

# Pakistan Affairs

## Test-3

### Q NO. 1

## Pakistan's Foreign Policy and its Strategic Balance

### 1. Introduction

Pakistan's foreign policy is shaped by its strategic geographic location, complex history and diverse challenges. Positioned at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East, Pakistan plays a crucial role in regional and global geopolitics. Its foreign policy seeks to balance three critical pillars: promoting economic growth, ensuring national and regional security and exerting influence within the region. This balancing act is further

complicated by internal economic challenges, regional tensions with neighboring countries like India and Afghanistan and the shifting dynamics of global power, particularly between the United States and China. In this context, Pakistan's ability to navigate these intersecting priorities is essential for its stability, development and role in the international arena.

## 2- Historical Context

Pakistan's foreign policy has been shaped by its geopolitical challenges since its creation in 1947, particularly its economic vulnerabilities and security concerns including the Kashmir dispute with India. During the Cold War, Pakistan aligned with the West through alliances like SEATO and CENTO, securing aid but tying itself to global power rivalries. In the 1980s it played a key role in Afghan-Soviet war, gaining strategic significance but also facing

long-term instability due to emerging militant groups. Post 9/11, Pakistan became a critical ally in the War on Terror, balancing global partnerships with domestic repercussions.

### 3- Economic growth and foreign policy

#### I- Trade Partnerships

Economic growth is a key pillar of Pakistan's foreign policy. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project under China's Belt and Road Initiative, exemplifies its focus on enhancing trade and infrastructure. CPEC has brought significant investments in energy, transportation and industrial development, positioning Pakistan as a critical regional trade hub. Additionally, Pakistan has sought to diversify its trade partnerships, expanding ties with Gulf countries and exploring markets in Central

Asia.

## II. Economic Challenges

Despite these efforts, Pakistan faces significant economic challenges. Reliance on IMF loans and mounting external debt have limited its ability to implement independent economic policies. Foreign aid, particularly from countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, plays a crucial role in stabilizing its economy. However, these dependencies highlight the need for more sustainable economic strategies.

## 4 - Security Concerns

### I. Counterterrorism and internal stability

Pakistan's internal and external security challenges heavily influence its foreign policy. Collaborating with the US, China and Gulf states, Pakistan has made strides in countering terrorism.

For instance, military operations like Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fassad have significantly reduced internal militancy. However, cross-border terrorism and instability in Afghanistan ~~centr~~ continue to pose threats, requiring constant diplomatic and military attention.

## II. Regional Tensions

Relations with India remain a focal point of Pakistan's security concerns, particularly due to ~~the~~ the longstanding Kashmir conflict. Frequent border skirmishes and India's growing military capabilities exacerbate tensions. Moreover, the volatile situation in Afghanistan post-US withdrawal has created new security dynamics, with Pakistan playing a critical role in mediating peace efforts and addressing refugee crises.

## 5. Regional influence

### I. China - Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

CPEC is central to Pakistan's regional aspirations. By connecting Gwadar Port to China's western regions, Pakistan aims to establish itself as a regional trade and energy hub. However, concerns over debt sustainability and opposition from India challenge its long term success.

### II. Role in Islamic World

Pakistan maintains close ties with Islamic countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. While it enjoys strong economic and military cooperation with Saudi Arabia, balancing relations with Iran remains tricky due to sectarian differences and regional rivalries. Pakistan's active role in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) underscores its efforts

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to maintain solidarity within the Muslim world.

### III. Connectivity and Central Asia

Pakistan is also focusing on enhancing connectivity with Central Asia. Projects like the TAPI gas pipeline and transnational trade routes aim to boost regional integration. Leveraging its geographical position, Pakistan seeks to become a bridge between South and Central Asia, benefiting from increased trade and energy linkages.

### 6- Challenges to Policy Implementation

Implementing a balanced foreign policy is fraught with challenges. The growing rivalry between the US and China forces Pakistan to navigate carefully between its strategic ties with both. Skepticism from neighboring countries, such as India and Afghanistan complicates regional collaboration. Additionally, domestic political

instability coupled with an over-reliance on external actors undermines Pakistan's ability to pursue consistent foreign policy objectives.

## 7. Future directions and recommendations

To achieve its foreign policy goals Pakistan must prioritize economic diplomacy by attracting foreign investment and diversifying trade. Strengthening multilateral cooperation within South Asia, particularly through SAARC can help address regional conflicts. Additionally, investing in human capital and technology will enable Pakistan to build a more self-reliant and stable economy, reducing dependence on external powers.

## 8. Conclusion

Pakistan's foreign policy is a delicate balancing act between economic growth, security, and regional influence.



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By capitalizing on its strategic location, fostering economic partnerships and addressing security challenges, Pakistan can emerge as a key player in regional and global politics. However, achieving this balance requires sustained efforts, visionary leadership and strategic policymaking.

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Q No. 2

# Pakistan's approach to regional Security challenges and its impact on neighboring relations

## 1. Introduction

Pakistan's geopolitical position at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East places it at the center of regional security dynamics. Its foreign policy is shaped by longstanding issues such as terrorism, border disputes and fragile relationships with its neighbors including India, Afghanistan and Iran.

Addressing these security challenges is crucial for Pakistan's stability and its ability to foster regional cooperation.

However, its responses to these issues have significantly impacted its diplomatic and economic relations with neighboring countries.

## 2. Pakistan-India Relations

### I. Kashmir Dispute

The Kashmir issue has been a core conflict since the partition of British India in 1947. Pakistan views Kashmir as a disputed territory, advocating for the right to self-determination based on UN resolutions. India, however, considers Kashmir an integral part of its territory. The abrogation of Article 370 by India in 2019, which revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status, further strained relations. Pakistan condemned this as a unilateral move, escalating tensions both diplomatically and militarily.

### II. Cross-Border Terrorism

India frequently accuses Pakistan of supporting militant groups, such as Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) which have been linked to attacks

in India. The 2016 Uri attack and the 2019 Pulwama attack were both attributed to Pakistan-based groups. Pakistan denies these allegations and counters with claims that India supports insurgents in Balochistan.

### III. Military Escalations

Relations between the two countries have witnessed repeated military escalations including airstriking and skirmishes along the Line of Control (LOC). Following the Pulwama attack, India conducted the Balakot airstrike in February 2019, to which Pakistan retaliated by shooting down an Indian fighter jet. These incidents underscore the fragile nature of their security dynamics.

### 3. Pakistan - Afghanistan Relations

#### I. Border disputes (Durand Line)

The Durand Line, established in 1893 has been a contentious issue

between Pakistan and Afghanistan with Kabul refusing to recognize it as the official border. This has resulted in frequent border skirmishes and disputes over territorial sovereignty. Pakistan's construction of a fence along the Durand Line to control cross-border movement, has been met resistance from Afghan authorities.

## II. Cross-Border Militancy

Afghanistan has accused Pakistan of providing safe havens to the Taliban and other militant groups complicating peace efforts in the region. Pakistan, on the other hand, highlights its sacrifices in combating terrorism and accuses Afghanistan of harboring anti-Pakistan elements. Reports from the US Department of Defense have pointed to Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan but Pakistan's role in facilitating peace talks including hosting the Doha negotiations shows its efforts to mediate.

### III. Refugee Crisis

Pakistan hosts over 1.3 million Afghan refugees placing significant economic and security pressures on the country. While Pakistan has called for the repatriation of refugees, the unstable situation in Afghanistan makes this challenging. The refugee influx after the Taliban's return to power in 2021 exacerbated Pakistan's economic burden.

### 4- Pakistan-Iran Relations

#### I. Border Security Issues

The 909-km border between Pakistan and Iran is porous, often exploited by militants for cross-border attacks. Iranian security forces have repeatedly faced attacks by extremist groups such as Jaish-e-Adl allegedly operating from Pakistan's territory.

## II. Sectarian and geopolitical rivalries

Pakistan's close ties with Saudi Arabia particularly its involvement in the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen have strained relations with Iran. Sectarian differences between Sunni-majority Pakistan and Shia-majority Iran further complicate their relationship. Iran has criticized Pakistan's perceived alignment with Saudi interests viewing it as a threat to regional stability.

## III. Joint Security measures

Despite challenges, both countries have attempted to address security concerns through collaboration. Recent agreements on joint border patrols and economic cooperation including the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline Project reflect efforts to improve bilateral ties.

## 5- Regional Impact of Pakistan's security approach

### I. Strained diplomatic ties

Pakistan's approach to security has contributed to strained relations with its neighbors affecting regional cooperation frameworks like the SAARC. SAARC's effectiveness has been hindered by India - Pakistan tensions, limiting its potential for fostering regional collaboration.

### II. Limited Economic integration

Security challenges have impeded economic integration within the region depriving Pakistan and its neighbors of trade benefits. Despite sharing borders, trade between Pakistan and India remains minimal amounting to less than \$ 2 billion annually before trade was suspended in 2019.



### III. Growing Security alliances

Pakistan has sought to strengthen security ties with global powers like China and Russia to counterbalance regional challenges. CPEC projects and military cooperation with Russia highlight Pakistan's strategic realignments.

### 6- Recommendations for improvement

To improve relations with its neighbors, Pakistan must prioritize confidence building measures, such as initiating dialogue with India on Kashmir and collaborating with Afghanistan on border security. Strengthening multilateral mechanisms like SAARC and the OIC can provide platforms for resolving disputes and fostering regional cooperation. Additionally, focusing on economic diplomacy and trade partnerships can shift the focus from conflict to development, creating a foundation for improved ties and stability in the region.

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## 7- Conclusion

Pakistan's approach to regional security challenges has had significant implications for its relations with India, Afghanistan and Iran. While these challenges have created mistrust and instability, they also present opportunities for cooperation and dialogue. By adopting a more collaborative and multilateral approach, Pakistan can improve regional relations, enhance stability and achieve long-term security and economic goals.

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