

A "FAUX - PAS" - THE BEGINNING OF ERRORS:
AN ANALYSIS OF PAKISTAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE
UNITED STATES AND CHINA 1949-1959

S.M.Ibrahim Shah Bukhari
Parvez H.Mirza

We all are aware of the fact that in International politics there can be neither eternal friends nor perpetual enemies. The only determining factor is national interest.

The foreign policy of Pakistan during the period under discussion was determined by two factors. The first was security against the Indian threat, as Wint put it: "Pakistan throughout its life has been observed with the quarrel with India over Kashmir".⁽¹⁾ Ayub Khan declared: "The barometric relations between India and Pakistan depend on Indians' attitude to Kashmir and on the levels of Indian defence expenditure".⁽²⁾ Krishina Menon had already categorized Pakistan as "India's enemy No.1". The second factor was the Communist threat to Asia. By crying wolf Pakistan wanted to exploit the anti-communist sentiments of the US government in order to obtain western help against India.⁽³⁾ Addressing businessmen in the States, Ayub Khan proclaimed: "I fear we have about fifteen to twenty years to make the grade. If we cannot support ourselves by that time, we are bound to be overwhelmed by communism, there is no come back after that, and everybody, you and we, would be loser".⁽⁴⁾ This then, was the attitude of the man who as Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army went to United States, in 1953, to seek military aid and to prepare the ground for subsequent military pacts.⁽⁵⁾

Grassroots

Fortunately for Pakistan's leadership certain important events had taken place on the world scene. Firstly, East-West anti-facist cooperation between the Allied powers was withering away due to ideological differences, power politics, competition for world supermacy; and Communist success in Europe and Asia were a bone of contention. According to Z.A.Bhutto, the Truman doctrine and Marshall plan to help West European States against Soviet threat, 'the principal purpose of the United States foreign policy to contain Communism had taken a definite shape'.⁽⁶⁾ The estrangement began with conflict over Zone of Influence. The departing point was Greece, which, to the disillusionment of Greek Communist movement, was abandoned by the then Soviet Union. The Iran issue was the next to rear its head. The then Soviet Union which had occupied Northern Iran during the Second World War was obliged by the United States to withdraw its forces from the area. As a result, two Peoples Republics, the Peoples Republic of Azerbaijan and the Peoples Republic of Kurdistan, which had been formed with Soviet help, were left to the mercy of the Iranian Army. Relations further aggravated by the blockade of Berlin. The United States, having already used atomic weapons in Japan, were drawing maximum advantage from their military superiority to force the then Soviet Union to retreat. To pour further salt on the wound came a series of Communist successes in Asia, starting with the establishment in 1949 of the Peoples Republic of China, swiftly followed by the Korean Crisis of 1950-51, and finally the Communist victory in Indo-China in 1954. The United States, sensitive to the vacuum created by the defeat of the Japanese and the departure of the British and the French, had already moved into South East Asia. The pump was primed. The United States was more than will-

ing to proffer military aid when Pakistan presented herself as taking an anti-Communist stand.

Pakistan's relations with the Peoples Republic of China can be discussed in the light of these events. Since the establishment of the cease-fire line in Kashmir, giving Pakistan control over the area to the West and North West of this line, Pakistan has had a common frontier with China. "As a frontier zone", said Lamb, "Kashmir concerns not only India and Pakistan but also China which marches with the North and the North East of the state".⁽⁷⁾ In spite of the conflicting claims arising out of the somewhat equivocal position of Hunza, the Pak-China frontier was demarcated by mutual agreement on the 2nd March, 1963.

Pakistan's relations with the Peoples Republic of China date from the establishment of the Communist regime in China on the 1st October 1949. Pakistan's reaction was swift. The issue of recognition was taken up the same month. Zafarullah Khan then foreign minister of Pakistan at a press conference declared: "This question will have to be faced".⁽⁸⁾

After a few months of deliberations, Pakistan recognized China on the 4th January, 1950, maintaining 'friendly and cordial relations between China and Pakistan to be cemented in all spheres to their mutual advantage'.⁽⁹⁾ In September 1950, Pakistan lent support to the Peoples Republic of China for admission to the UNO and expulsion of Nationalist China.⁽¹⁰⁾

Plainly Pakistan had an interest in taking these

Grassroots

immediate steps. Firstly there was a large number of Muslim population within the Peoples Republic of China, particularly in the province of Xingjiang (Singkiang), contiguous to the areas, 'the defence of which is under the actual control of Pakistan'.⁽¹¹⁾ Secondly, in Chinese manpower, Pakistan saw in China a possible friend to balance her inferiority in manpower against India. Pakistan imagined that ideological differences and power politics for supremacy over Asia would ultimately lead China and India to conflict and war. Burke suggests that 'All in all, it seems fairly clear that Communist China had coolly calculated from the very beginning that in the large run it would be with India that national interests would clash and the forbearance with Pakistan in the meantime might ultimately pay a useful dividend'.⁽¹²⁾ By seeking to profit from this situation, Pakistan was to adopt an ambivalent foreign policy on the one hand with China, and on the other hand, taking the mission ideology and a Communist threat.

In 1949, before the hands of Pakistan's foreign policy makers were tied by the United States, Liaquat Ali Khan was invited to visit the then Soviet Union and his un-diplomatic refusal antagonised Stalin. The following year he was prompt in his acceptance of an invitation to visit the United States, where he declared that ideologically Pakistan was near to the West. Obviously he had in mind that Pakistan was a land where the Islamic ideology and way of life could be practiced and demonstrated to the world. In 1952, Muhammad Ali Bogra then Ambassador to the United States stated, "Don't count Pakistan as a neutral nation of Asia. Our basic sympathies are with the West".⁽¹³⁾ Such was the obsession with anti-Communism that Pakistan's leaders felt, "If Communism was to prevail

Grassroots

in our part of the world, we should have the status of satellite".(14) The same leader, Ayub Khan, in 1960 referring to Laos, proudly affirmed, "If Pakistan is called upon to shoulder its burden and responsibility, we will never hesitate to do it".(15) He was speaking of cause of Pakistan's obligations to SEATO.

In spite of strong public opinion in favour of neutrality, Pakistan's theoretical neutrality from 1949-54 over-compassed a series of decisions which could be described as anti-Communist and pro-American. Nevertheless, Pakistan attempted to avoid alienating China.(16) Thus in 1950 at UN, Pakistan voted for a resolution declaring North Korea to be an aggressor on the one hand, but on the other, abstained on the resolution blaming China as an aggressor, without feeling able to actually oppose the motion. Sino-Pak cultural relations progressed smoothly and the signing of bilateral trade agreements promoted a growing trade between the two countries. Beijing's relations with other states seem to have been on the basis of 'It is not what you are, it is the way that you act'. Yet Pakistan, nevertheless, maintained 'unofficial but offensive contacts with the Chiang Kai Shek rump on Formosa'.(17)

While our relations with China, both negatives and positives, were developing, our imported Bureaucrats and self-styled representatives of the people were busy making Pakistan a sheep in the American flock irrespective of our national interests. "The one dimensional approach to diplomacy is wrong. Although it is a natural propensity of people to think in terms of their own situation, the global situation defies that limited approach",(18)

said Bhutto.

The geographical location of Pakistan and coming to power of a markedly anti-Communist group in USA favoured the designs of the Pakistan's policy makers. Pakistan's proximity to the frontiers of the Communist world, its situation with relation to the Gulf and the Khyber and Karakoram passes forming a link with Central Asia, meant that the USA had to nourish the aspirations of Pakistan. "Pakistan will have tremendous strategic importance in the event of another world conflict", (19) said Lord Wavell. Olaf Caroe described Pakistan's location as in the 'Arc of danger' (20)

Consequently with the arrival of Republican government with Eisenhower as President, Nixon as Vice-President and Dulles as Secretary of State, the United States considered it in their own 'self-interests and self-preservation to offer Pakistan military and economic aid'. (21) Henceforward to be a Communist state was to be an enemy of democracy, the United States was proclaimed the Champion of democratic cause, neutrality was seen as a crime. The countries which joined the USA were to get more aid than neutrals. Aid was to be offered not for survival but to check communism, or in Eisenhower's words, 'to help poor states, to preserve their independence against Communist threat and enticement'.(22)

When Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Muhammad Ali Bogra was recalled to Pakistan, in 1953, to form a government, the time was ripe for a shift, from a nominal neutrality to an actively pro-American foreign policy. With him he brought a donation of 600,000

Grassroots

tons of American surplus wheat, known as "Ali miracle". When the proposed Middle East Defence Organization, (MEDO) was turned down by the Arabs, the United States began to consolidate its hold over Pakistan by offering bait. After a year of deliberations the Mutual Defence Agreement was signed between Pakistan and the USA in May 1954 and the shipment of arms began the following November. Dulles saw Pakistan as a 'dependable bulwark against Communism, because of a strong spiritual faith and martial spirit of the people'.(23)

Such was the enthusiasm of the Pakistani leaders that they concurred to whatever the States proposed. The Baghdad Pact between Turkey and Iraq was expanded in 1958 to include Pakistan, Iran and England. Fearing reaction from the Arab states and bearing in mind her relations with Israel, the United States limited its participation only to support and advice. With the overthrow in 1958 of the pro-Western government in Baghdad and Iraq's consequent withdrawal, the Pact was renamed as CENTO in August 1959.

These facts in the West were followed up by SEATO in the EAST, Pakistan joining hands for the sake of peace and security with seven other states a thousand miles away from her borders. It is still not clear why Pakistan joined this pact, when the United States had made it plain that the aggression and armed attack referred to in Article IV para 1 applied only to Communist aggression. (24) Pakistan's security against the Indian threat was not assured as was demonstrated later when SEATO was impotent to come to help Pakistan in 1965 and 1971. The only reason for Pakistan's participation in SEATO seems to be as declared by Ayub Khan in July 1960: "Pakistan openly

Grassroots

and unequivocally cast its lot with the West . . . We have shut ourselves off completely from the possibility of any major assistance from the Communist Block".(25) "With the signing of these pacts", said Bhutto, "foreign domination has been replaced by foreign intervention and the power to make decisions radically affecting the lives of our peoples has been curtailed by the commons of neo-colonialism".(26)

These Pacts provoked a severe reaction on all sides. The then Soviet Union condemned them as imperialist plans and warned Pakistan against "dangerous consequences" and on the Kashmir and Pakhtunistan issues Soviet policy suddenly shifted from a neutral to an anti-Pakistan stand. In 1955, Soviet leaders touring India and Afghanistan, pronounced Kashmir 'as one of the states of the Republic of India' and they expressed sympathy with Afghanistan's policy on the Pakhtunistan issue.(27)

The Arab reaction was equally unfavourable and in February 1958 at Damascus President Nasser of Egypt condemned the Baghdad pact as representing foreign domination in the region and said: "Through our opposition to the Baghdad pact we aim at achieving true liberty, Arab solidarity and Arab unity".(28)

China's relations with Pakistan were equally affected. "In China's view", says Maxwell, "Pakistan had pursued an unfriendly policy towards herself throughout the 1950's, following the American lead in the United Nations against discussion of the question of China's representation".(29) In 1959, Ayub Khan proposed joint defence pact with India 'to defend respective frontiers and fron-

tiers of each other in the case of aggression'.⁽³⁰⁾ Happily, Nehru turned down the idea saying that the pact would damage relations between China and India and went on to say: "Pakistani ruling clique has been playing a vicious role and adopting an extremely unfriendly attitude towards China. The Pakistani government should pull up the horse before precipice, reverse its hostile stand towards the Chinese people and return to the road laid down by Bandung Resolutions and the road of Sino-Pak friendship".⁽³¹⁾

Under these circumstances Pakistan was busy trying to placate China with explanations. At Bandung in April 1955 Muhammad Ali Bogra explained Pakistan's position in SEATO. Chou En Lai, on his return to China advised the political committee that Prime Minister Muhammad Ali had assured him that although Pakistan was a party to a military treaty, Pakistan was not against China. Pakistan had no fear that China would commit aggression against her.⁽³²⁾ This was followed by a series of visits. Suherwardy went to China in December 1956 where the two Prime Ministers, in a joint statement, asserted that there was no real conflict of interests between the two countries.⁽³³⁾ Chou En Lai made a reciprocal visit to Pakistan in 1957. Pakistan had hoped to obtain Chinese help over the Kashmir issue. China refrained from making any statement, although in India Chou En Lai claimed that Kashmir dispute was the creation of imperialism. In February 1957 Chou En Lai and the Prime Minister of Ceylon, Sri Lanka, advised India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir problem through direct negotiations, but not surprisingly Suherwardy rejected the suggestions 'as the Communist and the neutralist line'.⁽³⁴⁾

Grassroots

"The low point in Sino-Pak relations was reached in mid 1959 when a Muslim Haj mission from Famosa, Taiwan, arrived".(35) China denounced this as group of Chiang Kai Shek's agents and criticised Pakistan for her implicit support for the American contention that there were two Chinas, and for 'repeatedly' issuing statements that . . . "fully showed its lack of respect for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity".(36)

The rapprochement between China and Pakistan was influenced by certain events. First was the Chinese take over of Tibet, the Dalai Lama obtaining assylum in India, from where he conducted a campaign of propaganda against China. Secondly, Chinese maps were published in which territory claimed by India was included within the Chinese borders. Thirdly, Ayub's proposed joint defence pact was rejected by India and 'having failed to secure Indian cooperation for the joint defence of the subcontinent, Pakistan decided to cut its losses and turned to developing closer relations with China'.(37) Criticism was rising in the US Congress against the heavy allocation of aid to Pakistan. 'The Dulles era had come to an end and in 1959, misunderstanding arose in the relations between the two countries and since then grew and multiplied, especially after Sino-India border conflict'.(38) The United States began to feel it to be more profitable to play India against China. In October 1959 Pakistan government came into possession of a Chinese map showing Pakistan territory in the north as Chinese. The following month the then Foreign Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto returning from the session of the United Nations proposed negotiations for the settlement of the border issue to China. This marked the first step in the rapprochement with China

Grassroots

and an agreement was signed on 2nd March 1963, some months after the Sino-Indian war. Pakistan had finally realised China's dominant place in Asia and felt that as an Asian state whose destinies were for ever linked with those of Asia it was vital for her to maintain friendly relations with China for strengthening Afro-Asian solidarity.(39)

The period from 1949 to 1959 was an era in which Pakistan's political theories were, in the words of Bhutto 'included to make policy assessments out of immediate developments and jump to hasty arbitrary conclusions'.(40) Still mentally chained to the West and interpreting Islam as implying an anti-Hindu and an anti-Communist stance in the foreign policy, Pakistan's leaders took decisions which were not in the longer term in national interest. The steps taken were emotional, irrational, hasty or lacking in an understanding of power politics and depriving Pakistan of real friends and serve only to complicate her problems.

In their experience, Pakistan's foreign policy makers had committed a serious blunder in alienating China and Soviet Union. By its membership of CENTO and SEATO, Pakistan lost liberty of action and came to depend on United States. Pakistan received as much as 956.2 million dollars in aid up to 1958-59,(40) but at the same time created crippling burden of debts and sacrificed much of her freedom manoeuvre.

REFERENCES

1. Wint, Guy, 'Asia', Praeger Publishers, New York, 1968, p.96.
2. Dawn, Karachi, 19th April, 1968.

3. Sen, Asi Kumar, International Relations Since World War-I, II, Chand & Co. Ltd., Delhi, 1985, p.587.
4. Pakistan Times, Lahore, 15th July, 1961.
5. Shirin, Tahir Kheli, The United States and Pakistan, Praager Publishers, New York, 1982, pp.4-9.
6. Bhutto, Z.A., 'The Myth of Independence', Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1973, p.38.
7. Lamb, Alastair, 'Asian Frontiers', Pall Mall Press, London, 1968, p.147.
8. Dawn, Karachi, 15th October 1949 (cited in Pakistan Horizon, XIV, 3, 1961, p.214).
9. Dawn, Karachi, 5th January 1950, (cited in Pakistan Horizon, XIV, 3, 1961, p.215).
10. Sherwani, Latif Ahmed, Pakistan China and America, Council for Pakistan Studies, Karachi, 1980, pp.33-36.
11. Ibid, p.122.
12. Burke, S.M., 'Pakistan's Foreign Policy: A Historical Analysis', Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1973, p.108.
13. Wilber, John, 'Pakistan', Hrat Press, New Haven, USA, 1964, p.316.
14. American Review, July 1958.
15. Dawn, Karachi, 17th February 1960.
16. Maxwell, Neville, 'India China War', Jonathan Cape, London, 1971, p.273.
17. Ibid, p.274.
18. Bhutto, Z.A., op. cit., p.3.
19. Dawn, Karachi, 16th November 1949, (Cited from Pakistan Horizon, XII, I, 1959, p.48).

20. Pakistan Horizon, op. cit., p.48.
21. Ibid, p.51.
22. New York Times, 7th January, 195.
23. American-Pakistan Relations. 1 Documents Vanguard Book Ltd., Lahore, 1984, p.81.
24. Venkataramani, M.S., The American Role in Pakistan 1947-58, Vanguard Books Ltd., Lahore, 1984, p.348.
25. Wilber, John, op.cit., p.318.
26. Bhutto, Z.A., op.cit., p.5.
27. Pakistan Horizon, op.cit., p.16.
28. Sharma, B.L., 'Pakistan China Axis', Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1968, p.139.
29. Maxwell, Neville, op.cit., p.274.
30. Wilber, John, op.cit., p.320.
31. Peoples Daily, 23rd July 1959.
32. Pakistan Horizon, op.cit., p.6.
33. Dawn, Karachi, 25th December 1956.
34. Dawn, Karachi, 11th February, 1957.
35. Dutt, Vidya Parkash., 'China and the World': An Analysis of Communist China's Foreign Policy, Preager, New York, 1966, p.229.
36. Peking Review, 28th July, 1959.
37. Rizvi, Mujtaba, 'The Frontiers of Pakistan', National Publishing House Ltd., Karachi, 1971, p.79.
38. Bhutto, Z.A., op.cit., pp.5, 49.
39. Ibid., p.131.
40. bid., p.6.