

PAK-US RELATIONS AFTER 9/11: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Abstract

The world was stunned on 11th September 2001 when United States of America was attacked by terrorists. It was Tuesday morning. Boeing 757 of American Airline 77 took off from Washington's Dulles Airport and dashed into the Pentagon Defence head quarters. The second one flew from Boston for Los Angeles and diverted to New York to smash into the World Trade Center's Northern Tower. After 18 minutes, the third one dashed into the Southern Tower and the entire Twin Tower building caught fire. Another Boeing was directed to White House but it crashed before hitting the target.

After this tragic event President George W. Bush addressed the nation, and said that it was the first war of 21st century in which the identification of the enemy and the target was difficult. Thus, the U.S. foreign policy took a new turn, which called for international cooperation against terrorism.

After 9/11, Pakistan is a country which has emerged as an important player in the war against terrorism: President George W. Bush laid the blame on Osama Bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network and wanted him "dead or alive". Without Pakistan's support that would not be possible. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, rang up President General Pervez Musharraf on 13th September and persuaded him to support U.S. military action against the Taliban government. President Musharraf's consent meant a U-turn in Pakistan's foreign policy.

Pak-US Relations From 1947

Foreign policy of any country is considered the first line of defence. It is generally agreed that foreign policy is influenced by the concerned country's

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history and geography. Geo-strategic location of a country is an important factor which affects the foreign policy. From the beginning when Pakistan got independence in 1947 it moved into the American camp for a number of reasons. American policy towards Pakistan, infact, has been a part of global plan to integrate non-communist Asia into a strategic balance favorable to itself, and at the same time capable of containing the Soviet Union and China. The 1950's alliance between Pakistan and U.S. was the result of U.S. policy directed towards the containment of communism. Pakistan and the United States moved closer after they signed the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement in 1954. United States hailed Pakistan during the cold war period as her most dependable ally in Asia. But when the cold war subsided, the American Policy towards Pakistan took a new turn¹.

Pak-US Relations After 1960

In 1962 US signed a military Pact with India. The relations between Pakistan-US deteriorated because of Pakistan Nuclear programme. US suspended her economic aid as a protest². On 6th September 1965, India attacked Pakistan at which time US adopted neutrality and cut off military aid to Pakistan³ and relations between the two reached the lowest ebb and Walter Lippman wrote about US policies, "the United States was looking like a dinosaur with tremendous muscle power but little brain"⁴. In the post-1971 war scenario, Pakistan's prestige had suffered, and with the loss of eastern part, Pakistan's geo-strategic position changed and its linkage with South East Asia was disrupted. By 1971 India gained a nearer approach to the US Congress. The situation dramatically changed also after Russian intervention in Afghanistan. In the early 1980s America relaxed and wished Pakistan to help the Afghan Mujahideen to evict the Soviet forces from their country. US government offered a \$ 400,000,00 economic aid and military aid to Pakistan but Pakistan refused to accept that offer. 'In June 1981 both countries agreed to sign a new program of \$ 3000 million for economic and military support'⁵.

"These relations much more improved especially during the year 1985-86 due to their shared perception of the regional security environment in the back-drop of the Afghan problem"⁶. The Afghan problem could not be resolved till April 1988. During these years Pakistan demanded withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan for safe repatriation of Afghan refugees, and restoration of non aligned status of the country. USA agreed to the proposal to obtain the whole hearted co-

operation of Pakistan in evicting Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Without Pakistan's support, the United States would not have rolled back the Soviet tide. President Ronald Reagan changed his priorities; because he knew that the nuclear proliferation issue was more important than supporting the Afghan Mujahideen in their struggle to push out the Soviet forces from their country.

Pak-US Relations After 1988

After the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, Pakistan lost much of its strategic importance for Washington. The sanctions began as early as 1987 with the Symington Amendment to prevent Pakistan from seeking nuclear military capability. 'In October 1990 US aid and arms sales to Pakistan were suspended under the Pressler Amendment and the Glenn Amendment which tightened the screw on Pakistan'⁷. 71 F-16 fighter air crafts were not delivered to Pakistan despite getting full payment⁸. It was the most serious action against Pakistan. Tremendous pressure was applied by US on Pakistan to freeze its nuclear weapons programme. IMF loan package of \$ 1.6 billion was suspended as a result of Pakistan's nuclear test, President Clinton in his speech said, "in my mind the most dangerous place in the world today is unquestionably the Indian sub continent. With nuclear weapons present in both India and Pakistan, the countries are sitting on a dry tinder box that could go off any time"⁹.

Pakistan continuously tried to improve her relations with US but failed to achieve its diplomatic objectives as India succeeded in the same. "Former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met President Clinton on 4th July 1999 at Washington and discussed different issues like Kargil war and Kashmir conflict"¹⁰. The US accused Pakistan of aggression and emphasized that "the sanctity of LOC (Line of Control) must be restored"¹¹. In the same year, that is 1999, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at Lahore, "The Lahore diplomacy neutralized Kargil issue"¹², and after one year nuclear weaponisation and international stress focused on the Kashmir issue_ "from 1999 till 2001, New Delhi - Islamabad relations remained cold"¹³.

Pak-US Relations After 1999

On October 12, 1999 the Pakistan army under Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf carried out a bloodless coup that deposed the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif¹⁴. On 14 October General Musharraf suspended the constitution and parliament. On 18th October he addressed

the nation and promised to improve national economy, reduce troops on the Indian borders and restore civilian rule, use restraint in nuclear weapons policy and promote moderate form of Islam. 'On 25th March 2000, President Clinton visited Pakistan and strongly advised military government to develop a time table and road map for restoring democracy'¹⁵. President Clinton asked General Musharraf to use his influence on Taliban government of Afghanistan to halt terrorist activities and wrap up training camps in their country.

From 1999 till 11 September 2001 the sanctions were imposed on Pakistan because of the 1998 nuclear tests, and military coup. In October 1999 with military coup in Pakistan, sanctions were triggered, but the tragic events of September 11 changed the whole scenario of the world relations. Pakistan's foreign policy, especially with US was changed. The post September 11th had created a new strategic situation which resulted in a convergence of interests with the U.S.

Tragic Event of 9/11

On the morning of Tuesday 11th September 2001, the four U.S. commercial planes were hijacked. Boeing 757 of the American Airlines Flight 77 took off from Washington's Dulles Airport with 65 passengers aboard. It dashed directly into the Pentagon Defence Headquarters, where 24000 military experts and the officials of Defence Ministry were at work. The second plane flew from Boston for Los Angeles. It was diverted to New York to smash into the World Trade Center's Northern Tower. After 18 minutes, United Air Lines Boeing 767 Flight 175 dashed into the Southern Tower and the entire Twin Tower Building caught fire with one thousand to two thousand Fahrenheit temperatures, turning it into burning debris. Another Boeing 575 Flight 93 was directed to White House but it crashed before hitting the target.

The world was stunned at this terrorist attack on the world super power. The immediate reaction of the U.S. Administration was articulated by President George W. Bush, who said that it was "the first war of the 21st Century in which the identification of the enemy and the target was difficult"¹⁶. It was to be a long war, which might continue for a decade. All diplomatic, financial, political and military means would be employed in it. The purpose of this war would be to eliminate the international terrorism. The nations and countries which harboured the terrorist groups were also to be considered terrorist. "Thus the U.S. foreign policy took a new turn, which called for international cooperation against terrorism in

the U.S. war against terrorism"¹⁷: 'You are either with us or with the terrorist' became the U.S. foreign policy principle.

Since the AL-QAEDA Organization and its leader Osama bin Ladin were based in Afghanistan bordering with Pakistan, and the Pakistan Government supported the Taliban Government of Afghanistan, President General Musharraf of Pakistan was contacted first to lend his support for the U.S. military action against the Taliban Government and Al-Qaeda terrorist outfit. He articulated a ready "Yes". President Musharraf's consent meant a U-turn in Pakistan's foreign policy. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan was de-recognized and all diplomatic, commercial and communication lines were cut off. 'Pakistan became the front line state in the U.S. war against terrorism'¹⁸.

Foreign policy of any country is considered the first line of defence. It is generally agreed that foreign policy is influenced by the concerned country's history and geography. This was even more pronounced in the case of Pakistan, which was caught in a difficult security situation from the very beginning. Islamic identity and consciousness of its people have been the dominant influence on the history of Pakistan throughout. The geo-strategic location of Pakistan has had important effect on its foreign policy. Early years of Pakistan's existence have been unusually eventful, marked by many ups and downs.

After getting independence in 1947 Pakistan moved into the American camp for a number of reasons. "The Pakistan - U.S. alliance in the 1950s was the result of U.S. policy directed towards the containment of international communism"¹⁹, though Pakistan did not subscribe to the American assessment of the threat from the north. India's non-aligned foreign policy further enhanced Pakistan's importance for U.S. strategists:- U.S. obtained base-facilities in Pakistan for reconnaissance flights over the Soviet Union and China. 'Pakistan also agreed to sign different pacts with the U.S. like SEATO (1954) and Baghdad pact (1955) which in 1958 was renamed CENTO'²⁰ and the bilateral agreement in 1959. But when the U.S. decided to provide India military aid in the aftermath of the Sino-India war in 1962, Pak-U.S. relations suffered a tremendous set back. 'In 1965 war with India, the U.S. attitude of treating equally an ally and a non-aligned hurt Pakistan'²¹.

Pakistan held a great responsibility of securing its frontiers from Indian aggression, as in Kashmir-Pakistan scenario it had to support the ongoing armed struggle in Kashmir against the Indian occupation. Owing to its small size and relatively backward economy as compared to India,

Pakistan had to bank upon American's support which in turn at the moment is dependent upon fullest support from Pakistan in the war against terrorism. Yet Pakistan being a Muslim state cannot go too far in this campaign directed against Muslim countries like Afghanistan and Iraq.

Pakistan's President General Pervez Musharraf is an army man and his roots are in the army which is the most powerful institution. In case a civilian government comes to power in Pakistan it might not be able to maintain its pro-American policy. In line with the western, particularly American, policy to contain Indo-Pak conflict over Kashmir. Pakistan's declared stand on the Kashmir problem, viz. U.N. supervised plebiscite, has to be softened, but Pakistan has to be very careful and watchful all the same on this score too. On the other hand, after the 9th September incident American doubts about Pakistan have also increased, and they are very watchful of the Pakistan Atomic Power Command and Control System, more so after the latest disclosure of nuclear proliferation through the KRL. (Khan Research Laboratories, Kahota) officials and scientists including Dr. A. Q. Khan the father of Pakistan's Atom Bomb. The U.S. Administration want a strict guarantee against the misuse or unsafe handling of Pakistan's nuclear power plant. On 22 September, 2004, a meeting was held in New York between US President George W. Bush and President Musharraf. "In this meeting President Musharraf gave assurance to US President of his cooperation and full support to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Both countries committed to sustain full efforts towards this end"²² Bush once again emphasized the long-term US commitment to Pakistan about the war against terror and the need for Pakistan's cooperation to defeat terrorists.

Challenges

Pakistan foreign policy after 9/11 episode has faced crucial challenges. The main challenge was and is national security and domestic stability. Protection of nuclear assets, which are now in effect a hard factor to maintain relations with India and other neighboring countries.

In this context of a changing regional scenario Pakistan enters 2005, with crucial challenges ahead. The recent disclosures in respect of Dr. A. Qadeer Khan have also made Pakistan a sensitive state in the world. It may even be alleged that Pakistan's atomic program is not in safe hands. It poses a big challenge for Pakistan's foreign policy after 11 September episode.

Second challenge for Pakistan is "preparing for a negotiated Compromise over Kashmir with India, based on altering the 57-year-old status quo that has been rejected by the Kashmiri people"²³.

The third one for it is "developing a concerted strategy to combat home-grown terrorism and extremism, not just through statements but substantive institutional mechanisms and measures, President Musharraf has rightly listed this as Pakistan's biggest security threat"²⁴.

Fourth challenge for Pakistan is re-defining national security by not measuring it in terms of military might alone but also incorporating the civilian components of national security like democracy, parliament, political parties, and rule of law, constitution, provincial autonomy, economy and education. And now it is up to the Pakistani policy makers to adjust the foreign policy equitably, keeping in consonance with the public opinion and the Muslim psyche as well.

Pakistan is the result of the popular expression of the Muslims of the sub-continent in the matter of their identity and independence. Under the dynamic leadership of the Quaid-e-Azam M.A. Jinnah the Muslims of the sub-continent rendered huge sacrifices for the making of Pakistan, which has already split into two parts through Indian tactics.

On the other hand there is the big neighbour that is also watching with interest, the internal conflicts of "the truncated Pakistan" where provinces are at loggerheads over the distribution of water and financial resources. Hence Pakistan is facing delicate situation and its responsibility towards safeguarding its physical and ideological frontiers is a heavy task.

Responsibilities

It is Pakistan's responsibility to secure itself from extremist elements and outside threats like cross border terrorism. Many time Indians have attempted to highlight the threat of Islamic fundamentalism from Pakistan to the international community and propagated that this Islamic fundamentalism manifested in Jihad or Holy War posed a disturbing factor against the Non-Muslim State. Internal security, regional cooperation and trust among neighbouring states is therefore a pre-requisite of peaceful coexistence and a successful foreign policy for all concerned.

- The other responsibility of Pakistan is to avoid a war in South Asia especially involving Pakistan and India which may in future lead to nuclear confrontation.
- Protecting nuclear assets.

- Reducing the current tension between Pakistan and India in order to establish good relations with each other.
- To reduce tension between Muslim Ummah and the West, end terrorism and evade Al-Qaeda presence in Pakistan.
- Find out the peaceful solution to the Kashmir dispute as it is a nuclear flash point.
- Control on drug trafficking which is harmful internally and for peaceable relations with other countries.

Conclusion

Pakistan is a nuclear power and an important member of the Muslim world. A strong and economically stable Pakistan will serve US interests in South Asian region. Now it is a duty of United States to remove all impressions that the war against terrorism in Afghanistan and the war on Iraq is not a war against Islamic world. Not only is this but United States is an ally of Pakistan in the war against terrorism. Pakistan on the other hand, is also a potential source of Islamic radicalism, nuclear proliferation. Stable Pakistan all the same is in United States interest because Pakistan is located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf and at the crossroads of West and Central Asia. Pakistan is the land of diversity; her geo-strategic location makes her important in regional and global politics. It is necessary for US government to remember that Pakistan will never compromise on the provocative policies of the US administration. It is better both countries in talks get down to brass tacks rather than interchange euphemisms and cliches. Pakistan is afraid of US past policies, when Field Marshal Mohammad Ayoob Khan is reported to have once said to Richard Nixon, "It is dangerous to be a friend of the US, it pays to be neutral and some times it helps to be an enemy"²⁵. It is a correct interpretation about American policies, because US is not an all weather friend.

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