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Q NO 1

1. Introduction

Pakistan's foreign policy aims to safeguard security, economic growth, and regional peace. Its geostrategic location offers opportunities for cooperation, but historical rivalries and domestic challenges often push Islamabad to prioritise security over regional collaboration. This sets the stage for understanding how far Pakistan has balanced strategic interests with regional stability.

Pakistan's Foreign Policy in Regional Context

2. Pakistan's National Security Drives Policy Decisions

- (i) Focus on India as Primary Security Threat
- (ii) Nuclear Program as Strategic Shield
- (iii) Managing Internal Security Challenges

(i) Focus On India as Primary Security Threat

Islamabad's focus on India as primary security threat like, wars in 1948, 1965, 1971, Kargil (1999) and May 2025 border escalation show Pakistan prioritizes military deterrence.

SIPRI 2024 notes defence spending exceeds 3% of GDP, limiting regional initiatives.

(ii) Nuclear Program as Strategic Shield

Pakistan's nuclear arsenal deters conventional threats and maintains regional credibility. IAEA 2024 reports Pakistan's nuclear program is among the fastest growing in South Asia. Although, it diverts resources from regional cooperation.

m) Managing Internal Security Challenges

Domestic instability and internal military force Pakistan has focus inward, impacting its ability to fully engage neighbors or regional forums.

2. Pakistan's Efforts at Regional Cooperation

- i) Bilateral Relations with Afghanistan
- ii) Engagements with Multilateral Platforms
- iii) Economic Partnership with neighbors

(i) Bilateral Relations with Afghanistan

Pakistan supported peace talks post-2021 but cross-border clashes at Tor Kham (2023) and Chaman (2025) and TTP

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activity hinder stability -
UNAMA 2024 notes security
concerns dominate policy.

ii) Engagements with Multilateral Platforms

Active participation in
SAARC, ECO, OIC, and SCO
promotes trade, connectivity, and
counterterrorism. Projects like
Trans-Afghan Railway 2024
show potential but mistrust
with India limits effectiveness.

iii) Economic Partnership with Neighbors

Trade with Iran
(\$ 2 billion, 2024) and Central
Asian initiatives strengthen
regional ties, though benefits
remain modest compared to
Security priorities -

3. Strategic International Partnerships of Pakistan

→ i) CPEC

→ (ii) Relations with Gulf States for Economic Security

→ (iii) Managing Great Power Relations.

(i) China - Pakistan Economic Corridor

Investments of \$ 85 billion improve infrastructure and energy. This strengthened Pakistan's strategic position.

Dr. Rabia Akhtar, ISSI 2025 notes over-reliance on China reduces flexibility.

(ii) Relations with Gulf States for Economic Security

Remittances contribute 56% of total inflows (2024). This supports economic stability.

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Dependency sometimes contrasts independent regional decision making.

iii) Managing Great Power Relations

Engagement with US, Russia, and China provides leverage. At the same time, conflicting interests limit coherent regional cooperation.

4. Critical Analysis

While Pakistan maintains security and influence, long-term regional stability remains only partially achieved. Economic and diplomatic efforts exist but are secondary to defence priorities.

Conclusion

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Pakistan's foreign policy partially balances strategic interests with regional stability.

By strengthening trust with neighbors, prioritising trade, and building institutional capacity are essential for sustainable peace.

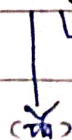
1. Introduction

Since 2001, Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan has aimed to safeguard borders, influence Kabul, and maintain regional stability. Changing regimes, from US backed governments to Taliban's Take over, have shaped bilateral ties and border management. Meanwhile, the recent 2025 escalations are highlighting persistent challenges.

2. Pakistan's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan in the Post-9/11 Era

2.1) Early Post-9/11 Engagement (2001-2014)

Managing US Security Spillovers



US Support for US Backed Afghan Government

Limited Regional Cooperation

i) Support for US Backed Afghan Government

Pakistan provided logistical and intelligence support to NATO forces to stabilise Afghanistan while maintaining influence in Kabul. USIP 2013 notes Islamabad sought to protect western borders while engaging diplomatically.

(ii) Managing Security Spillovers

Cross-border militancy, including TTP and Taliban sanctuaries, required checkpoints, fencing, and counterterrorism operations. Ultimately, this is affecting bilateral trust.

(iii) Limited Regional Cooperation

Pakistan participated in SAARC and ECO dialogues, but mistrust with Kabul and India restricted economic

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and connectivity initiatives.

2.2) Taliban Take Over and Policy Shifts (2021 - 2024)

- ↳ i) Diplomatic Engagement with Taliban
- ↳ ii) Border Security Challenges
- ↳ (iii) Limited International Coordination

i) Diplomatic Engagement with Taliban

Post-2021, Pakistan maintained diplomatic ties and humanitarian support, urging a broad-based Taliban government. UNAMA 2022 notes Pakistan's role in facilitating talks for border security.

ii) Border Security Challenges

Torkham and Chaman faced militant movements, smuggling, and refugee flows. Also, reinforce fencing and surveillance.

iii) Limited International Coordination

Aid Coordination with China and Gulf countries occurred, but pressure from the US and EU constrained Pakistan's foreign policy options on governance and terrorism issues.

2.3) Recent Escalations and 2025 Crisis

- i) May 2025 Border Clashes
- ii) Impacts on Bilateral Relations
- iii) Policy Response to Escalations

i) May 2025 Border Clashes
Clashes at Chaman and
Torgham involved temporary
closures and exchanges of
fire due to Taliban's inability
to control TTP attacks. This
disrupted trade and security.

ii) Impact on Bilateral Relations

Escalations of strained
trust, highlighted the fragility
of cooperation, and emphasized
security over economic or
diplomatic engagement.

iii) Policy Response to Escalations

Pakistan intensified border
fencing, military coordination,
and monitoring while calling
for international support for Afghan
stability.

3. Critical Analysis: Balance Between Security and Cooperation

While Pakistan maintains influence and border control, bilateral relations are fragile, and the regional stability is only partially achieved.

4. Conclusion

Pakistan's post-9/11 policy towards Afghanistan shows a delicate balance between security and cooperation. Strengthening dialogue, joint border mechanisms, and humanitarian engagement is important for sustainable peace and stability.