

Assignments of sectional Marks 20

Pakistan Studies

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Q.1 A critical Analysis of Pakistan's Foreign policy post 9/11

Ans .1

- **Abstract:-**

(Since its emergence in 1947, Pakistan has had to face daunting crises and challenges. The aftershocks of 9/11 have impacted on Pakistan severely necessitating radical revisions in some of its key foreign policy goals. The country is under intense international scrutiny as a frontline state in the global fight against terror. There is need for Pakistan to undertake far-reaching domestic reforms as only political, economic and social stability under a democratic dispensation will enable it to overcome the internal and external threats that it now confronts. This necessitates more emphasis on internal restructuring and the crafting of "a low profile foreign policy." – Editor).

"Cheshire-Puss," Alice began..."would you tell me which way I ought to go from here?" "That depends a good deal on where you want to go," said the Cat. "I don't much care where...." Said Alice. "Then it doesn't matter much which way you go," said the Cat. "...so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation. "Oh, you are sure to do that," said the Cat, "if only you walk long enough....In that direction lives a Hatter; and in that direction lives a March Hare. Visit either you like; they are both mad." "But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked. "Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat, "we're all mad here. I'm mad, you are mad." "How do you know I am mad?" said Alice. "You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here." Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.

- **The Turning Point:-**

On 9/11, that fateful day, Pakistan faced the worst dilemma of its life. It did not know which way to go, and which way not to. Its options were limited and bleak. The world had changed overnight altering the fundamentals of global relations. Political, economic and security shocks had been transmitted across the globe at an electronic pace, if not faster. Terrorism became world's foremost and "univocal" challenge transcending all other preoccupations with issues of peace, security and development.

With its own post-independence political history replete with crises and challenges that perhaps no other country in the world had ever experienced, Pakistan stood there aghast already

burdened with a legacy of multiple challenges, both domestic and external, when the tragedy of 9/11 presented it with new ominous realities, and also an opportunity to think anew and act anew.

“Bloody Tuesday,” “Act of War,” “Carnage,” “Catastrophe,” “Heinous Crime”, and “An Unprecedented Tragedy in American History” were some of the headlines used the next day in the American media to describe the event. The disappearance of the twin towers from Manhattan’s skyline also changed the global geo-political landscape altogether.

The world’s sole super power was overwhelmed by anger and lost no time in determining the nature and scale of its response. President Bush threatened strong action against the terrorists and vowed that the US would do “whatever it takes” to punish them. He warned other nations that there can be “no neutral ground in the fight between civilization and terror.” Stern punitive measures would also be taken against those who “harbored” terrorists.

At the diplomatic front, the US was quick to mobilize international support for building an “international coalition” to combat terrorism. Besides enlisting NATO’s participation in this campaign, it got strong resolutions adopted overwhelmingly the very next day, i.e., 12 September in the UN Security Council and the General Assembly thereby paving the ground for the legitimization of US military action against terrorists and their hideouts.

Despite political, religious, cultural, and ethnic diversities as well as disparities in economic development and influence, the international community spoke with rare spontaneity and unanimity condemning the terrorist attacks and resolving “to work together not only to bring the perpetrators to justice but also to prevent and eradicate terrorism. “Two weeks later, the US was able to have a more specific action-oriented resolution adopted in the UN Security Council on implementation of global measures to suppress terrorism through a UN Counter-Terrorism Committee.

Secretary of State Colin Powell marshalled a broad diplomatic effort talking to allied governments and reiterating the unambiguous message to other countries that they could no longer remain neutral in the fight against terrorism.

No nation had any choice in its relationship with the United States. The option was a stark “black or white.” In the words of a senior Administration official: “You’re either with us or against us.” To that end, special focus was brought on Pakistan’s association with the Taliban of Afghanistan who were accused of supporting Osama bin Laden, and giving his militant organization, Al Qaida, the freedom to operate. Even at the level of the American public, there was a voluble emotional backlash against Pakistan for its alleged complicity with the “terrorist” groups.

The signals to Islamabad were both tough and ominous. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz was quoted by the New York Times on its front page saying that US action will be aimed at “removing the sanctuaries and support systems” and “ending states which sponsor terrorism.” Senator Joseph Biden, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was also quoted as having warned Pakistan that it must decide whether “it is a friend or an enemy.”

The “belligerent” mood of the Administration was further stoked by the American media which openly talked of “choosing sides” as the only option for Pakistan. Islamabad had to decide whether it wanted to be a “partner” or a “target.” In its editorial on 13 September, the New York Times stated that Pakistan was the only country which, “despite international sanctions,” had been sustaining the Taliban over the last five years.

According to another report, the Bush administration officials had made it clear that “they will not be satisfied with condolences and boilerplate offers of help from Pakistan.” President Musharraf was among the very first international leaders to be told that failure to cooperate in the fight against global terror would put his country on a collision course with the US.

Secretary of State Colin Powell telephoned him late in the evening of 12 September, asking for Pakistan’s full support and cooperation in fighting terrorism. In a somber message “from one general to another,” he conveyed to President Musharraf that “the American people would not understand if Pakistan did not cooperate with the US in fighting terrorism.” President Musharraf took no time in pledging the needed support and cooperation.

On 13 September, Powell said that the United States was now prepared to go after terrorist networks and “those who have harbored, supported and aided that network,” wherever they were found.

The same day, President Bush while appreciating Pakistan’s readiness to cooperate spoke of giving it a “chance to participate” in “hunting down the people who committed the acts of terrorism.” According to a senior US official, Pakistan was told that “it isn’t what you say, it’s what you do.”

● The Reckoning:-

Pakistan was thus under tremendous pressure to comply with the US demand to sever its relations with the Taliban and to assist in apprehending Osama bin Laden. Through UN resolutions, Washington had already built an international consensus on combating terrorism which Pakistan could not ignore. Given the prevailing mood in Washington, any reservation or reluctance on Pakistan’s part would have been seen as “defiance” and triggered grave consequences including economic sanctions and possibly military reprisal.

For a military government, “defiance” was the last thing it could afford. The distinct possibility was that the US might even contemplate use of force against identified terrorist cells in Pakistan. According to Barnett R. Rubin, a political scientist at New York University, “Pakistan could only be a full partner, or a target,” and didn’t really have a third option. “There is no more being a friend of the United States and of Osama bin Laden,” he said.

Faced with serious domestic and regional problems, Pakistan’s military ruler, now had a clear signal from Washington that if Islamabad did not choose to cooperate with the United States, it

could find itself a target in any retaliation for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It was indeed a moment of reckoning for Pakistan.

After a meeting of cabinet ministers and senior military officers, President Musharraf addressed the nation on 19 September, in which he reassured his US counterpart of Pakistan's "unstinted support" in the fight against terrorism. He spelt out three main elements of support that the US expected from Pakistan. These included sharing of intelligence information, use of air space and logistical support.

In practical terms, however, Pakistan was required to do much more. It was asked to seal its border with Afghanistan, cut off fuel supplies to the Taliban, and block any activities or movements of Al-Qaida members. According to some reports, the list of demands was exhaustive, and included:

- i) Stop Al-Qaeda operations on the Pakistani border, intercept arms shipments through Pakistan and all logistical support for bin Laden.
- ii) Blanket over-flights and landing rights for US planes.
- iii) Access to Pakistan's naval bases, airbases and borders.
- iv) Immediate intelligence and immigration information.
- v) Curb all domestic expression of support for terrorism against the United States, its friends and allies.
- vi) Cut off fuel supply to the Taliban and stop Pakistani volunteers going into Afghanistan to join the Taliban.
- vii) Pakistan was to break diplomatic relations with the Taliban and assist the US to destroy bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network.

Although Islamabad did not seem to have any other option, the immediate and unconditional reversal in Pakistan's "established" policies surprised even the Americans. "Astonishingly, within the course of a week, the military government took an about-turn to become a lynchpin in the US-led military operation against Afghanistan." It was all done in the "best national interest," the government claimed.

However, Pakistan's post-9/11 "turnaround" was not the result of any considered "institutional" policy review. There was no parliament in place at that time. There were no consultations at any level, nor did the military government make any visible effort to build a political or quasi-political consensus on abandoning its policy which for more than two decades had constituted the mainstay of its "strategic end-game" in the region.

No matter how necessary or justified the policy "turnaround" was, it only showed the *ad hoc* and arbitrary nature of the decision-making process in Pakistan on crucial national security and foreign policy issues during the days immediately after 11 September 2001. This was also reminiscent of the earlier policy of recognizing and supporting the Taliban regime.

In Pakistan, vital policy-formulation and management issues have always been the exclusive prerogative of those wielding military power. This reality was never lost upon Washington which

consistently “engaged” with and had “honeymoon” phases with Pakistan only when it was under a military or military-controlled government.

President Musharraf in his own authority and “wisdom” not only rolled back the “controversial” policy of support for the “oppressive and reactionary regime” in Afghanistan but also decided to become part of the evolving US “strategic end-game” in the region. He gave the American forces complete access into Pakistani territory, and started a full-fledged war against terrorism in his country.

- **The Trade-Off:-**

9/11 represented a critical threshold in Pakistan’s foreign policy. In President Musharraf’s own words, “9/11 came as a thunderbolt” that presented (him) acute challenges as well as opportunities. He was right in claiming that he had to “absorb external pressure and mold domestic opinion” in readjusting Pakistan’s policies to the new global environment. He chose, and rightly so, to avoid the “wrong side” of a “wounded” super power, and made Pakistan a vital ally in the US-led anti-terrorism coalition.

Pakistan’s prominence in the international community increased significantly as it assumed its new role as a pivotal player in the global war on terror and made a commitment to eliminate terrorist camps on its own territory. It started receiving special attention in Washington and in European capitals. In a US effort to shore up the Musharraf government, sanctions relating to Pakistan’s 1998 nuclear tests and 1999 military coup were quickly waived.

In October 2001, substantial US aid began flowing into Pakistan. Direct assistance program included aid for health, education, food, “democracy promotion,” child labor elimination, counter-narcotics, border security and law enforcement, as well as trade preference benefits. The United States also supported grant, loan, and debt rescheduling programs for Pakistan by the various major international financial institutions.

During his visit to Islamabad on 16 October 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell was effusive in acknowledging President Musharraf’s “bold and courageous action” against “international terrorism.” According to him, President Bush had asked him to visit Pakistan, and to “demonstrate our enduring commitment to our relationship with Pakistan....We are also looking forward to strengthening our cooperation on a full range of bilateral and regional issues....we’re truly at the beginning of a strengthened relationship, a relationship that will grow and thrive in the months and years ahead.”

In the spring of 2002, US military and law enforcement personnel began engaging in direct, low-profile efforts to assist Pakistani security forces in tracking and apprehending fugitive Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters on Pakistani territory. Since then, Pakistan claims to have already remanded to US custody more than 700 fugitives.

In a major policy address to the nation on 12 January 2002, President Musharraf announced far-reaching measures to root out “extremism, violence and fundamentalism” from Pakistan’s society and to restore its “true image” as a forward-looking and moderate Islamic state. He reaffirmed that Pakistan’s behavior would always be “in accordance with international norms.” Condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, the President said, “Pakistan will not allow its territory to be used for any terrorist activity anywhere in the world,” and vowed that inside Pakistan, an environment of “tolerance, maturity, responsibility, patience and understanding” will be promoted.

Subsequently, he banned numerous militant groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad. Both had been blamed for terrorist violence in Kashmir and India and were designated as terrorist organizations under US law. In the wake of this policy shift, thousands of Muslim extremists were arrested and detained though many of them were later released.

In 2003, a five-year US \$3 billion aid package was announced for Pakistan to be disbursed in annual instalments of \$600 million each commencing from FY 2005, which is split evenly between military and economic aid. Besides extending grants to Pakistan totaling \$1 billion during the first three years after 9/11, the US also wrote off \$1 billion in debt. In June 2004, President Bush designated Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally of the United States, a move that in all respects was more symbolic than practical.

A framework agreement on trade and investment was signed in June 2003, and the two countries also commenced negotiations on a bilateral investment treaty. On security, the US approved a \$1.2 billion arms-sale package that included roughly \$950 million for the purchase of P3C Orion aircraft.

In March 2005, President Bush authorized the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan. This arrangement involves the sale of 18 F-16s in the first instance with Pakistan having an option to purchase a further 18, and an offer to upgrade Pakistan’s existing F-16 fleet. The US also reinstated a military-training program for Pakistani officers in its military institutions.

The Departments of State and Defense publicly acknowledged Pakistan’s role and “unprecedented” levels of cooperation in terms of allowing the US military access to its air space and bases, helping to identify and detain extremists, and tightening the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Top American officials regularly praised Pakistan’s anti-terrorism efforts. One of them, William Wechsler credited Musharraf with “great courage,” and for making after 9/11, “one of the bravest decisions taken in the past ten years by any foreign leader, which involved from the top down to completely reversing Pakistan’s policy towards the Taliban.”

The improved relations, they said, came about because of President Pervez Musharraf’s actions since the 11 September 2001, attacks — assisting with the hunt for Osama bin Laden, cooperating with the investigation into the weapons network of Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan and agreeing to elections in 2007.

There were others in Washington who had a different view. Some analysts in the US call Musharraf's efforts "cosmetic, ineffective, and the result of international pressure rather than a genuine recognition of the threat posed." Former CIA Middle East operative, now a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Reuel Marc Gerecht warns the United States to remain skeptical of Musharraf's "intentions" and what he alleges as "his double game."

The Bush Administration has also occasionally voiced similar concern and asserted that Musharraf was not doing enough. Although Washington is aware of the president's limitations and the personal perils he faces, as demonstrated by the three abortive assassination attempts on him two years ago, its consistent refrain is that he ought to do more.

According to the Economist, "the biggest political threats to Mr. Musharraf come from militant religious groups hiding in rebellious areas such as the western province of Baluchistan." Indeed, President Musharraf walks a fine line; he wins respect abroad for helping the war on terror and sustaining talks with India over the disputed province of Kashmir, "but such moves have earned him few allies, not to mention the assassination attempts from al-Qaida."

- **The Geo-politics:-**

The challenge to Pakistan's foreign policy resulting from its "moment of reckoning" is manifold and not without serious implications for its long-term geo-strategic security and economic interests. It cannot change its geography, nor escape from the fallout of this volatile region's turbulent political history.

It must accept and deal with all realities, pleasant or unpleasant, in its neighborhood. This requires consistent vigilance and careful conduct of its relations not only with its immediate neighbors but also with the major global powers which now have enormous stakes in the stability of this region.

Located as it is at the confluence of some of the most important but volatile regions of the world, Pakistan enjoys an unrivalled relevance as a factor of regional and global stability. Its strategic location was pivotal to the global dynamics of the Cold War era making it a major player in dismantling what the free world once called the "evil empire" of the former Soviet Union.

Its geographical location has always had a predominant influence on Pakistan's personality and conduct as a state. Since its independence, Pakistan's foreign policy has been determined primarily by its geo-political environment and concomitant compulsions of national security and territorial integrity. It has always had to respond to exceptional challenges inherent in its ever-volatile regional and global environment.

In the process, Pakistan has encountered incessant challenges and experienced wars and territorial setbacks. It lost half the country, and even today, it continues to live in a hostile neighborhood. Above all, the post- 9/11 scenario has placed it on the global radar screen in a very negative image as "the breeding ground" of "religious extremism, violence and militancy."

This negative perception complicates things for Pakistan both domestically and externally, and limits its policy options. In recent years, grave crises and acute problems have proliferated in the volatile region in a manner that has not only made Pakistan the focus of world attention and anxiety but also forced it to make difficult choices in its perennial struggle for security and survival as an independent state.

The internationally recognized principles of inter-state relations are also as immutable as geography. These principles, which constitute the essence of every civilized country's foreign policy, include non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, the right to self-determination and peaceful settlement of disputes.

Since its independence, Pakistan's foreign policy has been marked by a complex balancing process in the context of this region's turbulent political history, its religious heritage, its geo-strategic importance, its untapped economic potential, and the gravity and vast array of its problems with their impact on the global security environment.

The India-Pakistan adversarial equation with all its ramifications has had a fundamental impact on Pakistan's foreign policy, on its security perception, on its domestic situation and on its international relations. The two countries have fought wars and have remained perennially locked in a confrontational mode with ever-escalating military budgets at the cost of their peoples' socio-economic wellbeing.

In 1971, taking advantage of an entirely domestic political crisis in Pakistan, India intervened militarily subverting its independence and territorial integrity. It dismembered Pakistan. This tragedy was the worst that could happen to any country in contemporary society.

Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979, Pakistan again became a key ally of the US and also the front-line state in the last and decisive battle of the Cold War which hastened the collapse of the Soviet Union and its symbol the "Berlin Wall."

In most cases, Pakistan was able to accomplish its foreign policy goals rooted in its unique geo-political environment and concomitant compulsions of national security. But in some cases, as the 9/11 watershed later proved, its policies conceived and nurtured without taking the political leadership into confidence did not stand the test of time, and had to be re-adjusted or reversed altogether. History alone will judge why and how we adopted those policies.

- **The Afghan Nettle:-**

"It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own

part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us.” President Woodrow Wilson: Fourteen points Speech to Congress, 8 January 1918.

No doubt, Pakistan found itself in this unenviable situation because of the protracted turmoil in Afghanistan and its alleged “association” with the Taliban. But one must also ask why and how Afghanistan came to be linked to the tragic events of 9/11. The answer lies in the way the international community had treated Afghanistan ever since the end of the Cold War through ostracism, indifference and neglect.

The genesis of the Afghan crisis is rooted in the chaos and conflict that engulfed this unfortunate country in the aftermath of the Soviet Afghan war. The tragedy of 11 September 2001 becomes relevant to the Afghan crisis only as an epilogue of this sad chapter which, till now, remains unclosed from the previous century.

It would be historically inaccurate to circumscribe the Afghan crisis within the context of the 9/11 tragedy alone. The truth is that Afghanistan has been in a state of crisis for over two decades. It is a crisis, however, which changed the course of history, but at tremendous costs to the Afghans themselves.

For decades, the people of Afghanistan had been the victims of a foreign occupation and a long fratricidal civil war. Instead of promoting inter-factional peace and reconciliation through a non-discriminatory approach and a policy of engagement, the world community deepened the Afghan chasm by resorting to punitive and partisan measures.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, instead of giving it the help it deserved for having been used as the final battleground of the Cold War, the international community abandoned the Afghans leaving them at the mercy of their fate and allowing their country to remain engulfed in a state of chaos and conflict.

The then elected government in Pakistan tried to encourage and facilitate the Afghans to develop a broad-based and multi-ethnic political dispensation. Efforts were made to persuade the warring factions to resolve their differences through dialogue and reconciliation. The Islamabad Accord, signed by all the Afghan parties in 1991, remains a testimony to Islamabad’s commitment to a genuine home-grown peace process in Afghanistan.

In spite of solemnly swearing by this Accord, inside Islam’s holiest shrine in Mecca, the Afghan warlords motivated by their hunger for power broke it, unleashing war and cruelty on their own country and people. Pakistan persevered in its efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan, but the fractious nature of Afghan political and social landscape always got in the way.

Even when the Taliban were in power, Pakistan, again under an elected government, continued its efforts to bring about a negotiated solution to the Afghan conflict. In 1997 and 1998, Pakistan had been involved in an intensive diplomacy to find a political settlement that would bring about a broad-based, multi-ethnic and truly representative government in Afghanistan.

Even before 9/11, the UN Security Council was used to punish the Taliban through economic and other sanctions which not only prolonged the conflict in Afghanistan but also ostracized the Taliban in a manner that only deepened their linkages with terrorist outfits.

While the Afghans continued to suffer, the Taliban who controlled more than percent of the territory became increasingly obstinate, intransigent and irrational. Their isolation and ostracism drove them into the arms of Al-Qaida – a group of non-Afghan runaway dissidents from their own countries who could not find a safer haven than the rugged mountains of Afghanistan.

Once the world decided to turn its back on Afghanistan, the Taliban were left with no incentive to cooperate with the world. While the international community continued to demonize the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and his associates took advantage of the Afghan “tradition of hospitality and friendship” and abused their trust to spread terror across the globe. The continued turmoil in Afghanistan provided an ideal breeding ground for global terrorism and extremism.

History is witness to the fact that the tragedy of 9/11 was only a logical epilogue to the unclosed chapter of the long Afghan tragedy. Had the US not walked away from Afghanistan after the Soviet pullout, perhaps the history of our world today would have been different. If the world had remained engaged with the people of Afghanistan, providing them strength and succor to change the policies of their government, the situation today might have been totally different.

On their part, however, the Taliban were also, regrettably, far removed from the global realities to comprehend the severe consequences of their own “self-righteous” attitude and rigidity of their “moral world view.”

For them, “hospitality” to Osama bin Laden was their traditional and cultural imperative but this self-serving logic could never make sense to anyone in the contemporary world. Their tarnished image and medieval practices provided an easy target for exploitation to different global players including India for their own self-serving reasons.

But the fact remains that opportunities were missed in managing the Afghan imbroglio for good reasons as well as bad, and the unpalatable consequences could have been avoided if a country as chaotic and as primitive as Afghanistan had been treated with greater care and compassion, and assisted in its gradual transition to global standards of “conduct and behavior.”

Indeed, the Afghans are not the only victims of their tragedy. Pakistan as the key front-line state in the Afghan war suffered irreparably in multiple ways in terms of refugee influx, socio-economic burden, rampant terrorism and protracted conflict in its border areas with Afghanistan.

The Afghan crisis, both during and post-Soviet occupation era had a direct impact on Pakistan’s social, cultural, political, economic and strategic interests. For decades, Pakistan was burdened with millions of Afghan refugees and afflicted by a culture of drugs and guns, commonly known as the “Kalashnikov” culture, which has since then been tearing apart its social and political fabric. For years before 9/11, the world perceived a nexus between developments in Afghanistan and those in Pakistan. As Afghanistan drifted into “obscurantism” and became a safe haven for

terrorists, the world became increasingly suspicious of Pakistan as the real source of inspiration for violence and militancy, and labelled religious schools in Pakistan as the breeding ground for extremist forces.

- **The Dilemma:-**

“Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.” Oscar Wilde

In the aftermath of 9/11, Pakistan is once again a frontline state, and a pivotal partner of the United States in its war on terror. As a battleground of this war, Pakistan could not escape the fallout of the crisis in the form of a heavy toll on its already volatile socio-economic environment as a result of protracted violence, instability, displacement, trade and production slowdown, export stagnation, investor hesitation, and concomitant law and order situation.

This was the beginning of another painful chapter in Pakistan’s turbulent political history. In the blinking of an eye, Pakistan was abandoning its decades old policy and orientation. It had become the center of world attention after the 9/11 as a major player in the war on terror and was seen both as a source of the problem as well as the key to its solution.

Although “by allying himself with America’s war on terror,” General Musharraf had managed to secure “de facto international acceptance for his 1999 coup,” he faced the “dilemma” of his life in having to maintain a delicate balance between the US demands and an expected backlash from internal militant and religious organizations. It was a difficult task but he did manage to ride over the storm by making it very clear that Pakistan will not get involved in any military operations beyond its geographical boundaries.

US military action in Afghanistan started almost within a month after the 11 September attacks as the Taliban Government refused to meet American demands of closing alleged terrorist training camps, handing over the leaders of the Al-Qaida network, and return of all foreign nationals, including American citizens detained in Afghanistan.

Pakistan’s religious as well as other political parties made noises against US military action against the Taliban regime and use of Pakistani soil. They were not only against attacking Afghanistan from Pakistan soil, but were also against offending a “brotherly” neighbor, whom Pakistan had supported against the Soviet Union at the cost of burdening itself with a large number of refugees.

General Musharraf made efforts to persuade the country’s political and religious leadership to support an alliance with the United States but was only partially successful in his efforts. Liberal-minded politicians agreed to fully back the government while leaders of some hardline Islamic parties were not happy. Several groups threatened to start a countrywide uprising in protest against any US attack on the Taliban.

Given the intensity of the US pressure and his perception of Pakistan’s long-term security interests, President Musharraf took the decision to comply with the US demands, and agreed not

only to abandon Afghanistan's ruling Taliban but also to cooperate with the US in its military strikes against Osama bin Laden. The US was allowed the use of Pakistan's airspace for missile and aerial strikes against targets in Afghanistan.

There were fears that this situation might provoke Muslim sentiment in Pakistan to topple the Musharraf regime. It didn't happen that way. He remained unscathed and managed the crisis authoritatively. Meanwhile, the Americans and their coalition partners continued their military attacks in Afghanistan with relentless intensity. The Taliban regime crumbled and a transitional government was installed in its place under the Bonn Accords.

Pakistan's dilemma did not end there. On the one hand, it is being continuously blamed by the Karzai government for allegedly harboring Taliban "insurgents," while on the other, it faces unending criticism from the US "for not doing enough" to secure its borders and arrest Taliban leaders, including the elusive Mullah Omar.

President Musharraf rejects these accusations as "humbug and nonsense;" and claims Pakistan's security forces have killed a number of high-ranking Taliban and al-Qaida leaders. His foreign minister maintains that the anti-terrorism drive inside the country has been a "great success." According to him, over 700 suspected al-Qaida operatives and affiliates including some of its top leaders like Abu Zubaydah, Ramzi bin Al-Shibh and Khalid Shaikh Mohammad have been either arrested or killed.

Pakistan became engaged in a full scale war within its own territory. It deployed roughly 80,000 troops since last autumn along its Afghan border, most of them in the desolate mountains of North and South Waziristan where al-Qaida militants had reportedly been operating alongside Taliban sympathizers. It also pledged to work more closely with NATO-led forces in southern Afghanistan.

The government and the militants in the restive North Waziristan agency subsequently concluded a peace agreement. In the preceding weeks, the two sides had been observing a ceasefire while the tribal Jirga worked on a settlement. If this agreement endures, it will be a big relief for the government and its beleaguered troops in the rugged terrains of Waziristan.

Officially, Pakistan remains committed to "close and friendly relations" with Afghanistan as a foreign policy priority. It supports the Bonn process and the Karzai regime in its efforts for "national reconciliation and development." In the past two years, despite occasional mutual recriminations, the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have improved in diverse sectors. Pakistan has also pledged \$100 million aid to Afghanistan for its reconstruction and institution building.

- **The Image:-**

The sum-total of Pakistan's post-9/11 foreign policy is its new identity on the global radar screen as the "hotbed" of religious extremism and terrorism, and its frontline role as the "ground zero"

of the war on terror, which has not only made it the focus of world attention and anxiety but also forced it to make difficult choices in its perennial struggle for security and survival as an independent state.

President Musharraf has himself acknowledged publicly on several occasions that Pakistan now has a serious image problem which needs to be addressed by “moderating” its national culture and behavior.

According to him, while the domestic environment was as it was and the US coalition forces were battling al Qaida/Taliban in the Afghan countryside, Pakistan was facing accusations of being a source of terrorist activity in Afghanistan and in occupied Kashmir, as well as nuclear proliferation, and also being “an intolerant militant extremist society.” He admitted that his “single-handed” efforts to project Pakistan as a progressive, moderate Islamic state had not succeeded sufficiently.”

Woefully, wherever and whenever there is an act of “violence or terrorism” in any part of the world, howsoever remote it might be, Pakistan finds itself linked in one way or the other. Last year’s London bombings and again the latest security alerts in London and elsewhere in the world are stark reminders of this reality.

No matter how much Pakistan now tries to wear the mask of “enlightened moderation,” continuous sectarian violence and terrorism-related problems have tainted its image on the global radar screen as the breeding ground of violence and militancy. This perception impacts adversely on Pakistan and its nationals living or travelling abroad.

There could not have been a gloomier depiction of a country today than what the Economist in a recent Pakistan-focused survey wrote: “Think about Pakistan, and you might get terrified. Few countries have so much potential to cause trouble regionally and worldwide. One-third of its 165 million people live in poverty, and only half of them are literate. The country’s politics yo-yo between weak civilian governments and unrepresentative military ones currently on offer under Pervez Musharraf, the president and army chief, albeit with some democratic wallpapering.”

Yet another comment is: “The state is weak. Islamabad and the better bits of Karachi are orderly and, for the moment, booming. Most of the rest is a mess. In the western province of Baluchistan, which takes up almost half of Pakistan’s land mass, an insurgency is simmering. In the never-tamed tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, the army is waging war against Islamic fanatics.”

Assessments such as these may be biased but they are not entirely inaccurate. It is ironic that Pakistan, which has played so formidable a role in the fight against global terror, should be pilloried for extremism. A lot has to do with its tarnished image. This can be altered through far-reaching reforms to ensure a return to genuine and inclusive democracy rooted in the will of the people, constitutional supremacy, rule of law, institutional integrity, a culture of political consistency and a civilianized body politic.

- **The Scourge:-**

“Terrorism poses the most urgent threat to many countries, including the most powerful states. For many of us, the terrorist threat is close and personal. Terrorism threatens Pakistan’s vital national interests and objectives. We have thus participated actively in the unprecedented campaign against it. Pakistan has led the way in this campaign. Our counter-terrorist campaign is ongoing.” President General Pervez Musharraf; Address to UN General Assembly, September 22, 2004

Terrorism is the new scourge afflicting our world and a phenomenon that transcends all boundaries which, in recent years, has affected the political, economic and security environment of all regions, countries and societies. Unfortunately, the war on terror has not gone beyond retribution and retaliation.

According to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, terrorism is the product of what he once described as “a broader mix of problems caused by bad governments, opportunistic politicians and militant leaders who exploit grievances”. He may have changed his mind now but at one time, he also believed that “when there are no legitimate means of addressing the massive and systemic political, economic and social inequalities, an environment is created in which peaceful solutions often lose out against extreme and violent alternatives.”

President Musharraf also subscribes to this view and believes that terrorism in essence stems from unresolved disputes and unaddressed issues that give rise to forces of hatred and violence. However, one cannot deny that in recent years, most of the perpetrators of violence were trained “militants” and dissident runaways from their own countries and had a political agenda of their own in pursuing their terrorist activities.

Unfortunately, in the aftermath of 9/11, the detractors of Islam found an opportunity to contrive stereotypes to malign Islam and to mobilize an attitudinal climate of antipathy against its adherents by focusing obsessively on the religion of the individuals and organizations allegedly involved in terrorist activities.

The enthusiasm with which Islam was maligned obscured the truth that those responsible for the acts of violence were dissident fugitives from their respective countries with misguided, obscurantist political agendas which they were determined to pursue through terrorist activities. Terrorism will not disappear through retaliation and retribution alone. To address the underlying causes of this menace, the world community needs to build global harmony through mutual understanding and tolerance, promote peace and stability, pursue poverty eradication and sustainable development and ensure socio-economic justice, political freedom, genuine democracy and respect for fundamental rights of people, particularly the inalienable right of self-determination.

War on terror should not remain confined to nabbing or killing the perpetrators or changing a government in one country or the other. It should be waged at all levels – national, regional and global – against oppression, injustice and instability which fuel hatred and violence.

In combating terrorism, the foremost responsibility lies with national governments which must re-order their priorities and focus on the socio-economic uplift of their societies. People-centered development, not military arsenals, should be their priority. Education must become a strategic need and priority of every developing nation.

In the context of Pakistan, a special effort is needed to purge the society of extremism and obscurantism which have crept into its ranks over the decades of instability and poverty in its region. This is not an easy task. A sustained and persuasive effort will have to be made not only by the government but also all influential segments of Pakistan's society.

Pakistan continues to pay a heavy price for being the "ground zero" in the war on terror. It has suffered in terms of human lives and huge economic losses. Its leaders have been targets of suicide assassination attempts. The government in Pakistan has repeatedly admitted that terrorism cannot be fought by force alone. "The ultimate battle in this war will be fought in the hearts and minds of the people."

Pakistan has consistently stressed the need to identify and actively address the root causes of violence such as the long outstanding issues of Palestine and Kashmir. But charity must begin at home. While maintaining the pressure on global players for resolving disputes and redressing injustice, it must also focus on its home-grown problems that have spurred extremist violence. Here again a dispassionate appraisal is required into the causes of violence and extremism so that prescriptive measures can be determined. Instead of using military force against its own people, the government must engage them politically through the country's political and tribal influential. It must seek to build bridges of peace and harmony within its society, and promote an environment of mutual tolerance and accommodation through better education, national confidence building and reconciliation.

- **The Hinge:-**

Despite the cheered history of their relationship, Pakistan and the US have been "hinged" together as friends and allies for more than 50 years. For much of its history, this relationship has lacked continuity, a larger conceptual framework, and a shared vision beyond the "narrowly based and vaguely defined" priorities.

From the early days of its independence, Pakistan had a direction clearly charted for its future relationship with the US by the value system that it cherished, and indeed by the Quaid-e-Azam himself. Speaking to the first US ambassador to Pakistan on 22 February 1948, he described Pakistan and the US as equal partners in defense of democracy and freedom.

Emerging from the trauma of sub-continental turmoil, the young state of Pakistan, imbued with Islamic values and a moderate and progressive outlook, gravitated naturally to the pole that stood for freedom and democracy in that intensely bi-polar world.

In making that deliberate choice, Pakistan was guided not only by the Quaid's vision but also by its over-riding security and economic interests. On its part, the US looked at Pakistan and its special geo-political importance as a strategic asset in its "containment" policy against Soviet expansionism.

It has been a curious relationship which never had any conflict of interest and yet experienced interruptions in its intensity as well as integrity. The "hinge" was purely one of mutual expediency as both sides were always aiming at different goals and objectives to be derived from their relationship.

For Pakistan, the issues of security and survival in a turbulent and hostile regional environment and its problems with India were the overriding policy goals in its relations with Washington. The US policy interests in Pakistan, on the other hand, have traditionally encompassed a wide range of regional and global issues, especially nuclear and missile proliferation, India-Pakistan hostility, drugs trafficking, democracy, human rights, and economic reform.

According to a US Congressional report, "a stable, democratic, economically thriving Pakistan is vital to US interests in Asia." But the report also acknowledged that the US-Pakistan relationship had been marked by "periods of cooperation and discord" and "was transformed by the September 2001 attacks on the United States and the ensuing enlistment of Pakistan as a pivotal ally in US-led counter-terrorism efforts."

No matter how much praise is showered upon Islamabad by the top US officials for its role in this campaign, "serious doubts exist in Washington about Islamabad's commitment to some core US interests in the region." The US does not hide its perception of Pakistan "as a base for terrorist groups and their supporters operating in Kashmir, India, and Afghanistan."

There are also concerns in the US about Pakistan's serious domestic problems, including the democratic and institutional logjam, terrorism and violence and human rights violations. Similarly, congressional circles are also aware of Pakistan's difficulties as a result of its "unprecedented counterterrorism military operations" in the traditionally autonomous tribal areas. These concerns are, however, overshadowed by Washington's expectations from Pakistan "to continue to do more in fighting terrorists."

In June 2004, President Bush designated Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally of the United States under Section 517 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, a move that may be more symbolic than practical. On the other hand, allegations that Pakistan had been a source of "onward nuclear proliferation" to North Korea, Iran, and Libya will continue to complicate the future of U.S.-Pakistan relations.

This unusual relationship has, no doubt, seen ups and downs with rotating phases of "engagement and estrangement" depending on the nature of regional and global dynamics. This

tradition has generated its own anti-Americanism, which is triggered by a perception that the United States has not been a reliable ally and has not helped Pakistan in its problems with India. The first of the three major U.S. “engagements” with Pakistan occurred during the height of the Cold War, from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s; the second was during the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s, again lasting about a decade; and the third engagement dates to 11 September 2001 and relates to the ongoing war on terrorism.

And every US “engagement” with Pakistan was issue-specific and not based on shared perspectives. The spells of close ties between the two countries have been, and may continue to be, single-issue engagements of limited or uncertain duration. (Cold war, Afghanistan and now terrorism)

Interestingly, during each engagement or “honeymoon” period, Pakistan had either a military or military-controlled government, whereas in Washington, the policy direction on Pakistan was in the hands of a Republican White House with the Pentagon and the CIA playing a central role. Most of the “estrangement” phases of the US-Pakistan relationship happened when the US had a Democrat Administration and Pakistan an elected civilian government.

Unpredictability has been another consistent feature of this relationship. The US would lose interest in remaining engaged in any cooperation once it achieved its objectives vis-à-vis Pakistan. “Pakistan was either consigned to benign neglect or hit with a succession of punitive sanctions that left in their trail resentment and a sense of betrayal.”

History seems to be repeating itself again. As Pakistan was faithfully engaged in fulfilling its post-9/11 obligations, the US entered into a long-term defense pact with India last year as part of its evolving multi-dimensional “strategic partnership” which it values for various reasons, including India’s phenomenal market size and its great unrivalled potential as a “counterweight” against China.

This was an ominous development which would not only destabilize the critical balance of power in the region but also reinforces the prevalent public perception in Pakistan of traditional US insensitivity towards Pakistan’s genuine security concerns. The deepening Indo-US strategic partnership with all its ramifications has raised serious fears in Pakistan about its impact on the overall regional security environment, including prospects of durable peace in South Asia.

There is a general feeling all over the world that the US was not a “steadfast and reliable” friend and that over the decades, the US neglect and “self-serving” exploitation of its friends had contributed to most of the current problems in the region.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Pakistan is once again a pivotal “front-line” state fighting terrorism as a key US ally and partner. The effectiveness of its role and capability in this process will, however, be predicated on the overall political, socio-economic and security environment of South Asia and on how the US engages itself in helping the region to overcome its problems.

- **The Region:-**

“With nuclear weapons now in the possession of both countries, it is small wonder that people describe South Asia as “the most dangerous place on Earth.” Today, peace in South Asia is hostage to one accident, one act of terrorism, one strategic miscalculation” President General Pervez Musharraf: Address to UN General Assembly, September 2002)

There could not be a more poignant reminder of South Asia’s critical importance in today’s world as a factor of global stability.

Today’s world is in turmoil. South Asia is at the root of most of its problems ranging from interstate and civil conflicts to unresolved disputes, human tragedies, violence, extremism and terrorism. This region was globally important during the Cold War era and remains relevant to world’s peace and security in today’s changed environment.

With overt nuclearization of the sub-continent, South Asia’s problems are no longer an exclusive concern of the region itself. They now have a worrisome global dimension which raises the major powers’ stakes in the issues of peace and security in this region. No other region in the world today is as volatile and unstable as South Asia with its legacy of India-Pakistan hostility and conflicts and its new crucial role in the post-9/11 scenario.

In recent years, policy makers in world’s major capitals, especially Washington, have been exploring policy options in terms of their regional and global strategic and economic stakes. This brings in the crucial factor of US “engagement” or “re-engagement” in South Asia’s future and its role in the changing geo-political landscape of the region.

President George W. Bush’s visit to the region was a landmark event representing the new direction of US policy towards South Asia. In New Delhi, he bestowed upon India all that it needed to be acknowledged as a “de facto” nuclear power and to be able eventually to claim a permanent seat in the enlarged UN Security Council. He signed a nuclear deal lifting the decades-long US moratorium on nuclear cooperation with India allowing it access to fuel and technology for its civilian nuclear facilities.

The inevitability of the US-India strategic nexus had long been foreseen and was publicly articulated during Present Clinton’s five-day visit to India in March, 2000. In fact, he laid the foundation of the new relationship by signing a historic document “India-US Vision for the 21st Century” charting a new and purposeful direction for their future relationship in the new century. The Bush administration has now added a strategic dimension to this relationship.

Where does Islamabad stand in this new geo-strategic scenario? The last few years have been a fateful period for Pakistan. A dispassionate though painful soul-searching would reveal that its current relevance to the international community is only as a “breeding ground” for religious extremism and militancy and as a country afflicted with a culture of violence and sectarianism.

This perception not only impairs Pakistan’s global image but also complicates matters for its government in its dealings with friends and foes alike. The US, in particular, sees Pakistan as the

“ground zero” and a pivotal linchpin in its fight against terrorism, and for all purposes, now brackets Pakistan with Afghanistan. This is an unenviable distinction which circumscribes Islamabad’s role both within and beyond the region.

To make things even worse, Pakistan’s image in recent years as a “responsible nuclear state” has been marred by alleged proliferation scandals. US Secretary of State and other senior officials have publicly made it clear that no nuclear deal was possible with Pakistan as, according to them, there were serious “concerns” over its “proliferation” record.

President Bush also left Pakistan in no doubt on this issue when at his joint press conference with President Musharraf in Islamabad on 4 March 2006, he said bluntly that Pakistan should not expect a “civilian nuclear agreement like the one he had signed with India” because they were “two different countries with different needs and different histories and could not be compared to each other.” He also described India as a “great democracy and a responsible nuclear power” which had earned the right to nuclear technology.

The Indo-US defense and strategic alliance will not be without serious implications for the delicate balance of power and stability in the region and might also undermine the ongoing process of nuclear and conventional restraint and stabilization measures which India and Pakistan have been pursuing as part of their “composite dialogue” and mutual confidence building arrangements in recent years.

Besides the nuclear deal as the centerpiece of his visit to New Delhi, President Bush also reached additional agreements encompassing “a long list” of areas, including trade, agriculture, science and technology, energy, environment, defense, combating HIV/Aids, counterterrorism and “strengthening” of democratic institutions in Third World countries. In Pakistan, the only agreements signed were those on the establishment of a US-funded entrepreneurial training Centre and Pakistan’s participation in the US-sponsored container security initiative. No progress was reported on the much trumpeted bilateral investment or free trade arrangements. As against a substantive framework of “strategic partnership” with India, only a “strategic dialogue” mechanism was announced for Pakistan. Even on the four high-profile issues on the Pakistan-US agenda, namely, nuclear technology, democracy, terrorism and Kashmir, the US message was loud and clear. There will be no nuclear cooperation with Pakistan, not even for peaceful purposes, until it re-establishes its non-proliferation credentials.

For Washington, democracy is merely a subject for sermonic discussion and not a priority issue. On terrorism, Pakistan was doing great but still needs to do a lot more. On Kashmir, the US will only encourage a bilateral approach as the only “way forward.” No matter what Islamabad now says to keep face, the fact remains that the US has given it a clear reminder of the changing realities and a new geo-strategic landscape in South Asia. Instead of lamenting the conspicuous contrast in the substance, ambiance and outcome of his visit to India, Pakistan should be grateful to the US President for bringing it face to face with its

real “worth and standing.” Islamabad must also keep in mind that the US is the sole superpower today and also Pakistan’s largest trading partner. It is in Islamabad’s interest to continue to have a strong and enduring relationship with the US.

But this will not be possible unless Pakistan re-establishes its own relevance as a partner not in wars and fighting campaigns but in peace and prosperity. This would also require it to restore its global image and standing as a “democratic” country and a “responsible” nuclear state.

If the turbulent political history of this region has any lessons, Washington, on its part also needs to understand the real issues of peace and security in this region. Its future engagement must not exacerbate those issues. Any step that fuels an arms race with an escalatory effect on the military budgets and arsenals of India and Pakistan is no service to their peoples.

Durable peace between Pakistan and India on the basis of a final and just settlement of the Kashmir issue will not only be a factor of regional and global stability but will also enable the two countries to divert their resources and energies to improving the lives of their peoples, and eradicating poverty and despair from the region.

● The Composite Dialogue:-

While the world was focusing on the post-9/11 campaign against terrorism, India, in a blatant show of brinkmanship, moved all of its armed forces to borders with Pakistan and the Line of Control in Kashmir. Intense diplomatic pressure by the US and other G-8 countries averted what could have been a catastrophic clash between the two nuclear-capable states.

President Musharraf showed utmost flexibility in resuming dialogue with India after declaring a cease-fire along the LoC in November 2003 with several mutual confidence building measures, including Pakistan’s assurances of not letting its territory to be used for any terrorist activity or cross-border infiltration. In January 2004, India and Pakistan resumed their composite dialogue which had been disrupted by the Kargil crisis in 1999.

The 6 January 2004 Islamabad “joint statement” thus became the basis for the new bilateral approach in the current normalization process, which, it was hoped, would lead to a peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides. This agreement was based on two different assumptions for sustained dialogue: for India, it was the prevention of “violence, hostility and terrorism” that will sustain the “composite dialogue;” and for Pakistan, it was the “positive results and simultaneity of progress” on all issues. Notably, there was no common ground in the statement.

Subsequently, President Musharraf tried to recover the “lost ground” by giving his interpretation of the Islamabad statement. According to him, three main elements were inherent in the statement: (i) need for a final settlement of the Kashmir issue; (ii) need for a “composite dialogue” to settle all issues, and (iii) the “linkage and simultaneity” in all the three areas of interest to both sides.

India never acknowledged this unilateral roadmap and instead kept reminding Pakistan of its “solemn” commitment to abjure “violence and terrorism” from its territory. President Musharraf’s unprecedented gestures of flexibility and compromise, including his multiple formulae for resolving the Kashmir issue beyond the UN prescribed solutions based on the inalienable right of self-determination of the people of Kashmir did not cut any ice .

The dialogue process was never immune to domestic and external factors in both countries, and faced its first serious roadblock when citing the 11 July 2006 Mumbai blasts, India suspended the scheduled foreign secretary level talks. The peace process stands once again stalled. The future of this process will now depend on the freshness of political approach that both India and Pakistan will be able to bring in to sustain this process and to make it purposeful. What should be clear to them by now is that in today’s world, there will be no military solution to their problems, nor will militancy bring oppressed people any closer to freedom.

- **The Crunch:-**

As anywhere else in the world, Pakistan’s foreign policy is inextricably linked to its domestic policies and situation. And domestically, Pakistan’s post-independence political history has been replete with endemic crises and challenges that perhaps no other country in the world has experienced.

The tally of Pakistan’s woes includes costly wars and perennial tensions with India, loss of half the country, territorial setbacks, political breakdowns, military take-overs, economic stagnation, social malaise, societal chaos and disintegration, and a culture of violence and extremism.

Proxy wars were fought on Pakistan’s soil. Sectarianism has ripped its society apart. Even places of worship have not been spared as venues of cold-blooded communal and sectarian killings.

In the post-9/11 scenario, terrorism-related problems afflicting Pakistan have placed it on the global radar screen, giving it the unenviable distinction of being one of the epochal “frontlines of the war on terror.” The world watches Islamabad with anxiety and concern as it seek to correct its image. Pakistan’s crucial role in this campaign complicates its tasks, both at home and at regional and global levels.

Islamabad’s problems are no doubt complicated by the current regional configuration with the Americans sitting in Afghanistan, the new ominous Indo-US nexus, India’s resultant strategic ascendancy in the region, its unprecedented influence in Afghanistan with serious nuisance potential against Pakistan, the Baluchistan unrest and the Waziristan turmoil. Pakistan’s borders on all sides are no longer peaceful. The country is going through one of the most serious crises of its independent statehood.

Pakistan's domestic failures have seriously constricted its foreign policy options. Decades of political instability resulting from protracted military rule, institutional paralysis, poor governance, socio-economic malaise, rampant crime and corruption, and general aversion to the rule of law have exacerbated Pakistan's external image and standing. Terrorism is its sole identity now. The country is seen both as a problem and as a key to its solution.

Pakistan will have to remove this perception and take effective measures to improve its global image as a "moderate" and "progressive" country, and as a responsible member of the international community

For a country, Skip to next par domestically as unstable and unpredictable as Pakistan, there cannot be many choices. In today's world, Islamabad's options are limited. In the ultimate analysis, its problems are not external. Its problems are domestic. Putting its house in order is its priority need.

Pakistan needs to overcome its domestic weaknesses through political reconciliation and national confidence-building. The country must return to genuine and inclusive democracy rooted in the will of the people, constitutional supremacy, rule of law and good governance, and a culture of political consistency and institutional integrity. This is how it will correct its image and enhance its regional and global clout as a respectable member of the international community.

The world's major powers also need to recognize that under a democratically elected civilian government and with stable institutions strictly adhering to their constitutional roles, Pakistan will be a more responsible, more reliable, more effective and more appropriate partner of the free world in pursuit of common goals and in defense of shared values.

In Pakistan's external relations, it could best serve its interests by following Hafiz Shiraz's advice for "kindness to friends", "courtesy to enemies" with equal faith in Allama Iqbal's message of "self-pride, self-confidence and dignity." Pakistan needs a low profile foreign policy with greater focus on domestic consolidation.

Q.2 CPEC: prospects and challenges

Ans.2

Introduction

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (here after CPEC) is the flagship of China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative envisioned by president Xi Jinping in 2013 for the economic integration of Eurasia through belts and roads and other infrastructure initiatives. The OBOR is part of China's grand strategy of its peaceful rise as a great power on the global stage through financial initiatives

of \$ 40 billion Silk Road Fund and the 57 members Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to generate new growth engines along the New Silk Road with a win-win and cooperative approach. The OBOR has two international trade connections namely the land based 'Silk Road Economic Belt' and oceangoing '21st -Century Maritime Silk Road; the CPEC is the part of the former one. With the former launch of CPEC between China and Pakistan in April 2015 by President Xi Jinping, the CPEC has got a status of "game changer" or "fate changer" and nationalistic fervor in the political, media and public discourses in Pakistan. The multibillion dollar (US\$ 46 bn) CPEC is a network of roads, railway tracks, oil and gas pipelines, fiber optics for communication, dams, ports, airports and economic zones linking the Western part of China to the Gwadar Port in Baluchistan, Pakistan running some 3000 km from Xinjiang to Baluchistan via Khunjerab Pass in the Northern Parts of Pakistan. Historically the Sino-Pakistan relations have remained more military- oriented, but it seems that a new beginning has begun to make the relationship more economic oriented focusing on trade, investment and energy cooperation. The CPEC has the potential to further deepen the relationship between China and Pakistan both economically and at public level and can change the geopolitics of South Asia connecting China to the Indian Ocean triggering concerns for India as the latter considers the CPEC, Gwadar Port under the control of China can be turned into a permanent Chinese naval facility in the Indian Ocean though it may not be a reality at least at this stage. The CPEC is strategically and economically important both for China and Pakistan. It will pave the way for China to access the Middle East and Africa from Gwadar Port, enabling China to access the Indian Ocean and in return China will support development projects in Pakistan to overcome the latter's energy crises and stabilizing its faltering economy. Additionally, the CPEC could serve as the driver for trade and economic integration between China, Pakistan, Iran, India, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States provided the frosty political atmosphere between Pakistan, India and Afghanistan and to some extent Iran gets improved in the near future. Under the CPEC US\$ 10 billion will be spent on infrastructure development alone that could rejuvenate Pakistan's dilapidated communication and infrastructure, overcome energy crisis and could transport trade goods from Pakistan to China, Middle East and cross the regional states and global level. At this stage CPEC seems to be a bilateral initiative between China and Pakistan, however in the long run it has the prospects to be a multilateral project.

Strategic Significance of CPEC

CPEC as pivot to China's economic and energy security

The CPEC connects China directly to the Indian Ocean and the region of the Middle East from the deep Gwadar Port reducing its existing dependence on the South China Sea as the latter is becoming a contested territory between various regional and global actors and can be choked any time by the competing powers in the Asia-Pacific region. The Gwadar port in Baluchistan

under the Chinese control is only 400 km away from the Strait of Hormuz and is strategically pivot for China in transporting its energy and oil needs from the West Asia reducing its current maritime transportation distance from 12000 km to 3000 km. Accessing the Indian Ocean from the Gwadar Port is inevitable for China as it makes China less vulnerable to its existing Malacca Dilemma and provides the economic security to China to access the West Asia at a time when the Strait of Malacca is increasingly becoming a contested territory among various players including China.

China currently transports 80% of its oil and energy needs through the Malacca Strait and increasingly feels that its economic and energy security interest in the region are under serious threats due to the escalation of tensions between China and the region and global players in South and East China Sea. This is why China is looking for alternative viable transit routes both economically and security wise; the CPEC is the best choice for China linking it directly to the Indian Ocean via Gwadar Port. Under the US policy of rebalance to Asia the region of Asia-Pacific has got an unprecedented strategic importance for the Obama administration and the recently signed Trans Pacific Treaty between US and its allies testifies it. This rebalance policy of the US in the region of Asia-Pacific involves military, economic and strategic focus to the countries of South East Asia including India in shaping its rebalance of the region including South China Sea and the Indian Ocean causing discomfort for China vis-à-vis its economic interests in the region.

- **Regional trade and economic integration:-**

Geopolitically Pakistan is the most suitable economic corridor for trade and transit activities providing a gateway to Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia and West Asia. Its role has remained important both during the cold-war and post-cold war era due to its geostrategic location and is neighbor to the rising economies of the region namely China and India. It can act as an important economic geography for regional trade. However, Pakistan failed miserably to take economic advantage of its strategic location and geography in the region. The existing bilateral trade volume between China and Pakistan is miserably low. The CPEC if extended to India will further enhance trade between China, India and Pakistan. Inclusion of India to the CPEC will further enhance the bilateral trade between China and India to new heights.

The CPEC passing through the regions of China and Pakistan bordering many states could be extended to the countries Central Asia, Afghanistan and West Asia and India. The landlocked and resource rich countries of Central Asia have always set their eyes to access regional markets

including Pakistan, China, India and the countries of West Asia. Both Afghanistan and Tajikistan have transit agreements; CPEC will provide them the opportunity to transport their goods and market them more competitively to the regional and global market fostering regional economic and trade connectivity. Similarly, Pakistan has the desire to access the resource rich region of Central Asia via Afghanistan to meet its energy needs and transports goods to Central Asia. The area through which the PCEC passes is at the crossroad of Asia, South Asian and Central Asia. For the greater benefit of the region and regional integration, the CPEC could be extended to Central Asia including Afghanistan and India opening them to the regional and global market. President Xi Jinping has already made a reference to such an arrangement in future during his address to the Pakistani parliament on his first visit to Pakistan in April, 2015. The changing geopolitical environment demands Pakistan to reorient its trade policy to more export oriented and must search for new markets in its neighborhood including India to boost its economy and the CPEC seems to be the best opportunity for Pakistan to expand its trade with the region of South and Central Asia including China and India.

India has had always desired to have transit route to Afghanistan and Central Asia via Pakistan. However, given the political rivalry between India and Pakistan, the later has denied transit route to India through Pakistan. India as an alternative has focused on Chahbahr Port in Iran to access Afghanistan and Central Asia via Iran reducing its long lasting dependence on Pakistan to access Central Asia. India, Iran and Afghanistan have recently inaugurated the Chabahar Port under the trilateral frame work signaling bypassing Pakistan for a regional trade connection between the three countries. However, the Chahbahar Port is not likely to be a zero-sum game for Pakistan, Pakistan can also be part of Chabahar trilateral arrangement and both Gwadar and Chabahar ports could be linked as regional ports fostering regional trades. The Iranian side has already offered Pakistan to be part of the Chabahar Port trilateral arrangement and not to consider the port as rival to Gwadar Port

Can CPEC be transformed into IICPEC?

Can China Pakistan Economic Corridor be transformed into India/ Iran China Pakistan Economic Corridor (IICPEC)? To address this question one has to understand the recent geopolitical and economic developments in the region of South and Central Asia that could foster the regional environment to transform the CPEC into the IICPEC. The TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India) gas pipeline agreement signed in December 2015 between India, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan signifies the melting of the long existing cold attitude and trust deficit between India and Pakistan and Pakistan and Afghanistan. The concept of TAPI was an old

one but did not get materialize due to the political rivalry between the aforementioned states. Under the TAPI framework gas will be transported from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan to Pakistan and further to India. The TAPI agreement is the harbinger that a similar arrangement can be formed to extend the CPEC to Afghanistan, Central Asia and India.

Despite its strategic location and favorable economic geography, Pakistan has very limited trading activity with both its eastern and north- western neighbors- namely India and Afghanistan. India needs a transit route to trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia via Pakistan and Pakistan desires access to the markets of Central Asian States for its energy needs. Pakistan's access to Central Asia is unlikely unless Pakistan allows Afghanistan the transit route to access India. The CPEC seems to be an opportunity for India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asian States to have North South regional trade connectivity in addition to creating economic avenues for Pakistan. Currently the anathema between India and Pakistan could prevent India to be part of the CPEC. However, India's inclusion to CPEC can be mutually beneficial move for regional cooperation and trust

Building that could ultimately be stimulating in resolving political disputes between India, China and Pakistan amicably. Making India's inclusion to the CPEC will be helpful to allay the doubts between the two neighbors namely India and China toward each other's move in the region. The joint security of the CPEC between China, Pakistan and India can usher a new economic beginning in the region and can bring the countries more closely. China has already indicated that CPEC is not a bilateral move, rather a regional and cross regional move.

The lift of the international sanction on Iran has provided yet another opportunity to trade with Iran and to revive the Iran Pakistan India (IPI) gas pipeline- also known as the peace pipeline. India had left the IPI owing to the US pressure and Pakistan faced similar pressure from the US no to go ahead with the IPI. In his recent visit to Pakistan the Iranian President has stated to revive the IPI gas pipeline and India can again join the IPI as the sanctions on Iran have been lifted for international trade. Both IPI and TAPI are important for regional cooperation and trust building between India, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan extending the CPEC to both India and Iran in addition to the IPI and TAPI will further boost the regional economic integration and allay any mistrust toward the CPEC both by Iran and India. The connectivity between the Chabahr Port of Iran and the Gwadar Port and CPEC and Bangladesh China India Myanmar (BCIM) can foster a new economic and trade beginning between the South, West, Central and East Asia. Iran has already shown its interest for such an arrangement between Gwadar Port and Chahbar Port. The connectivity between Gwadar Port and Chahabar Port will further allay the existing feelings of ambivalence between Iran, India and Pakistan Chahabar Port supported by India and Gawader

Port supported and run by China. In addition to this, the Indian inclusion to CPEC will not provide a justification for India to oppose the project unwarrantedly as India claims that it passes through the disputed territory of Pakistan administered Gilgit-Baltistan. The region of South Asia has remained the least integrated one in the world despite having potential for accelerating economic growth and is rich in natural resources yet faces the energy crises that affect its economy badly. The regional economic cooperation through CPEC and related regional moves could pave the way for cross border electricity and trade cooperation harnessing complementariness in electricity demand patterns and gains from larger market access by removing the regional trade barriers between India, Pakistan and other states of the region including China.

In the lately hosted fifth ministerial conference of Heart of Asia Istanbul Process (HOA-IP) hosted by Pakistan the participation of the top leaders from Kabul, India, Tehran have vowed to regional security situation particularly Afghanistan and its war torn-economy and ways to strengthen cooperation, security challenges and regional economic ties. The participation of top leadership of Afghanistan in the HOA-IP signals a shift in the region from geopolitics to geo-economics. This conference is a fresh start for greater economic links between Central, South Asia and Iran. By changing the transit route policies between Islamabad and Afghanistan, economic development could be brought not only to these two countries but can also foster trade between Central and South Asia in bringing the electricity and gas from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to the region of South Asia (Wayand, 2016). The HOA-IP shows a commitment of the member countries for a broader economic engagement and CPEC could pave the way for such an engagement.

The CPEC could be catalyst for a regional economic integration if India and Iran also become part of it and that is likely to happen soon as China also desires the Indian and Iranian inclusion in the CPEC for a greater peaceful environment in the region. This is why China's entire trade and commerce policy is based on the peace in its neighborhoods and any quarrels between its neighbors would displease China for its trade and commerce initiative in the region. For this reason China is pleading both India and Pakistan to live peacefully and come closer for trade and economic ventures in the region setting aside their political differences. The recent trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan Chabahar port is yet another harbinger for regional and cross region trade connectivity given the condition that these developments are not taken a zero-sum game in the region of South Asia and West Asia. With the opening of Chabahar port there are strong prospects that the two ports namely Gwadar and Chabahar could be linked

to each other to forge regional and cross regional trade among the countries of South, Central, West and East Asia narrowing the existing gap of regional connectivity between these regions.

Challenges to CPEC:-

Despite its strategic significance both for China and Pakistan, the CPEC is not without challenges. It is surrounded by regional security and political challenges for its smooth execution.

Regional and internal security challenges

Regional security could be the biggest issue to the CPEC as it passes through some of the areas facing the biggest security challenges. The biggest challenge to the CPEC is the regional security environment; specifically the Afghanistan conundrum. China's huge investment in the region is hinged on the peace and stability both in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Western parts of China. This is why China is actively pursuing to bring the Taliban to negotiating table within the quadrilateral framework between China, Pakistan, US and Afghanistan. The security situation in Afghanistan is getting worse day by day and even could be devastating after the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan as the Taliban have refused to come to the negotiating table initiated by the quadrilateral forum comprising. After the killing of the Mullah Mansoor, the Taliban leader there seems to be few chances that the Taliban could come to the negotiations. Moreover, Pakistan has recently stated that after the killing of the Taliban leader in Pakistan, it cannot guarantee to bring the Taliban to engage in peace talks.

With the refusal of talk by the Taliban in their recent statements it seems that it will take time to prevail peace in Afghanistan. Stability in Afghanistan is of utmost importance as the spillover effect can further destabilize the regional security environment, particularly Pakistan and Western parts of China. This could create security issues for the mega projects namely TAPI and CPEC in the region. Within Pakistan the situation is not good equally. The long lasting insurgency in Baluchistan and FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) could hinder further to materialize the CPEC.

As Lieven has noted that after the Withdrawal of Western forces from Afghanistan, Pakistan's survival will remain a vital concern for the Western and Chinese interests in the region. On the other hand China is equally worry about the security situation of Afghanistan that could affect the Xingjian province which is an important region for the functioning of the CPEC. Moreover, the antagonistic attitude of the public of Pakistan and India could be a stumbling block in getting the public support for the Indian inclusion to the CPEC to make it a cross regional move. Pakistan's internal security has improved qualitatively after the military operation against the militants, yet the security phenomenon in Pakistan will remain a challenge to execute mega projects like CPEC smoothly. Although a special security force has been formed to protect the CPEC and related projects, given the porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan and some difficult terrains through which the CPEC will pass in Pakistan, security will remain a hinge for the success of the CPEC.

Conclusion:-

CPEC could foster socio-economic development in Pakistan if materialized timely. It can pave the way for regional economic and trade connectivity and integration between the region of South, Central and East Asia but that needs a change in the existing attitude of India and Pakistan toward more economic and trade relations. The regional economic integration through CPEC could be a harbinger to resolve the political differences through economic cooperation. The states of South Asia, Central Asia and East Asia need more regional economic connection to make the 21st century the Asian century setting aside the perennial political issues to start a new beginning. The CPEC as a flagship of OBOR can be a catalyst to begin regional trade and economic integration. However, some potential threats could hamper the CPEC to be transformed into a reality, namely the worsening security situation in Afghanistan and its spill over to Pakistan, political controversy in Pakistan regarding the selection of routes in various provinces of Pakistan and the trust deficit among certain regional states. In a longer perspective the CPEC can foster an economic community in the entire region of Asia and beyond if its vision is materialized in its true sense.