

Question no: 01Pakistan's foreign policy in regional contextIntroduction:

Pakistan's foreign policy has been shaped by its strategic geography, internal security pressures, and dependency on global power alignments. Although Pakistan has made numerous attempts to promote regional cooperation — especially through China, Central Asia and Islamic world platforms, however its approach often remains security and economic centric. Resultantly, Pakistan has achieved strategic balance in some areas but continue to struggle to ensure sustained regional stability.

Pakistan's foreign policy has been a search for security, recognition and development in an adverse regional environment.

(Former Foreign Minister - Abdul Sattar)

1. Strategic determinants of Pakistan's Foreign policy:

Followings are the strategic determinants of Pakistan's foreign policy;

i) Security and territorial integrity

The Kashmir dispute has remained the core determinant of Pakistan's regional stance. Frequent episodes of war situations in 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999 instilled a security-first orientation and slowed regional economic cooperation.

ii) Economic needs and developmental diplomacy

Pakistan, being economically weak, always searched for foreign aid, IMF assistance and foreign assistance; particularly from China and USA. It became a driving force of aligning with the western powers.

iii) Alliance formation and great-power patronage

Pakistan joined SEATO and CENTO backed in 1954 and 1955 respectively due to search for security. Pakistan trusted USA for fulfilling its security needs and defense modernization.

2. Pakistan's foreign policy in regional context:

i) Conflict over Cooperation with India

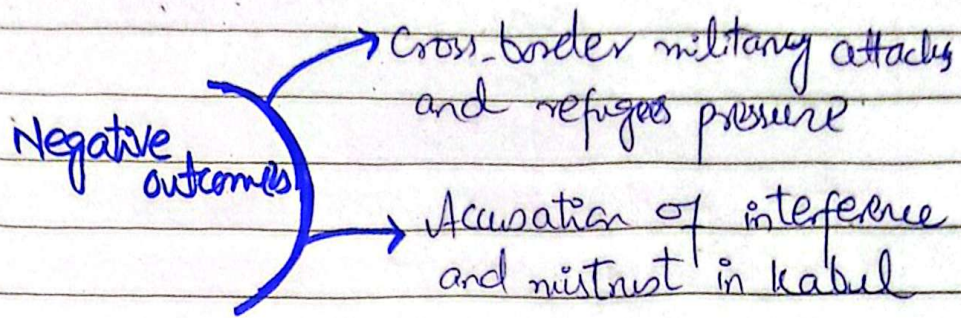
Since Independence, Pakistan perceives India as its strategic competitor. Owing to hostile relation since birth followed by war skirmished in 1948 and 1965, the relations with India remained hostile.

Consequently, SAARC summit has remained suspended since 2016 due to Indo-pak tensions.

ii) Strategic depth vs stability with Afghanistan

Pakistan's foreign policy with Afghanistan has had mixed outcomes;





The idea of strategic depth damaged regional trust and contributed to instability. Spillovers back into Pakistan.

(iii) China being the cornerstone of strategic balance

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) worth 62 billion dollars links Pakistan to the Belt and Road initiative. Although, it provides infrastructure, energy and strategic cover against India. However, this created economic dependency and raised debt-sustainability questions.

(iv) Iran and the Gulf: Balancing Sectarian and Economic interests

Pakistan relies on UAE and Saudi Arabia for subsidies and financial support. Meanwhile, it seeks gas and border security ~~too~~ cooperation with Iran.

v) Central Asia: Connectivity hopes but limited progress

With Central Asia, Projects like TAPI pipeline and CASA-1000 have been slow due to instability and financing challenges.

Though potential exists, but materialization remains weak.

3. Successes in balancing strategic interests with regional cooperation

i) Maintaining strategic deterrence

through credible nuclear capability (tested 1998), prevented large-scale war and stabilized deterrence dynamics

ii) Deep strategic partnership with China enhanced Pakistan's diplomatic leverage and economic resilience

iii) Counter-terrorism operations (2014 onwards) - like operation Raddul-Fassad rehabilitated Pakistan's international image

iv) Projects linking Pakistan with Central Asia and the Gulf like

TAPI and CASA-1000 energy projects, though incomplete yet signal Pakistan's willingness for cooperative regional integration.

Pakistan facilitated talks between Taliban and the US (Doha talks - 2018-2021) and also supported Afghan-led peace process through SCO regional formats. Pakistan was accepted as a key mediator hence increased diplomatic credibility.

Conclusion:

Pakistan has partially balanced strategic interests with regional cooperation. Success exists where strategic aims and partnerships overlap - especially with China. However, lack of trust with India and Afghanistan, weak economic diplomacy and over-reliance on security tools prevent Pakistan from shaping a stable regional order.

Question no: 03Pakistan's foreign policy towards AfghanistanIntroduction:

Pakistan and Afghanistan share deep religious cultural and security linkages. After 9/11, Pakistan became a ^{friendly} ally of the United States in the war on terror, which reshaped its Afghan policy. However, changing political regimes in Kabul - from the Karzai administration to Ashraf Ghani, and then to Taliban Takeover in 2021, it has repeatedly altered the tone of bilateral relations. Pakistan has sought strategic depths, border security, refugee repatriation and cross-border trade stability - yet mistrust and security spillovers have challenged these aims.

Pakistan's Afghan policy is a struggle between ideological affinity and strategic necessity.

(Abdul Sattar)

1. Pakistan's foreign policy shift after 9/11:

Pakistan joined the US-led war on terror in 2001, providing ^{Pakistan} airbases and intelligence. Banned support networks connected to Afghan factions. Also, it sought to prevent Indian strategic presence in Afghanistan.

2. Phases of Foreign policy in Response to regime changes in Kabul

i) Karzai Era (2001-2014): Cooperation but deep mistrust

Karzai accused Pakistan of "sheltering Afghan Taliban leadership". Pakistan accused Afghan intelligence and India of supporting TTP sanctuaries in Kunar and Nuristan. Despite high-level visits and trade agreements (Pakistan-Afghanistan Transit Trade agreement), mistrust persisted.

iii) Ghani Era (2014-2021)

Despite Ghani initial visits to Pakistan, Kabul failed to gain peace & concessions from Taliban. Ghani shifted towards India and accused Pakistan of non-cooperation.

iii) Taliban takeover: New trust, New tensions

Pakistan welcomed the end of US backed government hoping for strategic alignment. However, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) resurgence raised expectation;

- Taliban refused to take action against TTP insurgents
- Taliban stated that TTP is Pakistan's internal problem.
- Pakistan conducted cross-border precision strikes in April 2022 and again in 2023.
- Taliban deployed border forces at Torkham Chaman resulting in armed clashes.

Taliban Pakistan should solve its internal issues without pressuring Afghanistan.

(Taliban Spokesman - Zabihullah Mujahid)

2) 3. Torkham and Chaman Clashes (Recent Escalation - 2022-24):

Taliban attempted construction of border structures → disputes over territorial demarcation.

It resulted in ;

- Exchange of fire
- Border closures
- Suspension of trade and medical facilities

a) Rise of TTP as a primary cause of recent escalations

TTP attacks in Pakistan increased by 60% in 2022. Pakistan launched targeted strikes in Kunar and Khost. Taliban accused Pakistan of violating sovereignty.

Owing to recent escalation at Torkham and Chaman border, Pakistan started repatriation of undocumented Afghan migrants, in creating further strain in bilateral relations.

b) way forward

- i) Confidence-building measures in Pakistan border belt
- ii) Intelligence coordination against TTP
- iii) Economic incentives (energy corridor, transit trade)

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Conclusion:

Changing regimes in Kabul have directly shaped bilateral relations and border management. The TTP issue remains the core fault line and Durand line remains the symbolic and geopolitical dividing wall.