel through a Cease fire, Hostage exchange, demilitarisation and a transitional governance mechanism in Gaza. While the plan garnered support from Israel and some international actors, its contents, legitimacy and long term viability have provoked intense debate. Given Pakistan's historical support for the Palestinian cause and advocacy for a two-State solution, a critical appraisal of this plan and its implications is essential for formulating a coherent foreign policy response.

Evaluation Of the Peace Plan

(1) Structure and Objectives :-

The plan's first phase prioritised an immediate ceasefire, a release of hostages, and expanded humanitarian aid steps seen as urgent measures to stop the bloodshed. It envisaged an interim international stabilisation force (ISF) and a Board of Peace to oversee a demilitarised Gaza, guided by a transitional Palestinian technocratic authority. A phased Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and resumption of reconstruction efforts were also included.

Strengths;

Humanitarian Relief: Ending active hostilities and facilitating aid delivery are immediate, positive developments in alleviating civilian suffering in what has been widely described as a humanitarian catastrophe.

International Legitimisation:

The plan was adopted via UN Security Council resolution, lending it global diplomatic backing.

Weakness and Criticism:

Despite its high diplomatic profile, the plan has fundamental structural flaws:

Lack Of Palestinian Participation:

- It is reportedly crafted with limited input from Palestinian ~~resp~~ representatives, particularly resistance groups like Hamas, undermining its legitimacy among the primary stakeholders.

Vague Commitments on Statehood:

- While some iterations mention a pathway to Palestinian self-determination or statehood, critics argue that these are weak, non-binding and subject to conditionalities, failing to guarantee the two state solution as defined by pre-1967 borders. (Dawn)

Conditionalities:

Failing to guarantee the two state solution as defined by pre-1967 borders.

Asymmetric Power Dynamics:

- The plans demilitarisation focus and structural control mechanisms particularly the Board of peace dominated by international actors risk tilting authority away from Palestinian Self governance and entrenching Israeli leverage.

Implementation Challenges:

- Trust deficits, ongoing ceasefire violations, ambiguity over the ISF's mandate, and Israel's inconsistent stance on withdrawal and settlements pose significant obstacles.
- Pakistan's internal debate reflects this complexity: while the government welcomed the initiative, there were calls to ensure its alignment with international law and the rights of Palestinians, and some political voices feared the plan might sideline Palestinian interests.

Potential Impacts on the Two-State Solution:

1 Short-Term Stabilisation vs. Long Term Disillusionment

The Plan may temporarily halt active hostilities and deliver humanitarian relief, but without concrete guarantees for Sovereign Statehood, Clear borders and Palestinian political agency, it risks becoming a temporary ceasefire without a peace trajectory. The absence of a fixed timeline for Statehood and territorial Contiguity undermines the classic two-State framework.

3 Risk of Status Quo Entrenchment.

Ambiguous implementation terms and Conditions on Israeli withdrawal could allow the occupation dynamics to persist or intensify, rendering the two-State aspiration increasingly remote. Entities like the Board of Peace and ISF might

replace Palestinian Political Structures without empowering them, Cementing a Proxy governance model instead of a Sovereign Palestinian State. (Dawn)

Comprehensive Policy Framework

For Pakistan

Given these Dynamics Pakistan must adopt a principled yet Pragmatic Foreign policy that Safeguards its Strategic interests and moral Stance:

(1) Uphold International Law and Two State Principle

- Pakistan Should Consistently reaffirm its Support for a viable, Sovereign Palestinian State based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its Capital, aligning with UN Resolutions and International legal norms. This reinforces Pakistan's historic position and distinguishes it from Plans that prioritise tactical Ceasefires over fundamental justice.

2/ Advocate Inclusive Negotiations

- Pakistan must call for direct, meaningful participation of Palestinian leadership and Civil Society in any Peace process, ensuring the Solutions are not externally but reflect Palestinian aspirations and Consent. Isolation of key State holders like Hamas has historically undermined peace Prospects.

3/ Engage Multilaterally;

- Pakistan Should work with Arab, Islamic and UN Forums to Push for binding Political Commitments including Fixed timelines and mechanism for State hold and to Prevent the entrenchment of interim governance bodies that sideline Palestinian authority

4/ Public Diplomacy and Domestic Consensus:

- Given domestic Sentiment in Pakistan including Civil Society activism and Political Criticism of unilateral Peace Frameworks

Islamabad Should Communicate its Policy Positions Clearly to maintain Public Trust and Solidarity with the Palestinian Cause

Conclusion:

The Trump brokered Gaza peace plan represents a complex mix of immediate ceasefire prospects and long-term strategic Palestinian ambiguities. While its short-term effects may offer relief, its structural vagueness and limited Palestinian inclusion undermine the substantive prospects of a two state solution for Palestine. The challenge is to balanced diplomatic engagement that seeks peace and stability with an unwavering commitment to international law, Palestinian self-determination and equitable statehood. A balanced policy framework rooted in law, inclusivity and multilateralism will best serve Pakistan's principled stance and the broader quest for a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Q No 1: Critically review Pakistan's Strategic Mutual defence ?

Answer: Introduction

Pakistan's Foreign Policy in the middle East has historically been shaped by a delicate balance between Strategic Cooperation with Saudi Arabia and neighbourly relations with Iran. In recent years, renewed defence Cooperation with Saudi Arabia alongside a cautiously improving Pakistan-Iran engagement has introduced both opportunities and diplomatic Challenges. These developments Compel Pakistan to recalibrate its regional Strategy to avoid entanglement in Sectarian rivalries with safe guarding its national interests regional Stability, and Strategic autonomy.

Pakistan - Saudi-Arabia Strategic
Defence Cooperation

Nature and Scope:

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia share a long standing defence partnership involving:

- Military training and advisory roles.
- Joint exercises and intelligence Co operation

- Defence personnel deployments
- Security Co Operation for holy sites.

This Co operation is driven by shared Security Concerns, Saudi Arabia's Strategic reliance on Pakistan's professional military expertise, and Pakistan's economy dependence on Saudi financial support.

Strategic Significance

- Strengthens Pakistan's defence diplomacy and economic leverage.
- Enhance Saudi internal and regional Security
- Reinforces Pakistan's role in the Islamic world.

However defence Co operation is often perceived as tilted towards Saudi Strategic interests especially amid Riyadh's rivalry with Iran.

Strategic Significance;

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Limitations and Risks;

- Risk of Pakistan being drawn into Middle Eastern Conflicts.
- Domestic Sectarian Sensitivities
- Strain on relations with Iran if perceived as alignment against it.

Pakistan's parliamentary refusal in 2015 to join the Yemen Conflict reflects awareness of these risks.

Evolving Pakistan-Iran Relationship

• Drivers of Engagement

Pakistan's relationship with Iran are

Shaped by

- Geographic proximity and border security
- Trade and energy cooperation (e.g. gas pipeline ambitions)
- Counter-terrorism coordination
- Regional connectivity through Gwadar Chabahar complementarities.

Recent diplomatic engagements signal mutual recognition of the need for cooperation despite historical mistrust.

Strategic Importance;

- Stability along Pakistan's western border
- Reduction of cross-border militancy
- Economic diversification and energy security
- Strengthening regional autonomy from extra-regional pressures.

Challenges:

- US Sanctions on Iran limiting economic cooperation
- Border security incidents.
- Iranian concerns over Pakistan-Saudi military closeness.

Despite these challenges both states empha-

Size dialogue and non-Interference.

Impacts on Balancing Relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran

1/ Strategic neutrality under Pressure

- Pakistan's defence CoOperation with Saudi Arabia risks being interpreted as Strategic alignment, Complicating its declared policy of neutrality in Saudi-Iran rivalry.

2/ Diplomatic Credibility;

- Simultaneous engagement with both powers enhances Pakistan's diplomatic credibility as a potential bridge rather than a partisan actor, provided neutrality is maintained.

3/ Internal Security Considerations;

- Any perceived engagement with both powers enhances Pakistan's diplomatic Credibility as a potential bridge rather than a partisan actor, provided neutrality is maintained.

(3) Internal Security Considerations:

- Any Perceived imbalance may exacerbate Sectarian tensions domestically, directly affecting Pakistan's internal Stability.

4/ Economic and Strategic Trade-Offs

Saudi Arabia remains a crucial economic partner, while Iran offers long-term energy and Connectivity potential. Over prioritizing one risks Strategic imbalance.

Policy Recommendations for Pakistan

1/ Institutionalized neutrality.

Pakistan Should formally articulate and operationalize a non-aligned East policy. avoiding military involvement in regional rivalries.

2/ Transparency in Defence Cooperation

Clear Communication that Pakistan's defence ties with Saudi Arabia are defensive and non-offensive can reduced Iranian apprehensions.

3/ Balanced Engagement:

- Deepen economic and border Cooperation with Iran
- Continue Security Collaboration with Saudi Arabia without Combat Commitments.

Conclusion;

Pakistan's Strategic defence Cooperation with Saudi Arabia and its evolving engagement with Iran present both opportunities and diplomatic dilemmas. While Saudi Arabia remains a vital economic and Strategic Partner, Iran's importance as a neighbour and regional Stakeholder can not be ignored. Pakistan's long-term interests lie in balanced diplomacy, Strategic, and non-entanglement, enabling it to maintain Constructive relations with both Middle Eastern powers while Preserving regional Stability and domestic Cohesion.