

Pakistan People's Party and Foreign Policy Priorities: (2008-2013): An Analysis

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Abstract

Owing to the changing dynamics of state relations, scholarly attention has increased toward the domestic policy influence on foreign policy. In this regard, political parties are considered the main drivers in foreign policy formulation in parliamentary democracies. To comprehend the influence of the party on the agenda or formulation of governmental foreign policy, there is a need to examine the link between party manifesto and foreign policy priorities. The case of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) would be under consideration during the period from 2008-2013. This is an attempt to explore the foreign policy priorities given in the manifesto of Pakistan People's Party (2008) with its practical implementations. It is observed that dichotomy prevails between the manifesto and practical implementations of PPP's performance. The government of PPP has remained unsuccessful to implement its foreign policy priorities in true letter and spirit as promised in the party manifesto.

Keywords: Pakistan People's Party, Pakistan's Foreign Policy, Party manifesto, Policy priorities

Introduction

The role of political parties is vital to create awareness among masses about the national and foreign policy of a state. The significance of political parties can never be ignored in a healthy democratic political system. Political parties aggregate public demands, contribute to democratic governance as well as essential for the survival of representative democracy. Their presence is equally substantial in authoritarian rule. Dictators similarly formulate political parties to get legitimacy for their rule at a domestic and global level. In the words of Max Weber (1990), political parties are 'the children of democracy, of a mass franchise, of the necessity to woo and organize the masses' (p.35). Political parties aim to achieve power through their party policy to demonstrate policy options and priorities. Party policy is demonstrated through the manifesto, which describes the aims of a political party at the domestic and global level.

Party manifesto is a very essential document to describe policy options. In developed political systems, party manifesto is debated and discussed in an election campaign. Party manifesto not only comprises domestic policy of state but indicates foreign policy priorities too. In developed systems, foreign policy debate is as important as domestic public policy to impact public opinion. As Nincic & Hinckley (1991) have mentioned that, 'In the United States, the interplay of the domestic and external realms of politics and policy is summarized substantially by the relation between national elections and foreign policy, for this captures much about the impact of

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public opinion, pluralism, and competitive politics on the manner in which the nation deals with its international environment' (p.334). In the United Kingdom, the elections of 2017 focus majorly on the issue of Brexit. These developments depict that, foreign policy is the representative of the internal posture of the state. In healthy democratic systems, three basic objectives are followed by political parties to formulate policy.

- To preserve the national interest
- To advance party ideology
- To indorse their political and preemptive goals

While the stake of parties become substantial and more responsible with special reference to third world states, where masses are not literate and institutions are not much stable. India, by having one of the stable political systems in third world states, has remained unable to debate impartial her foreign policy in the election campaign. Patagundi & Rao (1981) has explored their study findings as, 'the Indian electoral political process has not generated any significant and substantial debate on foreign policy, whatever the partisan controversies that may have taken place or take in the inter-election periods' (p.39).

In Pakistan, the pedigrees of democracy are not much deep-rooted, same the democratic values. It is observed that the major focus of political parties has remained dominated by domestic public policy only, while foreign policy has always been ignored in election campaigns. This segment of policy formulation is never debated in public forums. It's the most ignored feature on the priority list of political parties.

The role of Pakistan People's Party is very significant in the regard of policy priorities with special reference to external relations of Pakistan. It is imperative to see the link between the foreign policy priorities mentioned in the election manifesto of 2008 with its practical implementations.

Conceptual Framework

Political parties prepare an agenda or election manifesto in which they prioritize their policy options and policy procedures. The agenda of a political party also depicts its foreign policy priorities. Modelski (1962) stated about foreign policy as, 'the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their activities to the international environment'(p.7).

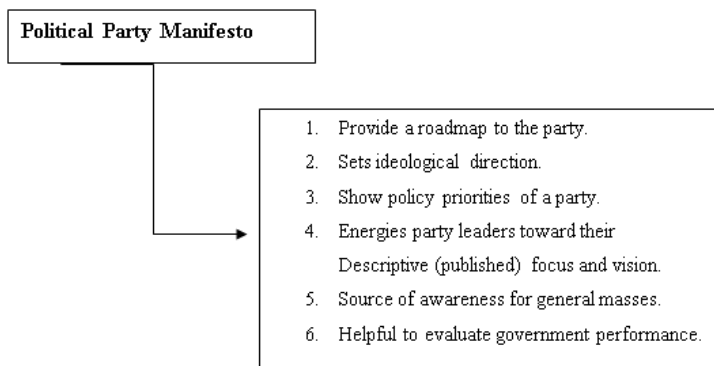
There is a close link between domestic public policy and the foreign policy of a state. As Hill (2003) stated that, 'foreign policy is not immune from the impact of values, ideas, initiatives and upheavals' (p.222). Both spectrums of domestic public policy and foreign policy may be different in context by policy options and government's narrative but they are determined on the level of populism and state leader's views based on consensus and agreement(Hill, 2003, p.220). There are many internal and

Pakistan People's Party and Foreign Policy Priorities: (2008-2013): An Analysis

external factors, those influence the process of policymaking as well as the method of policy formulation which varies according to the structure of government. 'Western democracies are viewed as having pluralistic process while authoritarian political systems are seen as hierarchical and highly cohesive, and the policies in the third world politics are determined by the predominant leader's predispositions' (Herman, 2001, p.50). Neoliberalism also having the view that revolves around the behaviour and role of institutions that determined the behaviour of the state. As Saad-Filho & Johnston (2005) stated, 'we live in the age of neoliberalism' (p.1). The concerned school of thought orbits around the responsibilities of the state, how the interaction among institutions prevail and political processes are conceded.

All political parties draft their party policies (party manifesto) to contest elections. In every country, there is a recognizable statement of policy, which has the backing of the leadership as the authoritative definition of party policy for that election' (Budge, 1987, P.18). Party policy or party manifesto is the written published declaration of any political party, which shows the expected intentions and motives of a political party.

Through an election campaign, party policies and priorities are discussed and debated to persuade the masses and to gain their favour in polls. Party manifesto play a part of a roadmap to achieve specified goals. Ray (2007) perceives party's manifesto as, abstract statements of parties' identities and philosophies, sheer party advertising or contracts between parties and voters. Laver and Gerry (2000) consider that party manifestos are 'strategic documents written by politically sophisticated party elites with many different objectives in mind. This leaves considerable scope for debate about whether party manifestos reflect the real position of the parties that publish them. This debate is ultimately fruitless, however, since the real policy position of a political actor is a fundamentally elusive, even metaphysical notion' (p.620). Political party's manifesto is important as they:



After assuming power, the political party tries to formulate internal and external policies in the light of set party directions. Foreign policy is one of the major tools to

indicate the standing of a state at the international level. International socialization can directly impact the internal policies of the state.

Political parties are the major sources to formulate public opinion and convey to the government. The role of political parties becomes more important in developing polities where masses are not much literate. During such a scenario, a manifesto plays an impressive role to persuade, attract and influence the general masses. This study is an effort to analyze the standing of PPP’s manifesto in post-election politics.

A Flashback of Pakistan People’s Party:

In Pakistan, the story of democracy is filled with major breakdowns and jerks. Since inception, Pakistan has faced long military rules and weak democratic governments. Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) is the party which emerged to counter the military rule of General Ayub Khan in 1967 under the leadership of Zulfikar-Ali-Bhutto. This party was considered as the only mass-based political party in the political scenario of Pakistan. The government of PPP has served three times before completion of its 4th tenure i.e. 2008-2013.

Following table shows the served period of PPP with its foreign policy stance.

Period	Head of Government (PM)	Foreign Policy Stance
1973-1977	Zulfikar-Ali-Bhutto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-aligned approach aided with bilateralism • Tensions with the United States over the nuclear program. • Solidarity with the Muslim World.
1988-1990	Benazir Bhutto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A less hostile approach toward India and Afghanistan (Najibullah) • Intelligence sharing to curb Khalistan move in India. • Efforts to remove ambiguity about Nuclear Program-response to Pressler amendment.
1993-1996	Benazir Bhutto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An aggressive approach to curb down the anti-Pakistan sentiments in Afghanistan. • Recognition of the Taliban regime. • Glenn amendment (1994) - Tense relations with the United States.

PPP is the only political party which has completed its parliamentary tenure (2008-2013) first time in the history of Pakistan. Pakistan Muslim League (Quad-e Azam) has also completed its tenure but under the cloud of the dictatorial rule of General Musharraf. The elections of 2008 have conducted in very acute conditions of security. PPP was the party who lost its chairman Benazir Bhutto in a terrorist attack in Rawalpindi on 27th December 2007, in her address to the public regarding election campaign. The elections were scheduled in January 2008. After the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, elections were postponed to February 2008. A congress report stated as, ‘Pakistan’s security situation has deteriorated sharply: the federal government faces armed rebellions in two of the country’s four provinces, as well as in the federally administered tribal areas. The country experienced about 44 suicide bomb attacks in the latter half of 2007 that killed more than 700 people’ (Kronstadt, 2008,

Pakistan People's Party and Foreign Policy Priorities: (2008-2013): An Analysis

p.2).The headship of PPP was handed over to Asif Zardari till the Completion of studies of his only son Bilawal, who was named as Bilawal Bhutto Zardari after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. The election results remained in the favour of PPP as the element of sympathy was also added to the turnout towards PPP because of Benazir Bhutto's assassination. PPP was successful to formulate coalitional government with Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) by having 125 seats in National assembly. The voter turnout has remained 43.65 % (Election Commission of Pakistan). The need is to analyze comparatively the practical implementations of PPP's manifesto in the course of foreign policy formulation.

Foreign Policy Priorities of PPP:

Foreign policy priorities of Pakistan People's Party as stated in the election manifesto of 2008 as following:

Kashmir's Right to Self Determination

In the manifesto of PPP, it is written that it will support the right of self-determination of Kashmir as before in the foreign policy of the state. They maintained that they will continue the process of dialogue with India to resolve this matter according to the resolutions of the United Nations.

In this regard the following steps have been taken:

- After assuming power in 2008, the government of PPP have faced two major challenges while maintaining its relations with India. First was the attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul and second was the violations at the line of control (LOC). In 2008, national security advisor of Prime minister, Mr Ali Durrani visited New Delhi and discussed an extensive range of issues. He denied the involvement of Pakistan on embassy attack which responded positively from other side and Poonch-Rawalkot root was opened for trade across the LOC. (New York Times, Oct 21, 2008)
- Mumbai attacks in India (November 2008) has brought the Kashmir Issue in limelight again, which was blamed on Pakistan. The government of PPP has banned an organization Jamaat-ud-Dawa and arrested its main leadership in response.
- The government of PPP has filed complain before United Nations Military observer group over frequent breaches of LOC ceasefire.
- PPP government has introduced the administrative changes in the Northern areas presently called Gilgit-Baltistan through self-governance order 2009. (GBPI Report, 2010).
- The other major effort done by the government was to internationalize the issue of Kashmir. PPP's government officials at many forums brought the issue of Kashmir in limelight. As President Zardari criticized the role of United Nations to resolve the issue of Kashmir at 67th session of General Assembly, 'Kashmir remains a symbol of failures, rather than strengths of the UN system and Pakistan's principled

position on territorial disputes remains a bedrock of its foreign policy' (India Today, Sep 26, 2012).

Overall the performance of PPP's government regarding the issue of Kashmir has remained stagnant and no other practical action was taken except to internationalize the issue. Even some statements of government officials show negligence or irresponsible response towards this issue. As President Zardari said once, 'Kashmir cause should not become an impediment to normalization between India and Pakistan' (CSCR report, p.4). This statement shows the major change in the government's foreign policy priorities toward Kashmir. The parliamentary committee on Kashmir was formed and chaired by Molana Fazal-ur-Rehman (Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam) during PPP's tenure, but nothing practical and sound in terms of policy proposals can be seen on the part of this platform. It only remained a silent forum over the Kashmir issue.

Relations with the Neighboring States

The election manifesto of PPP covers state relations with two neighbouring countries (i.e. India, Afghanistan). It is written in the manifesto that, PPP's government will maintain relations with India according to the Shimla agreement of 1972. Peaceful negotiations will always be the priority of the government to normalize the nature of relations with India. The government of PPP will aim to work for a regional economic framework to increase investment, reduce unemployment and eliminate poverty.

In this regard the following steps have been taken by the government:

- In March 2011, PPP's government has started a dialogue process to normalize the relations with India after the incident of Mumbai attacks and Indian embassy attack in Afghanistan (2008).
- In 2010, two media houses (The Times of India and The Jang group) from both India and Pakistan respectively have launched a program, Aman ki Asha (hope for peace). This program consists of discussion programs and cultural exchange initiatives. (The News, January 1, 2012)
- India was given the status of a most favoured nation (MFN) in November 2012. It was a major step toward economic cooperation.
- The democratic government tried to make a new start with a new vision of economic cooperation by keeping the Kashmir issue on a separate track. The motive behind this move was to create a conducive environment to start a dialogue on the Kashmir issue.
- In 2012, efforts were made to create a trade-friendly environment. In this regard, a combined press release was issued by trade minister of India Anand Sharma and from Pakistan Makhdoom Amin Fahim. The Indian minister said, 'India has taken an-in principle decision, as part of the process to deepen our economic engagement, to

Pakistan People's Party and Foreign Policy Priorities: (2008-2013): An Analysis

allow foreign direct investment from Pakistan to India.' (Express Tribune August 1, 2012)

Overall the major focus of the government remained to take a liberal and moderate approach in foreign policy and they consistently believe that economic cooperation can normalize the tense relations between two states. It was of the view that normal relations can lead to a conducive environment to start negotiations and dialogue process on conflicting issues.

Afghanistan

It was written in the PPP's manifesto that the government will not allow using the territory of Pakistan to destabilize Afghanistan and will fully implement the policy of non-interference. The government of PPP will remain in touch with the Afghan government regarding all security matters. Mutual understanding will promote peace, harmony and improved security situation. The government of PPP aims to sign a treaty of peace with Afghanistan which includes the respect for fundamental human rights, peaceful negotiations to solve disputes, promotion of mutual interest, cooperation and respect for justice and commitment to restore cultural and economic ties.

The following steps have been taken in this regard:

- In July 2010, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed with the collaboration of the American state department, known as Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) to promote trade and economic cooperation. Both governments have decided to build railway tracks to connect Afghanistan with Pakistan railway(The New York Times July 18, 2010). In 2012, both states agreed to extend (APTTA) trade agreement to Tajikistan to promote economic collaboration in this region.
- The government of PPP takes the credit of Swat operation led by the Pakistan army to curb terrorism.
- PPP proposed a joint operational mechanism for collective security and intelligence sharing system to eliminate extremism and terrorist elements residing near Pak-Afghan borders.
- PPP's administration happily claimed the deployment of 151,000 forces along with western border to curtail terrorist activities, smuggling, and spread of narcotics and movement of criminals.
- More than 800 border security posts were established to monitor border movements. The government fortified voluntary and safe resettlement of Afghan refugees and favours cultural cooperation as well as people to people contact between both states(Musa & Meer, 2014).

The concerned period of the study 2008-2013 was the time when Pakistan was facing acute internal and external challenges. The wave of terrorism was dominant in this phase. The policy of security was majorly managed by the military at this time. The government of PPP was unable to take solid measures for resettlement of Afghan refugees as Pakistan is facing many economic and security concerns because of their presence. The steps taken for economic cooperation were appreciate-able.

Defence and Counter-Terrorism:

It was mentioned in the party manifesto that PPP will try to curb the seeds of terrorism those flourished in the state during the rule of a dictator. The state will maintain its writ and there will be no distinction among any terrorist groups. PPP considered that a strong economy is the base of strong defence so the government will try to safeguard national integrity through economic cooperation and development. The curriculum of defence institutes will be revised to ensure respect for democracy.

In this regard, the following steps have been taken by the government of Pakistan People's Party:

- The period of Pakistan People's Party (2008-2013) was clouded with terrorist activities in the history of Pakistan. After assuming the charge, the government has tried to normalize relations with India by employing the principle of peaceful coexistence.
- The concerned period is characterized by developments like the Kerry-Lugar Bill, (the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009). This development was clear evidence of trust-deficit by the United States on Pakistan to carry a sound counter-terrorism policy. As John Carry once expressed his insecurities about Pakistan in words like, 'Pakistan is the critical focus, the greatest security risk for the United States. And all of this exercise, after all, is about our security' (The Nation, October 1, 2009).
- The other development includes Raymond Davis issue (January 2011), Operation Geronimo (May 2011) in which Usama Bin Laden was killed in Abbottabad compound, Pakistan. This operation was led by the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency, United States) with joint special operations command (JSOC). After this incident, Pakistan has to face many tragic incidents of terrorism in which military personals and infrastructure were targeted. Those include Mehran base attack (May 2011) which cost Pakistan heavy financial loss with 13 casualties, Salala check-post attack (November 2011), which resulted into 24 casualties of security forces by the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) attack. This incident was observed in Salala, the tehsil of Mohmand Agency, near Pak-Afghan Border (The Express Tribune, November 26, 2011).
- The memo gate scandal (October 2011) when the ambassador of Pakistan in the United States has written and delivered a request to US administration to settle

Pakistan People's Party and Foreign Policy Priorities: (2008-2013): An Analysis

down civil-military trust deficit. This activity shows the split in civil-military relations (Dawn, November 18, 2011).

The discussed period was one of the difficult phases of Pakistan. Many internal and external challenges, as well as continuous power tussle between state institutions, has marked a negative impression over a strong policy stance regarding the international scenario. The internal division has proved as a hurdle to formulate consensus and strong national policy.

Conclusion

Foreign policy is the reflection of an internal posture of the state. There prevails a very strong relationship between domestic and foreign policy. Both domains are closely interlinked. A strong independent foreign policy requires internal stability and objectivity in decision making of the state. In the developing polities like Pakistan, foreign matters of interaction are not debated. This is the most ignored area of party manifesto during the election campaign.

The government of Pakistan People's Party had assumed the charge in a very challenging environment. There were many acute challenges of internal division, terrorism and border tensions. The government of PPP has mentioned many good developments as peaceful relations with neighbouring states, curtailment of terrorism; Kashmir resolution etc. in the party manifesto, but keeping in mind the strategic importance of Pakistan, Party remains unable to comprehensively shed light on the foreign policy priorities of Pakistan. Party manifesto completely ignores the relations with other neighbouring states as China and Iran, as well as the relations with big powers, is also missed. The dynamic political and economic regional developments are very important and having a direct impact on the policymaking options of Pakistan. These deficiencies in manifesto show the confusion and lack of consensus among party organization.

It is true to say that the policy has to be mould according to a specific situation. But the efforts and directions must be visible and clear on the part of ruling authority. The government has tried to tackle all above-mentioned challenges but its performance shows that the government remained unable to formulate a coherent, stable, proactive foreign policy with clear vision and direction.

The issue of Kashmir remained overlooked due to regional tense dynamics. Continuous civil-military differences and intraparty rifts over domestic and foreign policy fronts has weekend the position and performance of Pakistan People's Party. Foreign policy must be debated in the parliament for its successful execution as well as to secure the support of general masses. There must be a difference between a defence policy and a foreign policy of the state. A stable, coherent, integrated effort of state institutions are required to pursue a strong, focused and visionary foreign policy of Pakistan.

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Pakistan People's Party and Foreign Policy Priorities: (2008-2013): An Analysis

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