

**Q: 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 neighbor 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 defense 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.

Zia 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 Ai-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 the regime of Musharraf 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 recent trade measures with India as stating the MFN status, looking upon the gas pipeline from Iran can add several benefits for Pakistan.

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 tones. Similarly, an Industrial and an Export processing zone attached with the port shall help in promoting national exports.