

PAKISTAN-US RELATIONS: LOOKING BEYOND WAR ON TERRORISM*

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Pak-US Relations (Historical Perspective)

Introduction

Pakistan's inception, like her ideological outlook, is unique in origin. The creation of Pakistan was part of the world wide process of decolonization in the wake of 20th Century renaissance and the World War II destruction. The burgeoning freedom movements in colonized Asia and Africa got a new boost due to the war weariness of their colonial masters.

Pakistan Movement was one such freedom struggle. It was aiming to get Muslims of India out of the clutches of Hindu domination after the British exit from the Indian Subcontinent. The fear of Hindu domination gave rise to the Muslim Nationalism leading to the establishment of a new geographical entity, Pakistan.

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah brought together the Muslims of India under the flag of All India Muslim League and founded Pakistan. Stanley Wolpert sums it well in his book "Jinnah of Pakistan":

"Few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly anyone can be

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entitled with creating a nation state. Muhammad Ali Jinnah did all three.”¹

Quaid-e-Azam’s task did not end with the establishment of Pakistan. The bigger tasks lay ahead. A strife torn territory had to be carefully nurtured and turned into the largest Muslim state in the world.

The country had little or no financial resources. India was to hand over to Pakistan her share of the assets. She was reluctant to do so. Simultaneously, Pakistan had to deal with millions of refugees fleeing from the strife stricken areas in India. The administrative machinery was virtually nonexistent because of the shortages of qualified manpower, office facilities and records. To top it, Pakistan was physically divided into two wings with 1000 miles of unfriendly (Indian) territory. West Pakistan shared a long and hostile border with India. East Pakistan was surrounded by India from three sides. The security alarms were further raised when issues like Kashmir, Hyderabad Daccan and Junagarh came up. The situation further deteriorated when, in 1948, the waters of the rivers flowing from India were blocked. In short, India did whatever she could, to unhinge Pakistan.

As a new member of the international community Pakistan received luke-warm reception from international community, because she was an unknown entity.

Pakistan was surrounded by either hostile countries like Afghanistan and India or, at that time, unfriendly countries like China. Only on the West did she have a friendly Iran under a young king, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. At this stage Pakistan needed friends who could provide her diplomatic and economic assistance. In the late 40’s the choices available to Pakistan were few. In the aftermath of WWII, the European nations had suffered huge human and economic losses. They were looking towards America for recovery. Pakistan’s former colonial ruler, Britain was the first

¹ Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.1

choice, but due to Britain's own post-war trauma, dire financial state and historical tilt towards India, ruled her out as a potential friend in need. As for the rest of the international structure, almost all countries were either going through a transitional phase to recover from the after effects of the WW2 or aligning themselves with the Capitalist or the Communist bloc.

In this bi-polar global system (the USA and the USSR as superpowers), Pakistan had few foreign policy options. She could either be neutral or ally herself with one of the two superpowers. Neutrality was the preferred option of the initial leadership of Pakistan, but due to the existential security threat (from India) and economic crunch, Pakistan could not remain non-partisan. However, if one was to choose the policy of alliance, there was a consensus among the decision makers, that of the two superpowers, America would be a more acceptable choice. Economically and militarily she was sounder. American ideology and way of life appeared to have an affinity with the Pakistani outlook. Unlike the godless Communists, they were people of the Book. Quaid-e-Azam himself was aware of American importance. This is evident from the speech he made to the *Constituent Assembly on 11th August 1947*, where he specifically mentioned America as one of the countries with whom we wanted to have close cooperation. He also delivered a specially prepared radio speech to the American people on 26th February 1948, broadcast to the North American audience, in which he introduced Pakistan, her people, and the faith they believed in, to the New World. He clearly stated that Islam believes in democracy and not theocracy. Pakistan aspired to be a Modern Islamic Democratic State. He emphasized on the domestic challenges faced by Pakistan and how her government tried to overcome them. He elucidated Pakistan's foreign policy goals and the National objectives. He sent a message of friendship to all nations of the world, condemning aggression in all its forms and manifestations. Finally, he pledged his allegiance to the UNO Charter.²

² Mehrunissa Ali, *Jinnah on the World Affairs, Selected Documents: 1908-1948*, (Karachi: Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi, 2007), pp. 638-639. Also See, Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2005), pp. 302-303

Under the Shadow of Bureaucracy

In early days Pakistan's leadership was either selected or nominated. In the absence of a representative structure, the process of institution building suffered. Elections were discouraged and power struggle was rampant among these leaders. Hence personalities became larger than the institutions. In the presence of weak institutional structure there were few exceptions: for instance, the military or the bureaucracy. Bureaucracy was the first to pursue its political ambitions. As early as 1950s, several bureaucrats were working in the national Cabinet. They formed vital part of government's decision making structure. Bureaucrats like Malik Ghulam Muhammad were working as finance minister and Maj. Gen. Iskandar Mirza as secretary interior in Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan's government. Presence of such West-leaning senior decision makers was a plus for Pak-US relations. Most of them were in favor of better relations with the US.

Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan wanted to explore different options. However, his pro-Western associates in the cabinet prevailed upon him to orientate Pakistan's stance toward the US. The military also wanted better equipment to deal with India. Liaquat Ali Khan visited the USA and showed willingness to support US Policy of Containment of the communism. Earlier, the US had invited the Indian prime minister on a state visit where he refused to sign any treaty or pact with the US. With this background, Liaquat Ali Khan's visit was a decent face saver for the US presence in South Asia.

US was constrained to review her perceptions about Pakistan. Pakistan's Army was highly graded by the US due to their high professional skills. Pakistan's geo-strategic position was almost ideal. The US was aware of Pakistan's military needs. If the US denied Pakistan weapons, she could possibly ally with the Soviet Bloc. In this scenario, Liaquat Ali Khan was welcomed and cooperation was pledged.³

³ Farooq Bajwa, *Pakistan & The West*, (Karachi: OUP, 1996), pp.21-25

In Pakistani politics, there was a school of thought which was less pro-America. Prime Minister Khawaja Nazim ud Din, Liaqat Ali Khan's successor, was one of them. However, by this time the bureaucracy, without an elected government, had become too powerful. Malik Ghulam Muhammad, the finance minister, was elevated to the position of the Governor General of Pakistan. This appointment was the beginning of a direct bureaucratic assault on Pakistan's foreign Policy. He was a frail man of advanced years with failing health. He belonged to the group of officials who believed in aligning with Americans. The duo of Khawaja Nazim ud Din and Malik Ghulam Muhammad was at odds with each other over the issue of Pak-American relations. It led to the dismissal of Khawaja Nazim ud Din. His dismissal removed any remnants of non-bureaucratic setup in Pakistani cabinet. Muhammad Ali Bogra, Pakistan's ambassador to the US, was recalled from Washington and sworn in as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Soon after his appointment in 1953, the two military agreements were signed in 1954 (SEATO) and 1955 (CENTO), respectively.

Malik Ghulam Muhammad had to step down due to health reasons. He handed over powers to another bureaucrat, Iskandar Mirza. Like his predecessor, Iskandar Mirza did not believe in democracy as the right political system for Pakistan. He too was pro-American. He maintained defense pacts with the US. He went to the extent of compromising the relations with the Muslim World. During the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956, Pakistan took pro-US position by supporting the idea of an international force controlling Suez Canal. It strained Pakistan's relations with Arab Countries in general and Egypt in particular. Later she had to backtrack from her earlier position on Suez Canal under domestic and international pressure.

Bureaucracy remained true to her pro-US leanings, regardless of who sat on the revolving chair of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Ayub Khan's Controlled Democracy and the US

It took Pakistan 9 years to make her first Constitution. In the meanwhile, the government structure was totally exposed to ambitious personalities. They did not encourage constitutional

institutions and the democracy to take roots. Even after the 1956 Constitution became operational, no government completed her tenure. President Iskandar Mirza created his King's Party - the Republican Party. Under the presidential patronage, this party formed four governments in fewer than two years. Floor Crossing and Horse-trading was used by Republican Party to survive in the government.

President Mirza was reluctant to hold elections, because he was not sure of getting reelected. By 1958, people were demanding stable, strong and elected government. Ayub Khan convinced him to impose Martial Law. On 7th October 1958, the first martial law was imposed and, within 2 weeks, General Ayub Khan dismissed President Iskandar Mirza, banished him abroad and assumed the powers of the Chief Martial Law Administrator and the President.

Ayub Khan was pro-US. Initially the relations between two states progressed smoothly. For the first time, John F. Kennedy accepted the Durand Line as the boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan. But relations started to strain after the Indo-China War of 1962. The US supported India against the communist China. Military supplies from US to India multiplied. It was viewed as against Pakistan's interest. Ayub Khan threatened US to walk out of SEATO. In his visit to US, he clearly stated that people of Pakistan will only stand by America if American people will stand by Pakistan.

At this juncture, Ayub Khan decided to adopt a bilateral approach to foreign policy. He allowed his foreign minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to improve relations with China. In 1963, Pakistan signed a boundary agreement with China. This agreement opened new avenues of understanding between the two countries.

At the height of Pakistan-US cooperation, Ayub Khan had allowed the US to set up a military facility near Peshawar. This soured Pakistan's relations with the Soviet Union, especially after the U-2 spy plane incident. In 1969, following the policy of bilateralism, Ayub Khan did not renew the US lease of the air base.

Ayub Khan started off as a highly pro-US general, but ended up taking a more nationalistic approach.⁴

Yahya Khan; Lurking in the Darkness

Yahya Khan was the most unwelcome martial law ruler. Pakistan had already experienced eleven years of martial law. The country was highly polarized. The demand of restoration of true representative democracy was becoming more persistent. Yahya Khan could not continue with martial law for long. He promised to conduct elections within ninety days. In 1970 elections, Awami League of Mujeeb-Ur-Rehman won the majority. Pakistan Peoples Party refused to accept those results. It led to the bitter strife of 1971 which ended with the formation of Bangladesh and a much diminished Pakistan.

The Pakistan-US cooperation reached its lowest ebb, even though Pakistan was still a member of SEATO and CENTO. The relations warmed up for a short period in 1971. Pakistan acted as diplomatic bridge between US and China. It led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between them. But after 1971 war, Pakistan was completely disillusioned by the US. She withdrew from SEATO and CENTO.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto as a Civilian Martial Law Administrator

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Ayub Khan's foreign minister, turned out to be an integrative and flexible manager of the foreign policy. He negotiated the Simla Accord in 1972, and hosted the second summit of OIC at Lahore in 1974, where he also recognized Bangladesh as an independent state. Bhutto also withdrew from the British Commonwealth after 1971. He was considered the architect of Pak-China relations. Bhutto moved Pakistan towards non-alignment. He believed that Pakistan had paid a heavy price for alignment.

The US had temporary interest in Pakistan. It was affecting Pakistan's relations with her neighbors. He was of the view that this

⁴ Syed Sami Ahmad, *History of Pakistan & Role of The Army*, (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 2004), pp. 285-286

policy of alignment had also alienated the communist world. Being a socialist he adopted the policy of rapprochement with Soviet Union and other communist countries. He diligently worked to take Pakistan out of American sphere of influence. The decision to join NAM in 1979 was the continuum of the Bhutto policies. Overall we can say that Bhutto era was responsible for acquainting Pakistan to diversified foreign policy options.⁵

Zai-ul-Haq's Guided Democracy

Zia came to power through a military coup in July 1977 by overthrowing Prime Minister Bhutto's government. The military take over was not welcomed by the international community. As for the locals, Zia assured the people that he had no intention of staying in power for more than ninety days. Instead Zia ended up ruling up to his death in an air crash on 17th August 1988, eleven years later.

He sought legitimacy to rule. Domestically the legitimacy came with the "nudged" judicial ruling. It was harder to get recognition at the international level. Zia was a closet religionist, a fact which came to light too late. Zia knew that Islam is a catchy and popular slogan with the masses. He used religion for furthering his ambitions. The gods were kind to him. Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the Shah's regime in neighboring Iran. This had global repercussions. Pakistan too felt its impact. The same year, Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan.

These two developments gave Zia a cause to justify Islamization in Pakistan, whereas his objective was self perpetuation in power. He pretended to reform the domestic political and constitutional structure of the state. He also became a willing proxy, on behalf of the US, to engage the Soviets in Afghanistan. It was a tailor-made solution to fit US strategy i.e. "bleed the Soviet Union" to oblivion

Within days of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the US president Jimmy Carter announced an aid packet of \$400 million in

⁵ Rafi Raza, *Zulfikar Ali Bhutto & Pakistan*, (Karachi: OUP, 1997), pp. 241-242

economic and military assistance to Pakistan. This was disdainfully termed as peanuts by General Zia. Subsequently, President Reagan promised \$3 Billion for five years and \$ 600 million annually.

Before 1979, Pakistan was under immense world pressure to roll back its nuclear program. In 1979, sanctions were imposed on Pakistan for continuing with her uranium enrichment program. After the Soviet invasion, Washington turned the pressure off and also acknowledged the past discriminations as well as turned a blind eye to the nuclear issue, which was bedeviling the US-PAK relations. The US accepted Zia's assurances that Pakistan would not develop nuclear weapons or transfer the nuclear technology.

Pakistan wanted to stay a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and yet wanted to be a front line state in the Afghan crisis as US ally. At this juncture Pakistan's Foreign policy was on a tight rope. She appeared to thrive on contradictions e.g. Pakistan condemned US diplomatic assault on Iran as well as her attempt to forcibly take over the US Embassy in Tehran. Pakistan also chose not to accept concessional loans for military purchases, to safeguard her non-aligned credentials. Yet she took a pro-US position at the UN against Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Pakistan played an important part in getting a resolution passed in the UN General Assembly against the Soviet invasion. The Soviet Union reacted by giving more military and technical aid to India, along with open diplomatic support. Around \$600 million worth of latest military equipment was also provided.

In the Afghan conflict Pakistan gained American military and economic aid but antagonized the Soviet Union and strengthened a hostile India. General Zia remained on apparent good terms with the US up to his death in the C-130 aircraft accident.

Gen. Zia had managed to rearm Pakistan military with US aid. He also continued working on the nuclear program clandestinely. In the bargain, Pakistan was burdened with 3 million Afghan refugees. Several other mega problems like: drug trafficking, weaponization of the society dubbed as "Kalashnikov culture", Use of religion as an instrument of state policy and continuous dictatorship, were the leftover of the Afghan conflict.

Decade of Democratic Rule

The decade of the nineties coincided with democracy in Pakistan. It was not a particularly promising time for Pak-US relations. The Afghan war had ended and with that the US had, almost instantly, lost all interest in Pakistan. The nuclear issue, which was put on the back-burner during the Afghan crisis, was revived. As early as 1985, the shift in US policy started to become apparent when Pressler Amendment was passed. Under this Amendment aid to Pakistan could only be given after periodic presidential certifications regarding Pak nuclear program. This program was the highlight of this decade vis. Pak-US relations. Pakistan had made significant strides in developing her nuclear program. Pakistan had also built a reasonable military arsenal during the mid-eighties. The US government now showed concerns about it. They wanted to restrict Pakistan by tying her to the international nuclear non-proliferation regimes. If Pakistan did not agree, then she was to be pressurized to either cap or roll back her nuclear program. Pakistan, to safeguard her national interests and long term survival against Indian hegemony, conditioned the signing of these treaties to the Indian signatures on similar protocols. India, on her part, considered the developing of nuclear weapons as her sovereign right and a check against a potential Chinese threat. The leadership in this decade had to take far-reaching decisions for the future of Pakistan's nuclear program. In the mid-nineties Benazir Bhutto took a crucial decision to temporarily cap the nuclear program. In the late nineties Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif authorized nuclear tests in response to the Indian test firings. As a result of it, Pakistan was slammed with more US sanctions.

The issue of terrorism is also a product of this decade of democracy. The civil war in Afghanistan gave rise to a third force, patronized by the US, called the Mujahedins. This force managed to develop its hold over Afghanistan as the "Talibans". Pakistan, under Benazir government, recognized the Taliban regime. The US government and the Taliban could not work for long. The differences developed over the imposition of Sharia Law in Afghanistan and on providing sanctuary to Osama-Bin-Laden and his Al-Qaeda network. Pakistan was in a difficult position. It could

neither abandon the Taliban nor convince them to abandon their support to Al-Qaeda.⁶

The Fourth Martial Law of General Musharraf

At the end of 1990s, Pakistan experienced her fourth military rule. General Pervaiz Musharraf became Chief Executive of the country. It was a martial law in every way but the name. The Pak-US relations were at their lowest ebb when he took the power in a military takeover. Some theorists link this coup to Pakistan's explosions of nuclear devices and relations with the Taliban government in Afghanistan. Due to divergence in Pak-US perceptions of these issues, the Musharraf regime was shunned. In fact it was an almost "outcast" of the global community. This indifference to Musharraf did not stay long. The incident of 9/11, brought Pakistan into limelight once again, and thus started yet another era of Pak –US rapprochement⁷

Pakistan eagerly came on board in the America's War on Terrorism. In days to come, Pakistan emerged as an important non-NATO ally of the USA in South Asia. Musharraf's decision to side with the US could have been far more beneficial had the Pakistani leadership bargained well.

Pakistan's financial loss is currently thirty five billion dollars which is not even one-fourth of economic aid that she is getting from US. Pakistan's human casualties in this conflict (including the Acts of terrorism) have risen to a staggering sixteen thousand since 2001 in comparison to US casualties of three thousand in 9/11 attacks.

⁶ Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2005*, (Karachi: OUP, 2007), pp. 225-228

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 243-245

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