

Pak-US A Balance Sheet of Relations

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The recent contradictory diplomatic rhetoric on Pak-US front has initiated a debate in the National Assembly to re-count the policy options of Pakistan towards the US, especially after 9/11 saga had put it into American fold sans any other option. The US has been, since then, asking Pakistan to do more in Taliban and al-Qaeda hunt whereas Pakistan has been alluding to its efforts, sacrifices and limitations. The US diplomats, after release of NIE (National Intelligence Estimates) report, are forcing Washington to opt for direct attacks into Pakistani territory along Pak-Afghan border to eliminate al-Qaeda hideouts and safe havens. They have, also, criticized the Bush for the monetary benefits he has been giving to Pakistan for nothing. Pakistan, nonetheless, has denounced this move by narrating the sacrifices its army made (losing more than 800 lives) for being an ally of the US in the ongoing war on terror besides mentioning the damage it has received from the terrorists. The strengthening of US-India nuclear knot is also being viewed as a matter of real concern for Pakistan.

Washington has recently got a bill passed from its legislature making aid to Pakistan conditional to its performance in war on terror. The Pakistani ruling elite has conveyed its concerns to the Washington that any such move could damage the ongoing counter-terrorism alliance. What concerns the US most about Musharraf regime at present is fragility it got after the Apex Court decided against the Presidential reference, filed against the Chief Justice of Pakistan. The Lal Mosque operation, political opposition, President's re-election and uniform issue, and the formation of some alliances for the new government (especially pressure from the West to give room to moderate political forces like Benazir Bhutto) are some factors which are not only causing an internal in-security in Pakistan but have also heightened the US concerns about the ongoing war on terror.

Opening Relations Book:

Instantly after establishment of Pakistan in 1947, Pakistan's security and economic concerns compelled it to incline towards American block. Meanwhile, the US was looking for a 'friend' in the region to thwart the spread of communism in South Asia and to counter emerging China. A series of treaties (May 1954: US-Pakistan Mutual Aid, September 1954: membership of SEATO, September 1955: membership of CENTO) did two things besides giving an air of security and protection to the new-born country. First, these pacts, along with some domestic governance constraints, introduced military as a component with some durability in the political system of Pakistan. Secondly, Pakistan's foreign policy got its opening features.

The United States agreed to give military assistance and invite Pakistan to join military pacts because at that time the US believed that there was a real threat of Communist attack and subversion both in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Thus, the United States must have felt that Pakistan, because of its unique geographical position, could become one end of the northern tier opposing the Soviet Union in the Middle East and could provide protection to Southeast Asia on its Western flank.

Many advantages accrued to Pakistan as a result of its alliance with the United States. In terms of the badly needed military hardware, the total assistance extended to Pakistan from 1954 to 1965 amounted to (between) \$ 1.2 to \$ 1.5 billion.[1] But economic assistance in the form of Public Law 480 or other agricultural commodity programs, grants for economic developments, technical assistance development grants, and loans of various kinds was much higher. Over the period from 1947 through June 30, 1965, economic assistance of this nature amounted to \$ 3 billion.

However, Pakistan also had to assume certain disadvantages arising from its membership in the United States-sponsored alliances. In August, 1953, after a series of bilateral negotiations, a joint communiqué was issued by the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan that the Kashmir dispute should be settled through a fair and impartial plebiscite and that the plebiscite administrator for this purpose should be appointed by the end of April, 1954. But when Mr. Nehru came to know that

Pakistan was engaged in preliminary negotiations with the United States regarding an alliance, he warned Pakistan in December, 1953, that the agreement set out in the joint communiqué of August, 1953, would not be carried out because the 'whole context' of the Kashmir agreement "will change if military aid comes to Pakistan." [2] Pakistan, later, tried to save the agreement when the Prime Ministers met in May, 1955, but failed.

Similarly, the Soviet Union, which had maintained a neutral stand on Kashmir dispute, in 1955, accused Pakistan of becoming a member of "an aggressive Western alliance" and Mr. Khrushchev declared that Kashmir was an integral part of India. After that, the Soviet Union vetoed every resolution on Kashmir that was opposed by India.

It was pointed out in the House of Representatives that one of the advantages the United States derived from its military alliance with Pakistan was this: "In its relations with other Moslem states and other members of the Afro-Asian bloc, Pakistan can be an efficacious advocate of Western policies and can exert a moderating influence on the extreme nationalism and anti-Western attitudes of some of the members of these groups." [3] But so far as Pakistan was concerned, its alliance with the United States turned out to be a serious liability in its relations with Afro-Asian countries. India often contemptuously referred to Pakistan as a country which had degraded itself by becoming a camp follower of a Western power. [4] The hostility that Pakistan incurred in the Arab world, particularly because it was one of the founding members of the Baghdad Pact, which was bitterly opposed by President Nasser, was even stronger than that of India. As a result the Arab world was not prepared to support Pakistan in its stand on Kashmir even though Pakistan was a Muslim country claiming to struggle for the self-determination of the Kashmiri Muslims.

Unfolding the 'Strategic-Depth' Pages:

When the United States decided to extend military aid to India in the wake of the Sino-Indian border war in October, 1962, Pak-US relations took a sharp turn for the worse, and relations between Pakistan and China were lifted to a higher level of cordiality. But a reappraisal of American policy towards India and Pakistan had been going on ever since President Kennedy came to power in 1961. Even before, some of the liberal intellectuals in the Democratic Party had put forward the view that India, being the most influential and powerful democracy in Asia, should be supported by the West in the ideological and power struggle that was taking place in Asia between the 'Free World' and a communist power like China. [5] Selig Harrison of the New Republic had expressed this view in blunt terms: "India is the great power of South Asia. It is not the business of the US to subsidize Pakistan as a permanent garrison state with a military capability swollen out of all proportions to her size." [6] Similarly, some of these leaders did not view with sympathy the historical depth and intensity that lay behind the Pakistan's Muslim nationalism. [7] Later, in September, 1964, Senator Humphrey declared the United States must realize that in the long-run, the only possible defence against Communism in Southeast Asia was an Asian coalition of powers "with India as its main forces". [8]

Pakistani leaders were also aware of this change in American thinking. Foreign Minister Muhammad Ali Bogra, who had been one of the architects of Pakistan's alliances with the United States, declared in the National Assembly in 1962 that the great powers were not attaching much importance to the pacts and regional security arrangements. [9] President Ayub Khan was not only aware of these shifts in American policy; he was even prepared to cooperate with India in forging a common front against the inroads of Communism in Asia. But the most essential condition for this cooperation was the settlement of Kashmir problem.

After Sino-Indian war erupted in 1962 and heavy US aid and military assistance started pouring in India, both Foreign Minister Bhutto and President Ayub Khan suggested that Pakistan expected

Chinese support in the event of an Indian attack.[10] A bitter press campaign started against the United States in the Pakistani press, and the US was openly accused of interfering in Pakistan's domestic politics and fomenting conflict between East and West Pakistan.

United States, however, remained very careful during the 1965 Pak-India war. "In response to Pakistan's request for American assistance during the war, US Secretary of State Dean Rusk declined, saying bluntly that the United States was being invited in on the crash landing without having been in on the take-off".[11] During the course of fighting between Pakistan and India, President Ayub appealed to President Johnson for his intervention and said that the President should tell both Pakistan and India, which depended on large United States aid programs, that the United States "will not stand for this conflict" and that the two countries should arrange a purposeful and permanent ceasefire.[12] Later, after the ceasefire had been brought about under the Security Council resolution of September 20, 1965, Ayub visited Washington on December 14 and 15, 1965. According to President Ayub, his meeting with President Johnson cleared the misunderstanding that existed between the two countries regarding Pakistan's relationship with China, which, according to the Pakistani view, had been dictated by "compulsion of geo-political factors".[13] Since the December meeting the relations between the two countries started improving. After 1971 war Pakistan once again realized that US can support India against China but can't support Pakistan against India thus withdrew from SEATO in 1972 and, later, CENTO in 1979 and joined Non-Aligned Movement.

Bhutto re-evaluated the nature of Pak-US relations after he assumed power in 1971. He explained this re-evaluation in terms of change in objective conditions and geo-political realities that called for a continued alliance with the US though he was charged by his opponents that this was another facet of Bhutto's opportunism. Bhutto was forced to face this reality in view of Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971, China-US rapprochement and the Pakistan military's need for the US equipment. It is conceivable that the military itself was a potent factor in retaining the alliance with the United States. The Pakistani military had links with State department which had developed and endured during different military regimes in Pakistan, and Bhutto was not prepared to disturb this linkage. In 1976, Pakistan ran in trouble with the US over the issue of acquisition of a nuclear processing plant. In 1974, India had exploded a nuclear device that revived Pakistan's insecurity syndrome. Pakistan, first, sought guarantee from Western nuclear powers and while unable to secure some such framework decided to go for nuclear option. It was in 1976 that Pakistan signed an agreement with France for a nuclear processing plant. The United States attempted to dissuade both France and Pakistan from making such a deal, but did not succeed. After the nuclear deal, the relations between the Bhutto regime and the US deteriorated. President Carter's administration was publicly hostile to the Bhutto regime's insistence on pursuing a nuclear option. In July 1977 when, after wide spread protest, the Bhutto regime was overthrown by the military, there were speculations and reports of the United States having encouraged the military takeover.[14]

Reading Between the 'Climax' Lines:

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, once again, highlighted the common interest of Pakistan and the United States in peace and stability in South Asia. The invasion proved to be great threat for both Pakistan and US. As victory of Soviet Union meant that they will be crossing the borders to reach the Arabian Sea waters through Pakistan. And for USA their invasion meant further expansion of Soviet power in the region which was not acceptable to it.

In 1981, the United States and Pakistan agreed on a military and economic assistance program aimed at helping Pakistan deal with the heightened threat to security in the region and its economic development needs. Congress authorized a \$3.2 billion five-year aid package in 1981 including 40 F-16 aircrafts, and President Reagan administration pledged to provide further assistance of \$4 billion

for next five years (1987-1993) and exempted Pakistan from the Symington and Glenn Amendments for a period of 6 years ending 1987. In exchange, Pakistan served as a channel for covert US military aid to Afghan rebel forces, the Mujahedeen, fighting the Soviet occupation army.

In March 1986, the two countries agreed on a second multi-year economic development and security assistance program. On October 1, 1990, however, the United States suspended all military assistance and new economic aid to Pakistan under the Pressler Amendment, which required that the President certify annually that Pakistan “does not possess a nuclear explosive device.”

India's decision to conduct nuclear tests in May 1998 and Pakistan's matching response set back US relations in the region, which had seen renewed US interest during the second Clinton Administration. A presidential visit scheduled for the first quarter of 1998 was postponed and, under the Glenn Amendment, sanctions restricted the provision of credits, military sales, economic assistance, and loans to the government. An intensive dialogue on nuclear nonproliferation and security issues between Deputy Secretary Talbott and Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad was initiated, with discussions focusing on CTBT signature and ratification, FMCT negotiations, export controls, and a nuclear restraint regime. The October 1999 overthrow of the Nawaz Sharif government triggered an additional layer of sanctions which included restrictions on foreign military financing and economic assistance. U.S. Government assistance to Pakistan was limited mainly to refugee and counter-narcotics assistance.

The Soviet-war climax of Pak-US relations revived and regained strength after 9 /11 debacle. Pakistan moved decisively to ally itself with the United States in its war against Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. It gave the U.S. a number of military airports and bases, for its attack on Afghanistan. This commitment of Pakistan helped USA a lot in its war against terrorism. Being a major ally of US, Pakistan has been gaining various monetary benefits since the war on terror started.

Four broad areas have constituted the basis of relations between the US and Pakistan since the terrorist attacks of 9/11:

Working together in the global war on terrorism.

Helping the states of South Asia to enhance regional stability.

Aiding Pakistan to strengthen economic, social, political, and democratic development.

Building bridges between US and Pakistani people in order to foster greater mutual understanding between the two countries.

With regard to the global war on terrorism, Pakistan has, since September 2001, become one of the United States' most important partners in its 'war on terror'. The governments of the two countries have worked closely and cooperatively to neutralize the remnants of al-Qaeda and the Taliban that remain in the region. Both countries have coordinated their efforts relating to intelligence, law enforcement, finance, and military authorities to successfully apprehend well over 500 suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives to date.

Pakistan is bearing its share of the human cost of fighting the war on terror. Approximately 800 of its soldiers have been killed in such operations. Some 80,000 security personnel are deployed in NWFP and FATA region. During 2005 heavy casualties of troops were witnessed. After North Waziristan and South Waziristan agreements the situation remained relative calm but the militants kept on

advancing with their radical agenda towards the settled districts of NWFP and even to Islamabad. Reportedly the militants from tribal belt hijacked the radicalized clerics in Lal Mosque and started challenging the writ of the government. On Tuesday, July 3, 2007, an indefinite curfew was imposed in G-6 sector (Islamabad) where Lal Masjid and Jamia Hafsa are located and troops from Pakistan army's 111 Brigade and units of Special Services Group (SSG) commandoes took control of the complex. Sporadic clashes between Lal Mosque students and the security forces continued for 8 days and finally after death of Abdul Rashid Ghazi, 'Masjid' was rescued. These 8 days of operation killed 106 persons and injured another 213. This was not over as during one month of July Pakistan had to face 15 fierce suicide attacks from the pro-Taliban militants, mostly in NWFP's settled areas.

Tribal Areas and Islamabad (only one was reported from outside these areas i.e. Balochistan). These 15 suicide attacks took 191 lives and injured scores of others. Militants targeted security personnel in these attacks. The current situation in North, South Waziristan, Bajaur Agency, Tank, Bannu, Swat and other settled districts bordering tribal belt and Pak-Afghan border is very critical from security point of view. Direct clashes between the security forces and the pro-Taliban militants have become a routine matter and casualties are reported from both sides on daily basis. Previously North Waziristan was at red alert and now the South Waziristan has also caught fire. Further, there are reports that NATO forces have started the al-Qaeda hunt operations along Pak-Afghan border.

This speaks a lot about Pakistan's internal security threats that emerged after its alliance with the US to counter terrorism. Some of the steps taken by the government of Pakistan have generated controversy and opposition from some quarters in the country as well. There is annoyance and anger among the people of Tribal Areas specially and a critical resentment every where in Pakistan against US-Pakistan alliance.

With regard to the second goal of regional stability, simply put: what happens in South Asia matters to the United States, and it matters to the world. The population of South Asian region is vast; and so is the amount of weaponry that exists, to which the nuclear capability has also been added. But it is also the one region of the world with perhaps the highest level of untapped human and economic potential anywhere - potential that, if fully exploited, could change the international economic and social landscape in fundamental ways.

In order to realize the full potential of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and the other countries in South Asia, the United States has worked with these countries to ensure regional political and military stability. The US is spending much time these days on helping to foster better ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and between Pakistan and India. Both relationships are fraught with historical tensions and mistrust.

With regard to the third priority area, the US has been involved is helping Pakistan to strengthen its economic, social, political, and democratic development. It is currently undertaking a multi-billion dollar; multi-faceted assistance programme that it hopes will ensure the stable and balanced development of Pakistani society. This programme includes development assistance, balance-of-payment support, debt rescheduling and forgiveness, and agricultural, trade, and investment support. USAID has returned to Pakistan with major assistance programmes in such areas as education, health, governance, and micro-finance. The American Business Council based in Karachi is an important testament to the success, American companies have had in Pakistan. Regarding advancement in democracy and good governance, the US is taking much interest in future political alliances for formation of the government for the next tenure.

Concerning the fourth area of increasing understanding between the people of the US and Pakistan. There is currently too much mistrust and lack of understanding, particularly when it comes to the question of tightened visa and entry procedures to the US.

Future Counts:

The current phase of PAK-US relations has greater strategic depth than they have ever enjoyed in the history. The new geo-strategic realities like nuclear South Asia, energy security, counter-terrorism regime and economic pursuits (especially trade liberalism) can not peter out the significance of Pakistan in regional and global politics. Pakistan has its own geo-strategic, security and economic concerns. However, what is needed, is a more comprehensive, democratic and political strategic advancement of policy options.

The renewed US-India relations need to be witnessed as a separate entity. These have been moving parallel to the Pak-US relations in the past as well. The United States, nonetheless, wants Indo-Pak reconciliation, vital for stability of the region and detrimental to the global security, especially in the context of ongoing war on terror. This can give an impetus to the on-going peace process between India and Pakistan provided they are ready to respond proactively to the opportunities knocking at their doors.

As regards the US future-count of the region, views expressed by Ambassador Crocker while talking to local journalists at the residence of the consulate principal officer seem very relevant. "I want to stress how important Pakistan has been for the US, all the way from Cold War to Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and now the war on terror. But there are high points, succeeded by low points. We are up now. The challenge we face is to broaden and deepen our relations that are not subject to downturn seen in the past. Things are going very well at the moment. We are cooperating in war on terror against a common enemy. But it should not be the whole story. There should be more attention on the economic dimension of our relations. I met with the representatives of business community in Lahore. I met the chief minister. In these meetings we explored issues of greater access to US market for the Pakistani goods, US direct investment in Pakistan and creation of an environment and conditions where all this could take place."

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[1] The Washington Post, August 12, 1965; The New York Times, August 29, 1965

[2] The New York Times, December 24, 1953

[3] Mutual Security Act of 1958. Hearing before House Committee on Foreign Relations, 85th Congress, 2nd session, April 15-16, 1958 (Washington: 1958), p.1753.

[4] K. Sarwar Hasan, "Pakistan and the United Nations" (New York: Manhattan Publishing Co., 1960), p. 73

[5] For Chester Bowles' and Kennedy's statements, see Selig S. Harrison, "India and the United States", (New York: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 28 and 64.

[6] Selig S. Harrison, "India, Pakistan and the United States", Reprint from August 10, August 24, and September 7, 1959, issues of the New Republic.

[7] See Chester Bowles, "Ambassador's Report", (New York: Harper, 1954), pp. 70-71 and 251-253; Adlai Stevenson, "Call to Greatness", (New York: Harper 1954), p. 23; and The Round Table, LIII(1962-63), 393.

[8] The New York Times, September 13, 1964.

[9] National Assembly of Pakistan Debates, I, No. 12 (June 27, 1962), pp. 621-622

[10] For Bhutto's statement, see The Round Table, LIII (1962-63), 398. For Ayub's statement, see The Washington Post, September 12, 1963.

[11] Tahir Kheli, "India, Pakistan and the United States: Breaking With the Past. P. 35

[12] The Washington Daily News, September 15, 1965.

[13] The Times, December 20, 1965.

[14] Tahir Kheli, pp. 54-55; also Lawrence Ziring, "Pakistan and India: Politics, Personalities and Foreign Policy", Asian Survey, Vol. VIII, No. 7, July 1978, pp. 717-724.

