

CURRENT AFFAIRS

SUBJECTIVE

QNO.7

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

1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan faces a ^{small-}classical state dilemma amid the intensifying US-China rivalry. While it enjoys strategic partnership with China rooted in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and defense cooperation, it also sought to revive ties with Washington through renewed diplomatic, security and economic engagement. As Haseeb Hussain noted, "Pakistan cannot afford to side with one pole in a polarized international order." In order to

preserve its autonomy and national interests, Islamabad must adopt a calibrated multi-track policy anchored in diversification, compartmentalisation, transparency and domestic resilience. This means Pakistan should deepen its economic ties with China without isolating itself from the Western led global order, and strengthening its internal economic and governance structure to reduce external dependency. As former Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry aptly stated, "True sovereignty lies in self reliance, not alignment."

2. PAKISTAN - US RELATIONS: FROM SECURITY CENTRIC TO CAUTIOUS RE-ENGAGEMENT

Pakistan's foreign policy trajectory reflects a long history of navigating between global powers to ensure

its strategic and economic interests.

US-Pakistan Relationship: History Full of Transactional Cycles

The US-Pakistan relationship has long been characterized by transactional cycles - phases of **intense cooperation** followed by **period of mistrust**. During Cold War, Pakistan aligned itself with Western alliances, viewing them as instruments to counterbalance India and ensuring military and economic assistance. It became a crucial partner in **Afghan Jihad** supporting US effort to counter **Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan**. During the **War on Terror**, Pakistan became frontline state of and was designated as a **Major Non-NATO Ally**. However, after the War of Terror, Trump used sharp **rhetorics** against Pakistan and accused it of duplicity in counter-terrorism measures. To show the

strategic recalibration it imposed
ban on **military aids and assistance**.

Recent US Role in Pakistan's Foreign Policy Trajectory

In recent years, US played significant
yet nuanced role in Pakistan's strategic
landscape.

**Mediator in Regional
Tensions**

**Largest single country
Exports destination**

**Influence through
Multi lateral institutions**

In the recent, **Pakistan-India May
escalation** US has acted as a mediator.
Economically, US remain Pakistan's
largest single country **exports destin-
-ation**, accounting roughly for **\$6 billi
ons**
in annual exports, which underscores
the enduring importance of trade ties.

Beyond bilateral relations, through multi lateral institutions such as **IMF** and **World Bank**, US influence macro-economic environment and lending programs. These elements highlight the US capacity to support Pakistan.

Possible Challenges in US-Pakistan Relations

Husain Haqani observed in his book **Magnificent Delusions**, "Pakistan has often been treated more as a liability than an asset in US strategic calculation". Analysts perceive US as a **fair weather friend** ^{who} shapes its policy according to **broader global environment**. US after War on Terror criticized Pakistan harshly and increased its coordination with India.

Reasons of Renewed US Interest

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Reasons of Renewed US Interest

Several reasons explained the renewed US interest in Pakistan in

recent years. **Economically**, Pakistan's **mineral and energy resources** have become increasingly important. Its interest is demonstrated in its **500 million dollars critical mineral investment**. Similarly, Pakistan's emergence in the **crypto and data sector** signal opportunities for high tech cooperation. Recently, Trump's efforts to facilitate ceasefire agreement between **India** and **Pakistan** underscore its interest in regional stability. In addition, Pakistan's role in **counter terrorism** and stabilizing Afghanistan remains another key consideration.

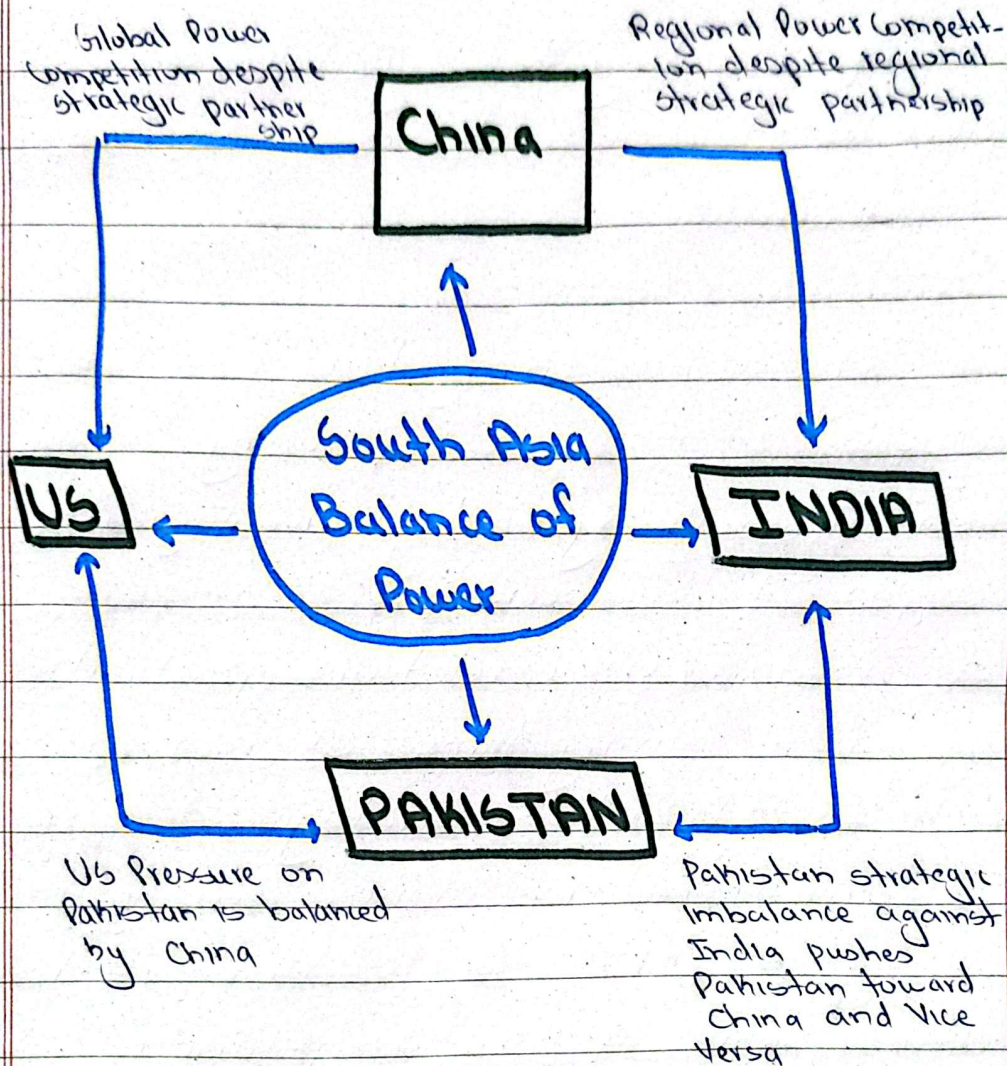
3. PAKISTAN - CHINA RELATIONS: DEEP ENDURING AND NOW SEEKING CPEC 2.0

Pakistan-China relations have historically been marked by consistency and strategic depth also recalled by "**higher than Himalayas, deeper than the oceans, sweeter than**

"honey," reflecting the symbolic and practical closeness of the partnership.

Strategic Partnership

China has emerged as Pakistan's closest **strategic ally**, providing sustained economic, military and technological support. It has been a **cornerstone** of Pakistan-China relations, particularly evident during times of **regional tensions**. Pakistan's strategic **deterrence** is strengthened by Chinese supply of **fighter jets, missiles** and other defense hardware. The longstanding **JF-17 fighter jet program** exemplifies sustained joint defence development. As **Michael Kugelman** noted, "**China remains Pakistan's principal military anchor, ensuring Islamabad retains strategic autonomy in the South Asia.**"



Economic Partnership

CPEC promises investment of **62 billion dollars** in Pakistan. CPEC is central to Pakistan's infrastructure and economic development. In addition to this, **70% of Pakistan's FDI** originates from China. In the fiscal year **2024-25**, China's net FDI in Pakistan soared by **90.4%**, reaching **\$12 billion** up from **\$643.2 million** in the previous

year. China stands as Pakistan's **largest trading partner**. In 2024, the total bilateral trade in goods reached **\$23.1 billion**.

Diplomatic Support

Throughout history, China repeatedly used UNSC veto in Pakistan's favour.

For instance, in **1998** after **Chagai Nuclear Test** and in **2019** when India revoked **article 370**.

4. BALANCING BOTH POWERS

Pakistan historically demonstrated skills in managing relations between major powers, often leveraging ties. As during Afghan Jihad Pakistan maintained strong ties with both countries, ensuring a strategic hedge. Similarly, during the War on Terror, Pakistan collaborated with US on counter terrorism efforts and continued ensuring Chinese economic deals. Pakistan needs to balance as no single partner can

deliver all Pakistan's needs. In this multipolar world, there is a cost of choosing as picking one camp risks sanctions, lost market access.

Use of Joseph Nye's Smart Power Framework

Pakistan needs to use Joseph Nye's smart power framework in which it will combine its hard and soft tools to widen options. Pakistan should cooperate with each power where interests converge.

Vendor Diversity

Pakistan must diversify its market to avoid single-vendor dilemma.

This will help Pakistan maintain autonomy in economy

Multilateral Platforms

Pakistan must prefer engaging through multilateral institutions than unilateral engagements.

Military Policy

Pakistan should maintain targeted and limited military cooperation and avoid all-out alliance with either power. However, Pakistan must adopt

No more boots on the ground policy against US military presence.

^{Political} Prioritize Domestic and Security Stability.

Machiavelli once said, "One should never fall in belief that you can find some to pick you up." This quote underscore the importance that Pakistan must strengthen its internal political and economic institutions to avoid reliance on foreign powers.

4. CONCLUSION

Pakistan's foreign policy reflects a careful and pragmatic balancing between two global powers. By leveraging China Pakistan has

attained long term strategic and financial support. Similarly, engagement with US open many avenues for Pakistan. In essence, Pakistan's success lies in maintaining equilibrium - ensuring its own national stability and autonomy while maintaining relations with great power rivals.

QNO.3

1. INTRODUCTION

The creation of new provinces has become a recurring discourse, reflecting demands for administrative efficiency, equitable resource distribution and ethnic or linguistic recognition. However, the real disease is weak governance, creating new provinces will only change the bottle not the wine. Proponents argue that new provinces can improve governance, strengthen local representation, and address socio-economic

disparities. While the others believe that creation of new provinces in the fragile state will exacerbate the existing crisis. This issue is complex involving political, economic, and social hurdles that hinder progress.

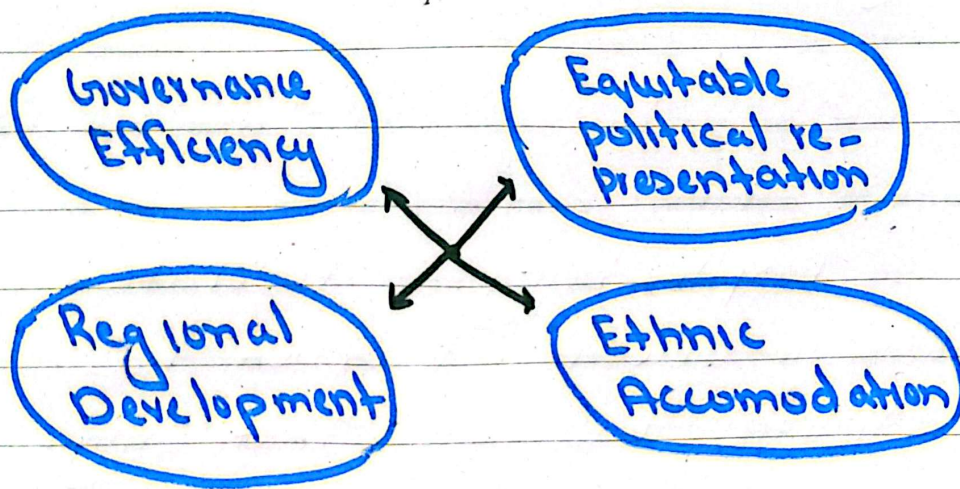
2. DISCUSSION OF CREATION OF NEW PROVINCES

Despite being a federation, Pakistan since its inception has a centralized governance that only impact its national solidarity but also causes grievances among many marginalized communities. Due to this, Pakistan has seen debates around the formation of new provinces over the years. This debate demands new provinces in **Punjab, Hazara and Urban Sindh**. Recently, the renewed media interest called for **12 provinces**. These demands can put efficiency, political stability

national unity and economic sustainability at stake.

3. ARGUMENTS PRESENTED BY SUPPORTERS

Supporters of this discourse cite several reasons



• Governance Efficiency

Larger provinces like Balochistan and Punjab has vast area that cause administrative services difficult. For many administrative tasks, citizens have to travel to the administrative capitals. Smaller provinces can improve response.

• Equitable Representation

Federal decision making is

influenced by representation in National Assembly. As Punjab account 56% of population, it creates an image of Punjab's dominance, however, this can be maintained by equal representation.

• Regional Development

Many far flung districts lag behind in basic facilities. Making new provinces will increase investment for these areas.

• Ethnic Accomodation

Subethnic groups (Hindko, Seraiki, and Muhajir) occasionally demand recognition. Creating new provinces will symbolically acknowledge their identity and reduce alienation.

4. ASSOCIATED RISKS IN CREATION OF NEW PROVINCES

1. Constitutional and Legal Challenges

Article 4 and Article 239 of the constitution requires a two-thirds majority in both **national**

and provincial assemblies to amend boundaries. Achieving political consensus is difficult due to divergent interests of existing provincial governments.

2. Ethnic and Political Consensus

Drawing new boundaries in a diverse area can cause tensions due to ethnic and linguistic sensitivities. Political parties can exploit this issue based on electoral calculations by promising new provinces. This can result in parliamentary deadlock, street agitation and further polarization.

3. Economic and Resource Distribution Lens

New provinces will require new assemblies, high courts, secretariats, and ministries. This would require billions in annual expenditures. Pakistan is ~~also~~ already suffering from

fiscal deficits. This could lead to disputes over revenue sharing, natural resources and taxation. Besides this, small provinces may struggle with **self sufficiency** without central support.

4. Intra Regional Inequalities

Creation of new provinces can empower dominant groups such as **Serahi speakers** in South Punjab. It will create further division as minorities will remain underrepresented.

5. Security and Governance Issue

Creating new provinces can lead to administrative disruption and governance vacuums in the short term. There is potential for legal disputes over boundaries that can paralyze governance for years.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SMOOTH FORMATION OF NEW PROVINCES

1. Constitutional and Legal Framework

Amendment of constitution will be required for clear, detailed procedure of provincial creation. There is a need of transparent legal framework to **avoid litigation and disputes**. Involvement of **independent constitutional experts** and the **Council of Common Interests** will be crucial.

2. Inclusive Political Dialogue

There is a need for engagement of all political parties, provincial governments, and local stakeholders. Public consultation and referendums must be conducted in areas demanding provincial status. There must be guarantee that all decisions will be taken on the base of **national interests** rather than

short-term political goals.

3. Economic Planning and Resource Allocation

A detail economic plan must be devised for each province which will include budgets, infrastructure, and revenue sharing mechanism. Hasty reforms must be avoided; central government must prioritise economic recovery and stability. Private investment and developmental projects must be encourage to enhance self sufficiency.

4. Security and Administrative Measures

Gradual reorganization of civil administration, police and governance structure will help implementation of conflict-resolution mechanism to handle boundary disputes. During transition, in order to establish law and order and prevent unrest

government must devise conflict resolution plan in advance.

6. CONCLUSION

The formation of new provinces offers opportunities for better governance, resource distribution, and recognition of regional identities. However, it faces multifaceted hurdles including constitutional, political, economic and social challenges.

A successful approach requires clear legal frameworks, inclusive dialogues, economic planning and attention to social cohesion. By adopting a phased and transparent strategy Pakistan can address local grievances, strengthen democratic governance and maintain national unity while accommodating the aspirations of its diverse population.

QNo.8

1. INTRODUCTION

The clouds of uncertainty are rising due to **element of uncertainty** in the **Middle East**.

There are recent violations of **sovereignty** and **territorial integrity** by Israel. This environment of uncertainty leads toward **historic defence pact** between **Saudi Arabia** and **Pakistan**

formally deepening strategic military and nuclear cooperation between the two states. The pact similar to NATO's umbrella obligations, symbolizes **deterrence, protection** and **prestige** - an assurance of mutual defence in case of external threats.

2. STRATEGIC MUTUAL DEFENCE AGREEMENT

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed **Strategic Mutual Defence**

on 17 September 2025. This is considered a landmark agreement that formalizes decades of cooperation into binding defence framework.

This agreement states "Aggression against one country will be treated as aggression against both." It is similar to Article 5 of NATO chapter.

3. CAUSES OF AGREEMENT

1. History of Strategic Relations between Two Countries

Pakistan's armed forces take active role in defending Haram Sharif. Similarly during Arab Israel war (1967-1973) Pakistan's armed and air force actively participated and engaged in dog fights with Israel. Now over 15000 to 20000 Pakistan's troops are already deployed in KSA. This agreement is called the

formal binding of the agreement

2. Dwindling Trust in US Security Guarantees

Over decades, US has gained dollars in billions from Gulf countries in view of security guarantees. However, recent attack on Qatar gave **strong realization** to Middle East. Qatar has aided US in Doha Talks, provide its good offices for Iran/US talks and opened doors for Israel and Hamas talks. However, attack on Qatar make middle East suspicious of US deception.

3. Israel Acting as Aggressor of the Region

US cannot keep Israel in check and this defense agreement is a signal that KSA do not trust USA for its defence. Security guarantees of

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Date: _____

USA now seem empty.

4. KSA Requirement of Nuclear Deterrence Against Samson Doctrine of Israel

Israel Samson Doctrine is dependent upon the story of prophet Samson who collapsed a temple killing himself and his enemies. This doctrine shows if Israel's destruction is imminent it will not go quietly and use its last resort of nuclear deterrence.

5. Balancing of Rival Powers

Both KSA and Pakistan try to balance their rival powers by this agreement. As during a war, Pakistan can get uninterrupted supply by KSA.

IMPLICATION OF THE DEAL

Reaction of USA

US has been the security guarantor of KSA and ME as a whole - KSA has been the largest defence buyer of USA. US will still determine security of KSA in years to come. It has just formalized its relations with Pakistan.

This pact may create indirect friction with US, especially given US Israel ties and strategic priorities in the region. It can complicate its neutral or multi vector foreign policy.

Indian Factor

India maintain strong socio economic relations with

KSA. It has become the **largest energy importer** from KSA

and KSA has become the major market for Indian workforce who sent remittances. In

Day: _____

Date: _____

case India attack Pakistan, USA will not jump into the war but would provide funds for war against India. It will condemn Indian attack while maintaining relations with Pakistan.

Israeli Factor

As a strategic ally of India and high tech nuclear state, may consider worst actions against Pakistan.

Pakistan- USA- Iran Equation

Iran and USA geopolitical rivalry is driven by sectarian divide. Pakistan will be major defector of the situation to

one vs. many paradox (Iran vs. Arab world). Iran is one

of the key neighbor and Pakistan cannot afford any instability. However, USA is the defense and economic partner

of Pakistan.

Conclusion

The USA - Pakistan defense pact represents a historic deepening of military and economic ties. Rooted in self interest and historical influence, it offers Pakistan many opportunities while opening many paradoxes at the same time.