

Q.1. In her foreign policy and trade, Pakistan has never benefited fully from her ideal geostrategic location." Discuss.

Ans. **Ideal Geostrategic Location of Pakistan:**

Pakistan is located in South Asia. It shares common borders with Iran, Afghanistan, China and India. In addition, it has a 700-km long coast along the Arabian Sea. The South Eastern tip of Pakistan guards the entrances to the Gulf. Thus close proximity of Pakistan to the oil-rich Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Iraq and Kuwait has given it great strategic importance. Similarly, Pakistan is not only a nuclear power itself but also is neighbour of two other nuclear powers viz. India and Peoples Republic of China.

Foreign Policy:

Due to its ideal geostrategic location Pakistan has been in a position to benefit in areas of foreign policy and trade. But since its independence in 1947, Pakistan has not been able to take full advantage of its ideal location. For example, from 1947 to 1960 Pakistan failed to develop friendly relations with Soviet Union because it joined the Western defence alliances of SEATO and CENTO. As a result of these military pacts which were formed to check Communism, the Soviet Union supported India on the Kashmir issue. On the other, hand India maintained its neutral stance and succeeded in extracting military and economic assistance from both USSR and the Western block. The

Soviet Union continued vetoing UN resolutions on Kashmir.

Again in 1979, Pakistan gained international importance when Soviet troops entered Kabul. Consequently, Pakistan became a frontline state and the Western nations were forced to seek Islamabad's assistance in their bid to oust USSR from Afghanistan. The Taliban regime gave shelter to millions of Afghan refugees and assisted in imparting guerrilla training to freedom fighters. The Russian troops were forced to vacate Kabul in 1988. However, the colossal services of Islamabad were not rewarded proportionately. This history was repeated again in 2001 when after the event of September 11, USA took military action against the Taliban regime and the Al-Qaida fighters. On this occasion Pakistan allowed Washington to use airstrips at Shorkat and Karachi and sealed its border with Afghanistan to check flight of Al-Qaida fighters. Islamabad's cooperation in fight against terrorism enabled US-led UN forces to dislodge Taliban regime and to crush the Al-Qaida network in Afghanistan. But once again Pakistan was not awarded properly for its distinguished services in fight against terrorism.

Trade and Commerce:

Similarly so far as the area of trade is concerned Pakistan has failed to take full advantage of its ideal geostrategic location. Pakistan has been in a position to offer services of its seaports of Karachi, Port Qasim and Gawadar to landlocked Central Asian countries of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. However, due to various reasons Islamabad failed to do so in the past. However in recent years Musharraf regime has taken positive steps to promote trade with other nations and to provide transit facilities to CARs. The development of Gawadar Port is a step towards this objective. The Gawadar seaport is being built 460 km west of Karachi with Chinese assistance. This project will be completed in two phases. After completion the port shall be able to handle ships weighing two lac tonnes. Similarly, an Industrial and an Export processing zone attached with the port shall help in promoting national exports.

Q.2. Give a critique of the performance of SAARC since its inception.

Ans. Performance of SAARC:

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established in December 1985 at Dhaka by Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The main objectives set for this organization were to promote the welfare of the people of Asia, to accelerate the pace of economic development and to promote cooperation in economic, social, cultural and scientific fields.

The first Summit Conference of SAARC was held in 1985 at Dhaka in which the member states identified the areas for joint collaboration. Since then the association has been holding summit conferences at regular intervals. Lastly the eleventh SAARC summit conference was held in Kathmandu (Nepal) on 5-6 January, 2002. This conference became conspicuous by the fact that the stand-off between India and Pakistan had reached such intensity that the President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf and Premier of India Atal Behari Vajpayee could not hold a separate meeting. However, Gen. Pervez Musharraf surprised everyone through a handshake with Atal Behari Vajpayee. Thus the Kathmandu Summit became reflective of India's non-serious attitude towards the objectives of the SAARC.

Unfortunately negative approach and non-cooperative attitude of New Delhi have so far proved a great hurdle in the way of the success of the SAARC. India's failure to solve its disputes with Pakistan peacefully has checked the positive working of this association. The Kashmir dispute has led to three wars between India and Pakistan. India as so far denied the right of self-determination to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Like its failure to solve the political issues, the SAARC has failed in other areas also. For