



Challenges to Pakistan's Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: 1991-2001

Vol. IV, No. 1 (Winter 2019) | Page: 1 – 7 | DOI: 10.31703/grr.2019(IV-I).01

p- ISSN: 2616-955X | e-ISSN: 2663-7030 | ISSN-L: 2616-955X

Ahmad Ali*

Khurshaid Ahmad†

Zahir Shah‡

Abstract

Pakistan's geo-strategic position determined her foreign policy choices and directions during the global cold war conflict. The dawn of the new global system brought new phase of challenges and constraints for Pakistan. This new unipolar power structure obliged Pakistan to think in terms of reorientation of her foreign policy because it had lost her importance and opportunities after the Afghan war. Pakistan has faced the challenge of increasing isolation mainly because of these factors in the decade of 90s. Firstly, security secondly, her nuclear program and sanctions, thirdly, political uncertainty and inconsistency in determining foreign policy goals, fourthly, regional constraints like Afghan Taliban factor, fifthly, Nuclear tests and finally, her support of Kashmir freedom struggle.

Key Words: Cold War, Foreign Policy, US Strategy, Taliban, Nuclear Tests, Globalization

Introduction

In early 90s, the demise of Soviet Union resulted in the victory of liberal capitalism against the opponent politico-economic ideology- Communism. Consequently, the world power structure shifted from bipolarity to unipolarity. The global changes momentarily affected Pakistan as it had remained an important ally of capitalist bloc, led by US, since former inception as an independent state in 1947.

From 1979 to the 1991, Pakistan hold a significant international position because of its role in Afghan war against Soviet expansionism, but the events of the decade of 1990s fundamentally changed the scenario. Pakistan was pushed towards isolationism and sanctions were imposed for the perusal of its nuclear program. Its nuclear program came under strict surveillance which was once ignored because of its need. In addition, USSR's disintegration further weakened Pakistan's international support with regard to Kashmir. Pakistan reiterated its support for Kashmir freedom struggle, on moral and political grounds. International community questioned Pakistan's support for Kashmir's freedom struggle on various grounds. Pakistan's extension of recognition to Taliban regime and its nuclear tests in May 1998 defamed it internationally. USA enlisted Pakistan in terrorists sponsored states of the world. Because of the mentioned factors, some of the members of international community called Pakistan an irresponsible state that caused its partial isolation that further triggered various challenges for Pakistan's foreign policy which is the focus of the paper.

US Sanctions against Pakistan

After the Soviet withdrawal, Pakistan's nuclear program came under strict observation of Washington. In reaction, USA imposed sanctions under Pressler Amendment. The Amendment was approved by the US senate in 1985 but was activated in 1990s on 'suitable' time (Jaffrelot, 2004). Pakistan's military and economic assistance was conditioned to the discontinuation of its nuclear program. USA suspended \$700 million dollars aid to Pakistan which was scheduled to be given to Pakistan in the years 1988 to 1994 (Farooq, 2016). Under this amendment, USA also stopped the transferring of F-16 Air Crafts for which Pakistan has already paid one billion

* PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan.

† Lecturer, Department of International Relations, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan.

Email: khurshid4ir@uop.edu.pk

‡ Assistant Professor, Department of Political Sciences, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

dollars in cash. Thus injustice committed to Pakistan in terms of sanctions imposed over her posed serious financial challenges to Pakistan and her sacrifices during the Afghan war were totally put into back burner.

Pakistan's Recognition to Taliban Regime: Facing another Challenge of International Disapproval

In May 1997, Pakistan recognized Taliban regime which provoked international criticism. There were a number of factors due to which Pakistan recognized Taliban's government. Firstly both Pakistan and Afghanistan shares some common ethnic entities which required the conduct of bilateral trade and travel. Secondly Pakistan felt urge to negotiate with Taliban's government on the subject of returning of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. Thirdly despite the opposition of Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazara communities, Pakistan was hopeful with the Taliban regime as it was the only group which was having some goodwill sentiments with regard to Pakistan. International community blamed Pakistan for supporting Taliban's government in controlling Afghanistan. Uzbekistan and Iran explicitly held Pakistan responsible for the emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan. They also helped opposition warlords in terms of supplying cash, arms and ammunitions to them. In this way they added fuel to the already existing fire of the civil war. Pakistan has also tried its best to agree the other friendly Muslim states to recognize Taliban regime. Consequently, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) recognized Taliban regime (Buyers, 2003). Pakistan's moral, political and material support enraged Washington and alleged Pakistan for supporting internationally most wanted terrorist Osama Bin Laden who took asylum in Afghanistan under Taliban government.

Pakistan tried her best to remove differences between Taliban and USA. In 1998 Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif attempted accordingly but Taliban showed stubborn attitude and they did not anticipate the detrimental consequences for opposing US stance. Instead of acting over the advice of Pakistan, Taliban developed its secret contacts with the religious groups and fractions in Pakistan that were later on found in cross border terrorism in it. Again Pakistan exerted pressure to convince Taliban government after 9-11 to expel Osama from Afghanistan but failed and consequently Taliban remained deprived of their rule over Afghanistan with in few weeks after NATO attacked on (Gall, 2013).

Dramatic Change in US priorities in South Asia After the end of the Cold War: Tilt towards India, Alienating Pakistan.

US South Asia policy in post-cold war scenario was changed in two aspects. First, the Soviet Union no longer remained the matter of concern in the US policy towards South Asia, Washington, instead, started to look from a regional perspective to the Subcontinent and began to deal with Pakistan and India in a changed or different way. Secondly, US perceived that the threats came from within the region rather than from somewhere else thus non-proliferation, free market economy, democracy and human rights became the core elements of the US policy in connection to South Asia.

US tilt towards India: Reasons

1. The Soviet Union collapse had disturbed India's foreign policy and her defense strategy that assured India that she could no longer use Soviet Union to counter weight US (Cohen, 2001). In the post-Cold War scenario US no longer suspected Indian attitude.
2. After the Soviet withdrawal, Pakistan's strategic importance in the eye of USA had declined greatly. As India became the predominant state in the subcontinent and US considered her as an important ally for maintaining regional stability and peace.
3. India's economy had changed due to Narsima Rao's reforms to a market one from central planning system (Bajpal, 1995). Washington considered India as a huge potential Market, of goods and technology.
4. India is a largest and long lasting democracy in south Asia and due to this factor USA have closer empathy with her than Pakistan.

Clinton administration and his policy in the post-cold war era is worth mentioning. These were the geopolitical considerations that brought changes into US policy towards South Asia in general and specifically towards India. Though Clinton's administration on one side tried to build strategic partnership with China, but at the same time his administration envisaged India to counterweight China in South Asia.

The process of US tilt towards India began in the late 1990s as New Delhi and Washington turned from "estranged democracies" of cold war to "engaged democracies" in the era of post-cold war (Khan, 2007). This US inclination can be perceived in the following arguments:

1. US developed institutionalized and a comprehensive relationship with India that consists of broad fields like, political dialogue, economic ties and military exchanges.
2. US put pressure on Pakistan with regard to its Kashmir policy to respect the line of control (LOC) and advocated the dialogue process between Pakistan and India to resolve the issue without use of force. Thus it was more favorable to India.
3. Washington in South Asia, recognized leading position of India and more broadly its main role, and developed more cooperation with India.
4. In South Asia India became the main or largest recipient of US food and development aid. In FY 2000 US aid to India covered a total of \$ 170 million (Guihong, 2003. April-June). Comparatively in the whole Asia, it was the second largest amount (2nd to Indonesia) and 45 times more than that of Pakistan (only \$ 3.78 million).

Pakistan one of the Great recipients of Washington assistance previously as an ally of US received only \$600 million in 1980s per annum which is a meager amount (Hilali, 2017). Prior to September 2001, Pakistan received only food and counter narcotics assistance (totaling \$ 5.4 million in FY 2001) due to sanctions imposed on Pakistan (Hilali, 2017). For the first in 1990, US imposed sanctions when the Pressler's amendment came into effect, second time in 1998, when Pakistan conducted nuclear tests and third time in 1999 more sanctions were imposed in response to military coup of Musharraf.

US inclination towards India meant the policy of "India First" but it does not always mean as "India only". Clinton's decision of five hours stay in Pakistan during his South Asia visit revealed that Pakistan was still important for Washington need her assistance mainly due to Taliban's insurgency in Afghanistan and Kashmir (Dixit, 2001).

Factors Responsible for Change in US Strategy

There are about six prominent factors that were responsible for the change i.e. (the improvement in Indo-US relations and mistrust in Pak-US relations in the late 1990s), in US strategy towards South Asia. These factors are given as follows:

1. Soviet involvement in Afghanistan was a major hurdle in Indo-US relations which was now removed and Pakistan's importance in the South Asia unexpectedly vanished.
2. Rapid economic development of India made it important trade and investment partner for United States, the Pakistan economy in contrast remained aid oriented only to which still US was a major supplier along with other several international economic organizations and china (Bajpal, 1995).
3. The growing community of Indian Americans as the richest settler community played a vital role in American politics and economy, as compared to India, Pakistani Americans strength and their political role was nominal in American society (Gupta, 2013).
4. The emerging Indian Ocean's strategic importance, which connects in East Asia with the oil-rich Persian Gulf. From geopolitical perspective; Indian Ocean and the subcontinent connect US's European Atlantic strategy with the strategy of Asia Pacific (Guihong, 2003). These two were connected with each other during the cold war but when the US started to think about new European strategy that need to deal with threats from the uncertain future ranging from China to Russia thus it was not Pakistan but India that could play a key role in this new plan.
5. Pakistan and India had different status in US eyes, as an emerging India was seen with blasting democracy and economic potential while Pakistan was considered almost a failed state with military regime and failed economic position.

- American policy makers considered Russia, India and China with uncertain futures that were titled as three transitional states (Ludestad, 2013). Different from Russia and China, US improved relations with India; however, it was the best way for the US to break through the Sino-India-Russian strategic triangle. This triangle was first proposed in 1999 by the then Russian Prime Minister Primakov. Pakistan in such kind of power game had no position.

Summing up we can say that US top priority goals in the post-cold war period were to stop the production and proliferation of Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and in the 3rd world countries to increase her focus on regional conflicts and regional stability. US security strategy priorities in South Asia restricted now to the dangers of a possible nuclear war between Pakistan and India. First the nuclear test in 1998 and then the Kargil episode completely changed US views with regard to South Asia. US objectives and interests in South Asia with regard to the Kashmir dispute and nuclear arms race in the subcontinent compelled USA to come forth with a new grand strategy in terms of Pakistan and India sharply.

Pakistan's Chaghi Nuclear Tests: Reaction of the outside World

Pakistan conducted nuclear tests Ras Koh Hills in Chaghi district of Baluchistan province in May 28, 1998. The whole nation celebrated this memorable event with open heart and expressed their bliss. Pakistani scientists won the hearts of the people of their country because its government could not succumb to the pressure of Clinton administration. The UN Security Council ascertained nuclear tests of Pakistan, and advised it to avoid the nuclear arms race with his opponent India. Pakistan came again under US economic sanctions due to her conduct of nuclear tests which were necessary for maintaining balance of power in the region. It is due to comprehending the need and partly due to her own concerns that they avoid to put more sanctions. That time Pakistan was in process to get 350,000 tons wheat form USA.

The Kargil Conflict 1998-99: A Great Setback to Pakistan's Image across the World

At the time when the Kashmir cause was under strict scrutiny and observations, Pakistan made a misadventure in Northern Kashmir at Kargil in very crucial time. In 1998 winter they operated the same mission very silently; they climbed at the trembling cold to the main heights across the line of control (Surana, 2017). Due to bitter cold the Indian army used to quit such heights as it was difficult for them to remain there in such extreme situation and environment. When this operation was operated, it was that occasion when Pakistan and India were busy in strategic talks to make good bilateral relations and Vajpayee came through Wagha border by bus to Lahore, the same visit was appreciated and even received with happiness and hope of improvement in relations (Jain, 2010).

The situations related to launching operation of the Kargil was kept in secret even form the higher authorities. Because both General Musharraf and Nawaz Sharif's opinions about the takeover were quite different and the same operation put the country in very strange and disturbing circumstances (Wirsing, 2003). Though the dispute was associated to Kashmir territory but still it had great influence on Pakistan's Kashmir policy. Pakistan army was involved in the same takeover and they climbed at Kargil heights without having a strong back of logistic provision and other related equipment to keep and maintained the same position. Once it come to enemy notice they responded with striking force, which was detrimental for Pakistan.

The army units were given alarm in 1998 winters to cross the line of control and takeover the high positions in Kargil. Musharraf himself explains it as "by the end of April the unoccupied gaps along seventy five miles (120 kilometers) of the line of control had been secured by over 100 new posts with 10-20 persons each" (Musharraf, 2008). In May 1999, first time the soldiers from both the sides came face to face to each other. India prepared itself very soon for facing the serious situation and even launched heavy artillery as her pre-emptive measure to face the challenge of full scale war.

India used heavy artillery and 200 aircrafts when they started strikes on the positions occupied by Pakistan. The forces fought well to the "last man last bullet". Pakistan was not having any artillery or logistic assistance because the skies were completely in Indian controlled territory. Musharraf narrated the situation as, "five battalions in support of freedom fighters groups were able to entangle more than four Indian divisions. The Indians were also forced to mobilize their entire national resources including their air force. By July 4th 1999, they achieved some success, which I would call insignificant" (Musharraf, 2008).

The Indian government response to the same takeover was of duplicity, wrath and amazement and at last applied the military reaction. India voiced at every platform against the incursion by Pakistan army and tried their best to blame it. Pakistan kept aside their involvement as usual in the same incursion and associated it with the Mujahidin.

Pakistan's Assistance to Kashmir Freedom Struggle: And Doubts of International Community

Pakistan assisted Kashmir both overtly and covertly in post-cold war era. Security and intelligence agencies, military and even bureaucracy were involved passionately. In the early nineties freedom fighters got great success in the valley, attacking and killing the Indian forces, which pressurized the India and in reaction they enhanced their troops to 500,000 in order to get control over the insurgents (Ganguly & Kapur, 2008). It was the same policy that Zia adopted against Soviets in Afghanistan. He used to train jihadist groups and would let them enter into Afghanistan, carried out the attacks and used to emerge as the common local people and would suddenly disappear there. Zia had made a special policy for that "to keep the pot boiling" such efforts used to put huge pressure on the opponents (Heymann, 2008). The same policy was adopted in 1990s for Kashmir which bore fruits. Marry Ann Weaver says that Zia Afghanistan formula is applied in Kashmir successfully.

India yet with huge diplomatic, military and economic power successfully controlled the situation. On diplomatic and political fronts, India remained successful to influence US. Accordingly they blamed Pakistan for being the state which nourishes the terrorists. Similarly India came closer to Russia and Iran and made a new strategic alliance against Taliban regime. With such Indian efforts Pakistan lost the opportunity of the Iranian strong support which was at its peak during Raza Shah Pehlevi era (Husain, 2016). Indians paid a lot in facing the insurgents, because with 70x90 kilometer valley India was organizing million troops, which never let to put heavy pressure on the valley controlled by India. At the same time India was also involved at the borders with Pakistan armies and even sometime made heavy casualties. As the dispute entered into second decade, there were no signs that India will come to solve the issue on table. The combination of Taliban with Al-Qaeda gave strength to Indian stance that there was a strong link between Al-Qaeda, Taliban and Pakistan's intelligence agencies (Gupta, 2004). Pakistan had arranged to keep Indian army in pressure in Kashmir, but there were no signs of the settlement of the Kashmir issue 1999. In these circumstances army organized the operation of the Kargil which had greatly influenced the Kashmir cause internationally.

In January 1993, US threatened Pakistan that they would keep an eagle eye on Pakistan "active containing review" to check whether Pakistan is assisting extremism in Kashmir (Gardner, 2013). The same assistance in past to Afghan cause was accepted but now when it is working in Kashmir favor is regarded as terrorism. Another important threat to US was from the foreign militants who were present in Pakistan in Afghanistan which were utilized in Afghan jihad.

Most of the countries across the world complained to Pakistan that these insurgents groups are conducting terrorist activities in their respective states. These are Philippines, Algeria, Indonesia, and Egypt. Such claims supported the Indian stance against Pakistan that the same fighters are involved in Kashmir insurgency.

These insurgents in South East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa were based on strong indoctrination of religion during the Afghan war in the decade of eighty. These fighters thus assisted with American aid increased their strength and become famous when US eliminated their aid. General Zia and the CIA organized radicals from the Muslim globe (Paulino, 2008). These poised radicals were supported and aided by various Muslim states who and have had their own interest. These Muslim states included, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Iran and Iraq.

The bulk of these extremists were when let free at their own they started living their own way of life, all of them now considered America as "Satan" because everywhere in the world it was found to struggle for the Israeli agenda and involving itself for their interests in the Muslim states. Therefore when these fighters got released from Afghan war, they adopted a new ideology which was far more difficult to bring them under control. All this proved havoc for Pakistan. Currently these militant groups are one of the major challenges that Pakistan is facing these days. Pakistan has lost more than 60000 civilians and soldiers in fighting against these militant groups.

Conclusion

Foreign policy of Pakistan since her independence has been restricted by horde of problems. These problems are materialization and putting into practice of the policy, its efficacy and internal political repercussions on it. The involvement of military and intelligence agencies in determination of foreign policy of Pakistan is one of the major problems. The main factors of this involvement are lack of political leadership, failure of democracy, Indian threat perception, its dependent economy and relations with US. These are the reasons due to which Pakistan could not successfully achieve its foreign policy objectives and is still facing formidable challenges.

Pakistan's foreign policy challenges in the post-cold war era were mainly the outcome of the aforementioned factors. Military establishment mainly dominated the foreign policy of Pakistan during and after the cold war era. They were the real players of conduct of Afghan war, Kashmir Freedom struggle and conduct of nuclear tests. Summing up, we can say that if Pakistan wants to compete and successfully face the challenges of militancy and Talibanization, US dominancy, globalization, Indian threat perception, it needs to improve her economic status, to minimize her unnecessary and covert involvement in Kashmir and in Afghanistan, and to reform her political system from gross root level. Pakistan should take into account economic competition in the region especially with India instead of arms race. The emergence of India and China in the region as the great economic powers greatly affects policy matters of Pakistan. Indeed in the current globalized world economic interests of the states receded the other matters.

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