

Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Internal Challenges

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Abstract

Since the post Cold War period, Pakistan has been in the face of diverse challenges. No doubt, the relative stability and predictability of that era has disappeared and a large number of regional and global alignments have lost significance as well. Old ties and linkages are under stress and almost every state is now reviewing the parameters of its foreign policy. Hence the post Cold War era can be described as *New World Order* or *New World Disorder*, as the security of small states has become more challenging than ever before. It has been dilemma of Pakistan that whenever in history, the dictators ruled the country, it was the US administration which found itself easy as the democratic governments relatively prefer to build up relations on mutual basis. From the last few years, the foreign policy of Pakistan has been directionless and to some extent, it has remained reactive too. The country is being run without any national security policy in face of many imposing challenges. The paper will discuss what challenges Pakistan is to face on the foreign policy front without going into details on one-dimensional focus on political aspects of country's foreign relations. It will analyze what issues should be taken up as urgent and important as far as the current challenges of the country are concerned.

Key Words: Cold War, National Interest, Geo-Political, Imperial Lurch, Colonial Rule, SEATO, CENTO, Arabian Peninsula, Détente, Al Qaeda, Taliban, 9/11, GWOT, Indo-US Nexus,

Introduction

Foreign policy has its genesis in the times when the earliest human societies started contact among them (Frankel, 1998). Since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648)ⁱ, which institutionalized the nation-state system and sovereignty, the

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states have very jealously guarded their sovereignty and it is even more pronounced in the post-colonial era of today (Zuberi, 2009: 25). With the relaxation of the new Cold War, and the emergence of a new Superpower *détente*, the general politico-security environment has been witnessing unprecedented changes (Jalalzai, 2003: 13). Despite the progress that has been made in International Law, it is obvious that the guiding principle of foreign policy and diplomacy remains the “National Interest” (Zuberi, 2008; 32). While the national interests are the driving forces in foreign policy formulation, they themselves are shaped by both history and geography (Amin, 2009: 33).

There are two ways in which foreign policy is of relevance to the study of world politics. The first relates to the agenda of world politics after 9/11 and the renewal of foreign policy *per se*. The second relates more closely to an academic dialogue between the literature on foreign policy and International Relations. Foreign policy is the “strategy or approach chosen by the national government in order to achieve its goals in its relations with the external entities. This includes decisions to do nothing” (Hudson, 2008: 12). Generally, foreign policy of a nation is the face that it carries to the outer world. However in real meaning, it is the “sum-total of the values that must guide its conduct in the comity of nations and of its national interests that it must protect and maintain. It also symbolises a “set of political, economic and strategic objectives that a country seeks to follow, bilaterally or multilaterally, in its relations with other countries of the world (Ahmed, 2007).

Four Major Constants/Motivations in Pakistan’s Foreign Policy

A provident foreign policy is no more than a part of the salutary strategy for a better future (Sattar, 2010: 353). Like any other state in the world, the basic motivation of Pakistan’s foreign policy is to ‘safeguard the country’s vital national interests’. Since beginning, the external relations of Pakistan have been marked by 4 major constants. These are in the order of priority;

- 1. Pakistan’s Independence** - Pursuing its security and survival as an independent state
- 2. Territorial Integrity** - Legacy of country’s conflict and tension-ridden relationship with India which infact constitute the centre-point of Pakistan’s foreign policy, owing to the geo-political environment (Particularly until 2004)
- 3. Economic Welfare** – Too much dependence on the West for economic, political and military endurance

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- 4. Preservation of its values, mainly its Muslim identity** - Country's entire solidarity with the Muslim world and unflinching support to the Muslim Cause (Amin, 2009: 33).

Historical context/Evolution of Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Pakistan is a "South Asian state when looked from India, a Middle Eastern, when viewed from the Persian Gulf and a Central Asian, when viewed from Ghazni, Kandhar or Kabul in Afghanistan". The recurring pre-British invasions into what is now Pakistan were largely from Central Asia. It was mainly because of their "contiguity to Central Asia that these invaders sought to bring what are now Pakistan's provinces of Balochistan and the NWFP (now KPK) into their realms" (Burke & Ziring, 1990: 76-77). Pakistan's strategic location has remained pivotal to the global dynamics of the Cold War era. The policy of containment was endorsed and the country had to be a "key player in dismantling what the free world once called the "Evil Empire" of the former Soviet Union (Ahmed, 2009: 56). Despite the harsh years of Cold War, Pakistan did not wink in the face of intensity and immediacy of the Soviet 'watch'. The historic errands on the behalf of US were take on which included the use of Pakistani air bases by the US Spy planes in 1960sⁱⁱ, and a decisive role in 1970s to the US-China re-proachment and thus Pakistan continued to play the role of a fall guy (Ahmed, 2009: 57).

Phases of Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Unlike Great powers, Pakistan did not engage in what Paul Kennedy called '*Imperial Lurch*'. Its founding Father was committed to the principles of coexistence (Sattar, 2010: 350). Pakistan emerged onto the world stage on August 14, 1947, after a two-pronged struggle;

- First, It got independence from colonial rule,
- Secondly, It was the freedom for the people of Muslim-majority areas from the intimidating menace of economic, social and political supremacy by other people, distinctly dismissive of their urge to protect their separate identity (Ibid: 7).

Since its independence, Paksitan's foreign policy has been manifested by an intricate balancing process in the context of this region's tumultuous political history, its religious legacy, its geo-strategic significance, its untapped economic potential and the enormity and immense range of its problems with their impact on the global security environment. In the process, Pakistan has come across the uninterrupted series of confrontations and experienced wars and territorial setback. It has lost half of the country in 1971 and even in the

present day, it prolongs to survive in a hostile neighborhood. The major decisions made in the Foreign policy of Pakistan can be discussed under following phases;

A. First Major Foreign Policy Decision

The first major foreign policy decision that Pakistani government made, was required by "India's hostility, manifest in refusal to respect the principles of the partition and transfer Pakistan's share of British India's assets, including the Ordinance stores that left Pakistan's Armed forces of 50,000 men without weapons for defence". In order to secure its independence, the new born state was in need of funds. For that reason, the government decided in October 1947 to move towards US for a loan of \$ 2billion for defence procurement and economic progress. Though American administration was taken aback by the "degree of the demand" yet it was not unsympathetic and presented an unpretentious amount for economic support (Sattar, 2010: 350). The years of 1947-53 were the years of Pakistan's non-aligned foreign policy. During these years, following four main issues significantly influenced the shaping of Pakistan's foreign policy;

1. The foreign issues used to be conversed together with the domestic political affairs in the annual meetings of Muslim League. Those foreign subjects predominantly comprised of those matters which had effect on Muslims and the resolutions used to be adopted on them.
2. Quaid-e-Azam's standpoint was compact on disapproving Israel's creation and opposing Dutch repression of Indonesian liberationⁱⁱⁱ.
3. The newly established country had to counter Indian propaganda and contend India globally.

In 1951, first Pakistani Prime Minister, Liaqat Ali Khan was assassinated yet the similar policy (neutral though twisted towards West) sustained till 1953. But the death of Quaid-e-Azam in 1948 and then Liaqat Ali Khan led to an era of political instability and the struggle for supremacy among political parties.

B. Second Major Foreign Policy Decision

The second major foreign policy decision was a consequence of US strategy for making a military alliance in the Middle East for the defence of political stability and safeguard of access to the rich petroleum resources of the Gulf region. In the mid-1950s, Pakistan had global, regional and domestic *raison*

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d'être to join Western-sponsored military pacts (and Grasping the opportunity for defence, Pakistani leaders decided to sign a defence agreement SEATO, 1954 and Baghdad Pact, 1955 which was renamed as CENTO in 1958). Owing to the geo-strategic location of Pakistan, the western strategists were ardent to include it in the policy of containment that was intended at "either the break up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power under continuous pressure from the United States" (X, 1947: 581).

The alliance policy was not free of costs but it yielded substantial benefits, which, were not, however as well noted by public opinion, though Prime Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suharwardy publically expressed satisfaction over its "dividends". During 1954-62, Pakistan received \$ 5 billion (about \$ 20 billion in current prices) in economic aid and arms supplies.

C. Third Major Foreign Policy Decision

Third major foreign policy decision was seen when Pak-US relations with the United States came under increasing strain due to following reasons;

- Washington's decision to perk up relations with the neutral India
- And on the other hand, Islamabad's cooperation with China.

Ayub Khan (1958-69) is considered to be the architect of Pak-US defence relations and therefore, he simultaneously offered India a "Joint Defence Pact". Possibly under American pressure and against the popular reaction at home, he defied the temptation to march into Kashmir in 1962 when India was all enmeshed with the Chinese in its North-East (Durrani, 2009: 85).

After India's border war with China in 1962, Washington provided it what Pakistan considered massive military support, overlooking Pakistan's apprehension that the weapons would be used against it, as there were in 1965 war. Inevitably, the alliance policy emaciated.

D. Fourth Major Foreign Policy Decision

The fourth turning point followed the defeat and disaster of 1971, as soon as Pakistan reversed its policy of nuclear abstinence (Sattar, 2010: 351). When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-77) came to power, the overall Indo-Pak power equation had skewed towards India and Pakistan was no match for it. Bhutto initiated to stress Pakistan's Middle-Eastern character and asserted that Pakistan drew its purpose and identity principally from the sands of the *Arabian Peninsula* (Burke & Ziring, 1990: 417). Consequently, Pakistan received much aid from the *Shiekhs* of Gulf and vowed to make bomb as a

retort to Indian alleged “peaceful explosion” of 1974. Until 1971, the Western policy makers considered Pakistan as a “Southeast Asian, a South Asian and a Middle Eastern State. However, its main geographical location was and still is in South Asia. With the separation of East Pakistan (which coincided with a modicum of superpower *détente* and the initial stages of a Sino-US thaw), Pakistan lost its relevance to Southeast Asia (Shah, 1997: 10). Secretary of State Kissinger’s (1973-77) persuasive defence of Islamabad’s resolution remained futile in holding back the US government from opposing the French supply of a reprocessing plant to Pakistan and imposing sanctions in 1979. Already at low ebb since the 1960s, Pakistan’s relations with the US continued to decline and got worsen. In 1979, the US Embassy in Islamabad was put on fire by students which cost the government of Pakistan over \$ 30 million as it had to recompense for the reconstruction of the embassy (Sattar, 2010: 351).

E. Fifth Major Foreign Policy Decision

General Zia-Ul-Haq (1977-88) who succeeded Bhutto also harped on Pakistan’s Middle Eastern character in order to obtain military, financial and political aid from the Western powers, predominantly from the USA and Saudi Arabia (Shah, 1997; 12). The fifth turning point came after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979. The Super power advanced to Pakistan’s border and exposed Pakistan to the nightmare of the Indo-Soviet nutcracker. After an initial hesitation, Pakistan accepted US cooperation, assistance.

In 1990, out of the blue, this period of the revitalized alliance ended, when the US President Senior Bush (1989-93), invoked the Pressler Law again to slap sanctions on Pakistan, ‘cut-off economic and military assistance and even withhold the transfer of F-16 aircrafts, for which burdens, due to the civil war in Afghanistan, and the Kalashnikov culture, due to the spread of weapons to civilians. Islamabad’s recognition of Taliban regime, nuclear tests in 1998 and a military coup in 1999 led to the international isolation’.

F. Sixth Major Foreign Policy Decision: Role of Pakistan as Front Line Ally in US-Led Global War on Terrorism

Few analysts consider 9/11 as the second phase of Pakistan’s foreign policy, while illustrating the first phase being “Indo-centric” until 1974. However, equally far-reaching was the transformation after 9/11. Pakistan’s decision to “join world community in the war against terrorism brought it back into the international mainstream and won it the revived and stronger support from major countries of the world, which it very much required in order to fight Al

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Qaeda and the indigenous Taliban who unleashed a reign of terror against Pakistani state and its people” (Sattar, 2010: 352). Despite all that, the struggle has not yet been fully won to date. With the dawn of 9/11, Pakistan’s foreign policy shifted country’s focus from Eastern to the Western front. The current phase in Pakistan’s foreign policy is the direct outcome of 9/11 and initiation of Global War on Terror. In pursue of its goals, America attacked Afghanistan in October 2001 and is engaged there after almost 12 years of futile exercise, though have announced a withdrawal time in 2014.

At the same time, the country’s western borders have been in conflict. Though it is easier to say that Pakistan could have kept itself out of this clash yet the geo-strategic position, being the evident access route to Afghanistan, it could not. By joining hands with America as a *Front Line Ally*, the country received immense support on economic, diplomatic and military front (Amin, 2009: 44). Principally, post-9/11 scenario has placed Pakistan on the global radar screen in a very negative image as “Breeding Ground” of “extremism, violence and militancy”. This negative insight has obscured things for Pakistan both domestically and externally, and confined its policy options (Ahmad, 2009: 50).

Pakistan’s post 9/11 alliance with the US was, though, the initiation of another hurting episode in Pakistan’s tumultuous political history. In the blinking of an eye, Pakistan turned out to be a theatre of war in the US war on terror, and has been paying a heavy price in terms of human and material losses (Ibid: 59). The 9/11 represented a critical threshold in Pakistan’s foreign policy and resultantly, Pakistan unavoidably became in the midst of crisis in the shape of a deep toll on its already capricious, socio-economic environment as an outcome of prolonged hostility, unsteadiness, displacement, decelerating trade and production, stagnation in export, wavering investor and concomitant law and order situation (Ibid: 63).

Internal Challenges and Future

Palliser (2000) states that, “The imperative thing is to accomplish well; and if policy is genuinely intended for that, no incongruity between ethics and diplomacy is necessitated”. Foreign policy of a nation always calculates on where one aspires to go as a sovereign and independent state. This is the fundamental determinant of a country’s foreign policy (Ahmad, 2009: 47). A look back at the history of Pakistan’s foreign policy reveals a continuity of aims as well as changing strategies. There have been shifts in policy from time to time in the light of changes in the global and regional environment (Sattar, 2010: 350). When one talks about Pakistan’s foreign policy, the years between 1971-1994 are much pertinent to the pattern of politics in Pakistan in

particular and in South Asia general. Pakistan's position on the world map poses a set of troubles for its security and foreign policy. Domestically crippled and weak nations never succeed externally. Even a Superpower, former Soviet Union could not endure as a Superpower simply for the reason that it was internally fragile in political and economic terms. Same is the case with Pakistan. Its domestic limitations have badly tapered its foreign policy options. Decades of political shakiness, resulting from long-drawn-out military rule, institutional paralysis, poor governance, socio-economic melancholy, widespread transgression and corruption, and wide-ranging repugnance to the rule of law have aggravated the external reflection and position of Pakistan (Ahmed, 2009: 53).

Foreign policy is not carried out in vacuity. It portrays its insight from political structures, while it reflects the national agenda, lays down its priorities and establishes its goals and objectives (Fatemi, 2009: 70). The test of a country's foreign policy always lies in its capability to resist pressures in the situations of conflict through "crisis management and conflict deterrence". In case, the conflict turns out to be unavoidable, the task of a foreign policy is extended to curtail the liable damage to the country's national interests together with its power and position (Ahmad, 2009: 49).

From target killings to drone attacks, Pakistan is suffering. Till 1960s, Pakistan was a role model of economic development around the world. After partition, US was among first nations to establish relations with Pakistan which Washington saw as a kind of South Asian's Turkey. But today the problems have knotty by the current regional pattern and relationship with Americans sitting in Afghanistan, the new-fangled gloomy Indo-US nexus, India's ensuing strategic ascendancy in the region, its unparalleled influence in Afghanistan with grave nuisance potential against Pakistan, turbulence in Balochistan and chaos in Waziristan. Pakistan is passing through one of the grimmest crisis of its independent statehood (Ahmad, 2009: 52). The internal challenges must be given foremost importance and Foreign policy should be revolved around them. The bigger internal challenges, regarding security are;

1. The country is looking for aid
2. It does not have reserves
3. It has to make payments and what future hold, no one knows?
4. Militancy is prevailing
5. Strategic balance of Pakistan and internal security viz-a-viz Afghanistan

The paradigm of those who are in power and hold a share in policy making is totally wrong in the present times. The need of the hour is to set a paradigm

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where the question should hold the argument, what Pakistan wants from the US and then there should be a distinction 'what is important and what is urgent'. It is the government of a country that is ultimately responsible, through its various agencies, for defining and implementing the national interest. The national interests always receive primacy, irrespective of the political system. As far as important issues are concerned, the relation with China is important. Though relations are good yet they need to be strengthened. The urgent issues in terms of challenges are related to Afghanistan and India. The governments come and go but a country's interests have permanence (Amin, 2009; 32-33). The objective of the new government should be in such a way that they should have a political and military plan through which they may break nexus of Pakistani Taliban with Afghan Taliban, so that the reconciliation with them, may become successful which seems difficult especially in post 2014. The upcoming transition there in 2014 seems quite difficult. It is being considered that this transition might not have negative implications on Pakistan's security. Therefore not only the initiative be taken in peace process and peacemaking efforts but the process should be speedy.

Though India is important for Pakistan, still Afghanistan is much vital because Pak-Afghan relations carry key position as far as the national security challenges of Pakistan are concerned. Moreover, the post 2014 relations are going to be important in a sense that they will not only have an effect on this region but also on the US and the European Union. But the immediate focus of Pakistan should be on its neighbors. Hence, it is very pertinent to keep good relations with India and emphasis should be given on the neighboring countries also. The tone should be in subsistence with Pakistan. Because tone keeps atmosphere good while subsistence describes the basis on which relations have to run? It must be in country's priority to progress trade with India but at the same time, the strategic issues cannot be put in back burner. If it happens, the crisis will emerge. Hence, the relations with India should be progressed on strategic tracks and focus on trade simultaneously. But it shall make sense only when it will heed under a cohesive and coherent policy.

The question rises whether Pakistani Taliban and Afghan Taliban can be segregated or not? If America leaves Afghanistan in 2014 without any peace process, chaos will occur there and so will be in Pakistan. It will make hurdles for Pakistan in establishing Pakistan's image as a credible country and will face difficulties in excelling. The nation today must behave as a nation. Reconciliation of Afghanistan is in Pakistan's interest. The genesis of militancy must be traced and rooted out. It is pertinent to know whatever role Pakistan played in Afghanistan, whether it got benefit or disadvantage? Was that decision in Pakistan's favor that time and does it promote country's national interest today? Either it is preserving or promoting or going against that? The

genesis of all problems at some level goes to security threats. The most crucial thing is to realize it and to make policy. In the foreign policy priority, the normalcy of relations and reconciliation with Afghanistan must be on the front. Pakistan has more challenges as far as Afghanistan is concerned vis-a-viz India because there is a trust-deficit which is deep-rooted since many decades. Pakistan must see what American demands from her are and what it demands from them. It must see what India wants from her and what should be asked from India? It must be checked what Afghanistan wants from Pakistan and what it needs from Afghanistan. Unless the issues of Afghan Taliban are resolved or a clear approach is adopted about them, the problem of Pakistani Taliban cannot be resolved.

As Mahan (2003: 106) states that, “self-interest is not only a legitimate, but a fundamental cause for national policy; and one which need no cloak of hypocrisy. As a principle, it does not require justification in general statement....it is vain to expect governments to act continuously on any other ground than national interest”. Certainly, the principal objective of any state in its relations with other states is to influence them in such a way as to maximize its advantages, while minimizing its short comings and weaknesses (Fatemi, 2009).

Conclusion

Every country’s foreign policy starts from its home. That means, unless the internal challenges are dealt with, foreign policy cannot be strengthened. The counter argument is that the dynamics of national security are made because of foreign policy. Pakistan today needs a clear national security and strategy. The economics must contain pivotal role in that and it must not be based on the foreign relations merely. The foreign policy, economic policy and defence policy is always a part of national security policy. These policies cannot be run in separate compartments. It must be carried with in a strategic focus which is the responsibility of leadership. The most important priority must be the economic revival and development. The country needs such a national security and foreign policy where economic development gains privilege. The solution of the problems of Pakistan lies within home, the only thing required is the “courage and political power”. Resources and taxes should be raised. Every country has to go according to its national objectives. Economic progress should be given priority but for that safe borders are required. SOP and rules of road should be fixed with India so that if any crisis (terrorist incidents) may occur, which both countries may not want, and hence the crisis may be prevented which does not exist between both countries. The peace process should be made swift in Afghanistan simultaneously because it is in the interest of Pakistan so that some accommodation may be made before

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2014. In September, the Afghan presidential candidates will be lined-up which will be held next year in April. It will help in establishing Afghan Taliban's interest in Afghanistan and Pakistan will get a space to segregate itself from them. As no country wants to have the situation of pre-1990s, and it can only be prevented, if there is no ballot fraud in Afghan presidential elections which may cause instability. If merely the aims and contents of the country's foreign policy are changed, even then it does not answer to its tribulations. Rather they have to be readjusted so that the mislaid sovereignty and liberty of action may be regained. The house needs to be systemized. The restructuring of national priorities is the answer to all problems. The country ought to revisit to the real democracy entrenched in the will of the people and founded on constitutional primacy, independence of judiciary and the rule of law.

Pakistan necessitates a low profile foreign policy formulated through institutional rather than individual approach with larger focus on domestic, political, economic and social consolidation. In doing so, the national interest can be best served by following Hafiz Shirazi's advice for "benevolence to friends, courteousness to the rivals" with "equal conviction in Iqbal's message of self-pride, self-confidence and self-respect", simultaneously Superpower must to identify that on path to a democratically elected civilian government and with stable institutions strictly adhering to their constitutional roles, Pakistan will be a more conscientious, more unfailing, more effectual and more apposite partner of the free globe in quest of common objectives and in the defence of shared ideals.

End Notes

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