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Sixty Years of Pakistan's Foreign Policy

By Karamatullah K.Ghori

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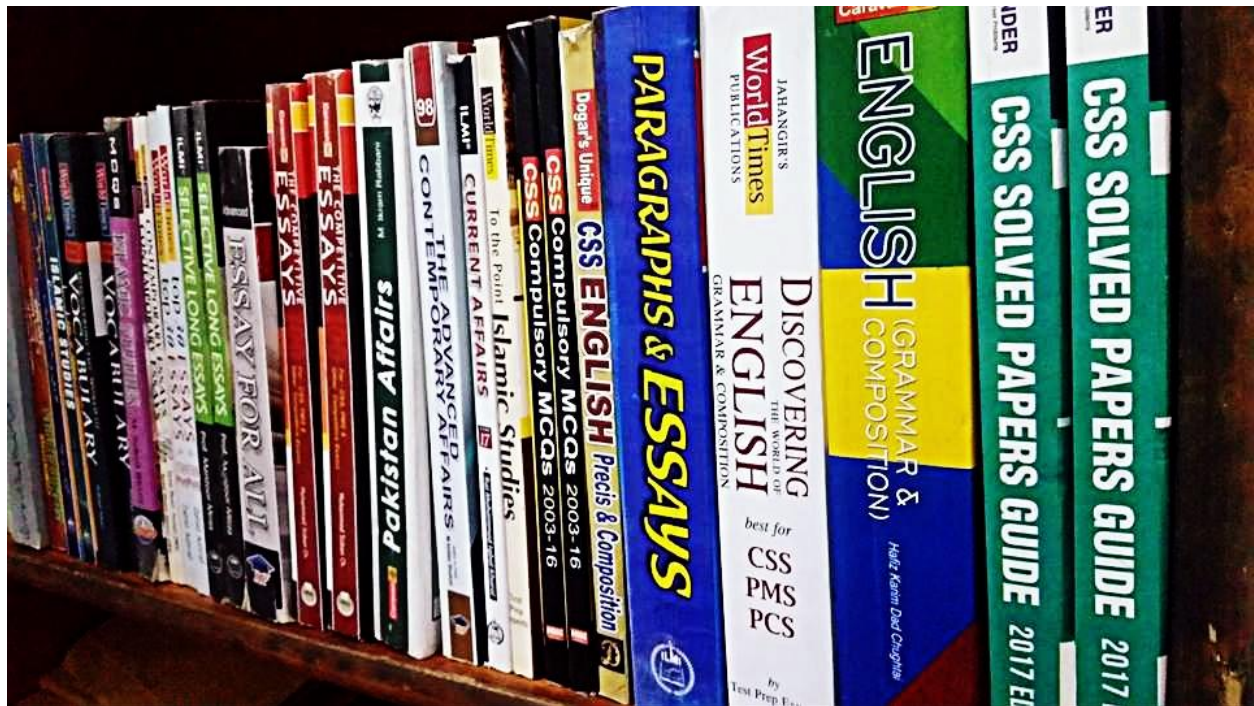
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Sixty Years of Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Karamatullah K. Ghori

A country's foreign policy, in the classical sense, is supposed to stay in lockstep with its political progression. By this yardstick, Pakistan's foreign policy has, indeed, kept as tortuous a course as its political meandering, stumbling from crisis to crisis. Another definition of a country's foreign policy says that it ought to reflect the national aspirations, goals and interests of its people. Foreign policy *gurus* have long argued that a country's foreign policy should, ideally, be a distillate of its ideology and, taking a lead from this national font, morph itself into an instrument of national strength, international respect and global recognition for its ideological bedrock.

Let us analyze Pakistan's foreign policy performance and progression against this backdrop. For facility, we may divide it into various phases, starting with the earliest one that commenced with the birth of Pakistan as a sovereign state.

First phase: Seeking unwarranted alliances

Pakistan was born in a highly unusual and tumultuous ambience. Its birth was attended by a gruesome religious-communal frenzy in which Hindus and Muslims shed a lot of each other's blood, thus leaving grievous scars of hostility on each other's psyche. Pakistan, the junior, weaker and less-privileged of the two new states emerging from the maelstrom of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent received, additionally, a much larger influx of refugees than was the case with the larger Dominion of India. It was a case, veritably, of double jeopardy and twin dilemma for the infant state of Pakistan, whose psychological impact was devastating, almost traumatic. It suddenly found itself saddled with a larder of challenges, which would be enough to test the mettle of a long-established state, much less one struggling to find its feet under daunting conditions.

The war triggered, virtually on the day after its birth, with India on the issue of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir could have only added to the sense of insecurity, which came creeping into the new nation's psyche, right behind the trail of blood from the Partition's mayhem. The death of the new nation's founding father, Mohammad Ali

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Jinnah, 13 months after the birth of Pakistan, was another devastating blow to the nation's already fragile morale. Insecurity spiralled into alarm.

The psychological trauma surrounding Pakistan's infancy as a nation became the backdrop for its hectic search for security alliances that its leadership deemed ineluctable to instil some sense of security and protection in the nation's heart. Pakistan was perceived as too weak and too under-equipped to stand up to a much larger, stronger and resourceful India all by itself. The search was quickly out to balance the inequality of power, vis-à-vis India, by finding partners who would be able to extend a security umbrella over Pakistan's head and make up for its perceptible handicap.

There could be little argument with the quest for security. However, it led Pakistan to the wrong door and laid the foundations of a foreign policy short on strategic and long-term interest but long on ad hoc and short-term tactical advantage. The keel for what subsequently mutated into Pakistan's hopelessly West-oriented and West-dependant foreign policy was laid by Liaquat Ali Khan's decision to accept the American invitation to pay an official visit to Washington and disregard an earlier invitation from the Soviet Union for a similar visit.

Much has been written in Pakistan's foreign policy annals as to why Liaquat Ali opted for Washington and ignored Moscow. Spin doctors toeing the establishment line have argued, vociferously, that it was a decision driven by pragmatism and national interest. Pakistan needed an early injection of military assistance to narrow the gap with a much stronger India; the US was the only power capable at that stage, so close on the heels of the end of World War II, to furnish that kind of material help to Pakistan. The Soviet Union, as the argument goes, was still licking its wounds of a war that had exacted a horrendous toll of 20 million of its people, and did not have the wherewithal to come to Pakistan's assistance. Another argument, an obvious after-thought concocted much later as Pakistan dug itself deeper into the hole of dependence on the West, contended that entering into an alliance with the world's prime communist and atheist power would have flown in the face of Pakistan's founding ideology of adherence to Islam and Islamic precepts. Both lines of reasoning were deceptively calibrated, deeply flawed and obtuse.

Granted that the US had come out of the war relatively unscathed and had the means to oblige a Pakistan pleading for military assistance. But how convincing, or realistic, is the assumption that the Soviet Union did not have the means to oblige Pakistan on that front? The Soviet Union

was known to be the principal source of weapons to the communists of China making the last Herculean effort to oust the Western-backed Koumintang from the mainland. The Korean War broke out in 1950—within five years of the end of World War II—and the Soviet Union pumped military assistance at a robust scale and pace to the Korean communists, as well as China, to keep the Americans at bay for three long years of a bleeding confrontation.

The argument of Pakistan being motivated and decisively swayed by its Islamic ideology to shun the godless communists was as specious as it was disingenuous and amounted to making a mockery of the Islamic precepts it supposedly strove to promote by rejecting Soviet overtures. It was a travesty of Islam's pristine universalism and myopically ignored the example set by the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) himself when he entered into treaty commitments with the Jews of Medina in the interest of ushering in an ambience of peaceful coexistence even with those who had refused to accept his divine message. Pakistan itself, subsequently, made light of its supposedly robust religiosity and religion-dictated foreign policy orientation by cultivating the closest possible relations with China, as much communist and godless as the shunned Soviet Union.

Not only that seeking security with a putative superpower, 10,000 miles from Pakistan, whose interest, at that stage in South Asian affairs was, at best marginal, made absolutely no sense to the strategic interest of Pakistan. Also, it did not augur well for Pakistan to seek security in arms and weapons only and ignore the far more crucial task of anchoring it in sound national institutions that could withstand the disappearance, by force or nature, of national icons like Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan. Liaquat Ali could be excused for being Anglophile by his feudal moorings and upbringing. Much of the leadership of the League was, like him, Anglophile and may have had insufficient or precious-little awareness of the other superpower next door in the Soviet Union.

It is a tragic fact of our history, however, that Pakistan's powerful military-bureaucratic elite had started seeking political power even in the new nation's teething period. The Rawalpindi conspiracy, hatched together by Bonapartist military officers and some left-leaning intellectuals belonging to the communist movement in Pakistan, was symptomatic of non-political forces coveting political power by any means. The unravelling of the Rawalpindi conspiracy did not, apparently, discourage these forces; they remained fixated on their mission of subverting political leadership. Their ploy sought to get Pakistan embroiled in the emerging East-West rivalry. The post-Rawalpindi conspiracy power barons, however, seemed to have calculated, rightly as far as their parochial interest was concerned, that a Pakistan tied to

American global security interest and dependent on its largesse, would be a Pakistan in thrall to them. History proved them right. But that 'initial sin' launched Pakistan's foreign policy on an elliptical curve from which it has not, to date, found a way to climb down to reality and pragmatism. The adventurism, begun early in Pakistan's infancy, has remained shorn of the sophistication expected in maturity.

Establishment apologists may dismiss it out of hand as a flight of fancy but it is not too farfetched to reason that had Pakistan not rebuffed and deflated the Soviet Union's friendly overtures so unceremoniously, the foreign policy curve of Pakistan would have developed far more smoothly than it did under its unnatural and unequal relationship—bondage, to be more precise—with the US. Cultivating the superpower closer to home would have made more eminent and rewarding sense than courting a power so distant from the shores of Pakistan, in a physical as well as metaphysical sense. Pakistan would possibly not have encountered the rough ride it did on its core dispute on Kashmir with India if it had not incurred the Soviet wrath. India, in the event of a friendly relationship between Pakistan and the Soviet Union, could not have bottled up Kashmir the way it did, with impunity, because of the *carte blanche* given to it by Moscow. It is entirely possible that there would have been no invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union if Moscow did not have such strong—and from Pakistan's point of view totally unwarranted—reservations about a Pakistan hopelessly tied to Washington's apronstrings.

But going back to the 'first sin' argument, Liaquat Ali's decision to cultivate Washington over Moscow, as a friendly superpower, did not, in his mind, amount to surrendering Pakistan's will or sovereignty as his successors so readily did, to Washington's global policy of networking against the communist bloc. The US national archives pertaining to the early period of Pakistan, recently declassified and opened to public scrutiny under the Freedom of Information Act, suggest that Liaquat Ali was not prepared to grant military base facilities to the US on Pakistan's soil. Some of the reports, written in anguish, from the American ambassador in Karachi vouch for that impression which gives good reason to cynics to argue that Washington could have had a hand in Liaquat Ali's broad-daylight murder in Rawalpindi through a hired Afghan assassin. Afghanistan's hostility to Pakistan, in that period, lends grist to the conspiracy theory surrounding Liaquat Ali's murder.

Liaquat Ali's elimination from the scene in Pakistan paved the way for a more cooperative and pliable government in Pakistan, one that was not given to dragging its feet on Washington's imperial commands and *diktats*. However, the real reason for Washington's star rising high on

Pakistan's firmament—and staying there to date—was the ascendancy of the army in Pakistan's national politics in the wake of Liaquat Ali's demise. As far as Washington's regional and global interests, focused on Pakistan or in alliance with Pakistan were concerned, they became a done thing once Pakistan slipped under the military's sway. Pakistan's alignment under SEATO, in 1954, and CENTO (successor to the 1955 Baghdad Pact) followed swiftly and in quick succession to stamp the authority of the Pakistan Army as the country's ultimate power broker. That introduced in the annals of Pakistan the bizarre innovation of foreign policy being made subservient to its ruling elite's convenience and interest, rather than the classical concept of a country's foreign policy being subordinate to its larger national interest anchored in the people's power.

As the Pakistani Bonapartes craved for the country's political mastery, its foreign policy had to be tailored to fit their requirements. A powerful army was deemed essential to knock the fear of God in the hearts of Pakistan's teeming masses. For that purpose, it was deemed ineluctable that the armed forces must be equipped with modern weapons. Washington, in its Cold War frenzy, stepped in to fill that gap. The army fell for crumbs and signed on the dotted lines. The rest, as they say, is history. With the unwarranted dismissal of the emaciated civilian government in October 1958, and the imposition of the first of a series of martial laws in the country, the fig leaf that had been hedging the army pulling the strings from behind the scene dropped, and the total military takeover of all national institutions in the country became formal.

Military rule in Pakistan incorporated American interests in its national affairs in a more systematized and robust manner. General Ayub Khan—the 'swell guy' in the eyes of his American mentors—moved quickly to cement the ties with Washington with great élan and oblige his 'friends' (he insisted, in his ghost-written memoirs that they were not his masters) generously with concessions they had been seeking for years. Ayub Khan gave a free hand to Washington to set up military bases on Pakistan's soil, something they could not convince Liaquat Ali to do. The U-2 spy scandal in which the Soviets, in May 1960, shot down over their territory an American spy aircraft and publicly paraded its pilot, Commander Gary Powers, exposed Ayub Khan's dangerous ploy, besides incurring the public wrath of Nikita Khrushchev.

Ayub Khan also aspired for the title of Washington's most loyal ally in the region by launching in concert with Turkey and Iran, two other lynchpins of the American security cordon around the Soviet Union, a supposedly economic-oriented regional association, called the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD). But the move was inspired solely to

lend greater teeth to American stranglehold over the region, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea, and bind it ever more closely with the American network of regional alliances aimed at the communist bloc.

All this pandering to American regional and global interests was going on in an autocratic Pakistan, at a time when the bulk of the newly freed Third World countries were organizing themselves zealously under the canopy of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), to chart a course of action in global affairs free of any constraints and limitations for their sovereignty.

Ayub Khan managed to get away with his haemorrhaging of Pakistan's foreign policy orientation because he was not accountable to any democratic calling or institution. Moreover, in what was destined to become a template for all subsequent Bonapartes of Pakistan, he had conflated his narrow parochial interest—the interest of Pakistan's highly tenacious and resilient ruling oligarchy made up of conniving feudals, military barons and power hungry bureaucrats—with that of Pakistan's national interest.

Since then, the interest of this ruling cabal has ruled the roost under successive military regimes, masqueraded as the core interest of Pakistan. Ironically, because of it, what was deemed from the inception of Pakistan as its real core interest—the so-called 'unfinished agenda' of the Partition of India—Kashmir, has become an unattainable target for Pakistan. Three wars with India, largely over Kashmir, have not dented India's resolve to hold on to its prized possession of Kashmir. Conversely, the five decades old status quo in Kashmir has chipped away Pakistan's earlier resolve to bend India and wrest concessions from it.

Pakistan became increasingly isolated on Kashmir as it slipped deeper into the quicksand of its military alliances with a neo-imperialist power. In the process, it lost irretrievably whatever little moral support it had garnered in the comity of nations on this dispute with India in the early years of the conflict.

Second phase: Brief interlude

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's rise to power, after the truncation of Pakistan in the dark shadow of the tragedy of December 1971, ushered in a period of course-correction in the foreign policy of the country. It was Bhutto who managed to extricate Pakistan out of the anomalies of its defence alliances and attachments with the US. But the damage had been done by then; Pakistan's credentials had become suspicious in the eyes of those

in the comity of nations that viewed military alliances with great mistrust. To date, Pakistan remains saddled with the stigma of its erstwhile military alliances with a neo-imperialist power.

Although he flaunted his credentials as a foreign policy ace with characteristic arrogance, Bhutto was also guilty of serious errors of judgment on foreign policy issues that made him look like an amateur. Bhutto's first mistake was the theatrical, almost petulant, manner of his decision to take Pakistan out of the Commonwealth. It was a decision taken in sheer pique, because the British government had hurt his 'higher-than-the Himalayas' ego. That was a crystal clear indication of how fragile Pakistan's foreign relations were in the hands of a feudal-socialist who, despite his protestations of being a democrat, brooked no interference in his feudal style of governance. The Commonwealth was the first litmus test of his sobriety as a leader, which he failed. The Commonwealth was not Britain alone but a multi-ethnic mosaic held together by the English language. Besides, despite its aura of an exclusive club, it was still the largest association of independent countries with a lot of common denominators binding them loosely. Because of Bhutto's knee-jerk behaviour, Pakistan was deprived of a considerable range of benefits and perks—for its nationals, if not for the government—enjoyed by the member states. It took 16 years, and Bhutto's own daughter, to rectify the error in the late 1980s.

Bhutto committed an even bigger wrong at Simla, in 1972, when he signed away, on proddings by Indira Gandhi, the international nature of the quarter-century-old Kashmir dispute. Up to that point, Pakistan had vigorously pursued a policy line on Kashmir that accorded the highest primacy to the skein of UN Security Council resolutions on the dispute. But at Simla, Bhutto buckled under pressure and agreed to the Indian demand to downgrade the dispute into a purely bilateral issue between the two countries, India and Pakistan. This virtually sounded the death-knell for any kind of UN role in the dispute. India has copiously capitalized on Bhutto's surrender at Simla and has since refused to allow any third party intervention in the Kashmir dispute, thus leaving Pakistan with practically no wiggle room to manoeuvre. This was an unfortunate sacrifice of Pakistan's core foreign policy interest, one that Bhutto had championed with great élan and zest as the foreign minister of Ayub Khan.

Bhutto fell for the Indian ploy because he was anxious to get the 90,000 Pakistani POWs freed from India. The canny politician in him told him that he would become an instant hero in the eyes of the Pakistan Army if he could get its officers and *jawans* released from their prison camps in India. So his personal interest was conflated with national

interest. In fact, whatever was deemed an asset to feather his nest became, instantly, the national interest. Bhutto was no different in his lust for absolute power than Ayub Khan, the military soldier of fortune whom he so routinely demonized and denounced.

Third and ongoing phase: Client state?

Bhutto paid the price of whatever innovation and independence he had ushered into Pakistan's foreign policy. With a lot of help and input from its foreign friends and mentors in the US—the same global power that had shunned and ditched Pakistan every time its assistance was needed, in 1965 or 1971—the Pakistan Army quickly put the clock back to where it was before Bhutto turned it on its head. Bhutto's nemesis, the new Bonaparte of Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq had taken note of the fact that the maverick leader had been made a 'horrible example', in the words of that non-apologetic champion and promoter of American hegemonism in the world, Henry Kissinger, because of daring to thumb his nose at the greatest superpower of our times. He was determined not to repeat that mistake. Afghanistan gave him just the opening he was waiting for to get into the American orbit; Pakistan has stayed there ever since and shows no inclination or desire to get out of it, or move away from it.

Those arguing in defence of Zia-ul-Haq contend that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in December 1979, galvanized Zia-ul-Haq's sense of pan-Islamism to rise in support of the Afghans. But that would be stretching Zia-ul-Haq's Islamism a little beyond reasonable limits. His Islamic brotherhood was taking him nowhere, even among his Arab brothers for whom he pretended to have a special niche in his heart. They were angry and annoyed with him, to the extent of not even standing on diplomatic niceties, because he had reneged on his 'solemn' commitment to them to not hang Bhutto. So, Zia-ul-Haq seized the Afghan jihad against the Soviets with both hands, more so because it offered him the God-sent opportunity to ingratiate himself with the Americans, who got their foot in the Afghan door only to kick the rival Soviet superpower in the teeth.

For Zia-ul-Haq, getting Pakistan entangled as a partisan into the superpower duel, fought on Afghan soil with no-holds-barred, was the perfect antidote to his erstwhile pariah status in the global community, including the Muslim states. General Musharraf did exactly the same thing two decades later, borrowing from Zia-ul-Haq's book, chapter and verse, to bring his own isolation in the comity of nations to an end. George Bush's much-heralded, so-called 'war on terror', became Musharraf's ticket to international stardom and legitimacy in a copycat

reprise of Zia-ul-Haq's instant camaraderie with Ronald Reagan's undeclared war against the 'evil empire.'

For Zia-ul-Haq, involvement in Afghanistan may have meant allegiance to faith and affirmation of Pakistan's pan-Islamic identity, as far as support for the Afghan victims of Soviet aggrandizement was concerned. However, he negated its Islamic component by agreeing to become a conduit for one superpower battling another with the sole intent of bleeding it to death. Becoming complicit with the US did nothing to augment Zia-ul-Haq's religious credentials. On the contrary, he abused and undermined the pan-Islamist passion of his countrymen who felt genuinely repelled by the naked aggression of a non-believing communist superpower against a poor and defenceless Muslim neighbour of Pakistan.

Donning the mantle of an American agent-state, Pakistan under Zia-ul-Haq did a terrible disservice to its national and foreign policy interest. The US had no brief for Zia-ul-Haq's Islamic faith or fervour. Nor did it feel particularly moved by the plight of the oppressed Afghans whose freedom had been snuffed out by the Russian invaders. It was using Pakistan to reach the Soviets' jugular in Afghanistan, and the Afghans fighting the Soviets for their freedom were only pawns on the chessboard of a proxy war.

The American credentials vis-à-vis Pakistan's pivotal interest in acquiring nuclear parity with India were known to be suspect up to that point. The US had brazenly targeted Pakistan's nuclear programme ever since it had been commissioned under Bhutto. Zia-ul-Haq, to give him credit, had stuck by the national pursuit to access nuclear power to match rival India. However, by giving the Americans a free run of Pakistan, in the name of facilitating the Afghan jihad against the Soviets, Zia-ul-Haq was taking a huge risk and could have, unwittingly, exposed it to sabotage by the Americans.

In the process of pulling the American chestnut out of the fire of Afghanistan, Zia-ul-Haq also allowed the Afghans to run berserk all over Pakistan. It was a hospitality bordering on self-destruction. The Afghans abused Pakistan's hospitality with impunity. A rampant drug and gun culture in Pakistan was an immediate and direct blowback of Pakistan's fervent patronage of the Afghan resistance against the Soviets.

An even bigger scourge were the Taliban, whose rise in Afghanistan after the defeat of the Soviets, was perhaps the biggest blunder of a Pakistan policy conceived and implemented by its intelligence agencies. Even if one were to give the benefit of doubt to Pakistan's overarching

and ubiquitous intelligence agencies for not directly bringing the Taliban into power in Afghanistan, it is an incontrovertible fact that it was the ISI that pampered the Taliban and smoothed their way to get a stranglehold over Afghanistan. Extending official recognition to the Taliban as the *de jure* government of Afghanistan was a decision of the Pakistani intelligence outfit and not that of the Foreign Office.

The dubious argument of Afghanistan providing the much-needed strategic depth to Pakistan was the alibi used to justify Pakistan being friendly and more than business-like with the Taliban. But this justification lost all its logic and relevance with both India and Pakistan becoming nuclear powers, soon after. The cover of Afghanistan's much-touted strategic depth was punctured the moment India acquired an atomic bomb. Pakistan's military geniuses could no longer wield the Afghan card to buttress their 'strategic depth' mantra in the context of conventional warfare. Sadly, the ruling oligarchy of Pakistan never seems to have realized that 'strategic depth,' in the real sense of the word, comes to a country in two ways: by building national institutions that would be resilient enough to flourish on their own strength and not be dependent on this or that personality or 'strongman'; and by cultivating neighbours to have the best of relations with them, thus eliminating the need for inordinate reliance on military parity or a balance of terror, vis-à-vis the neighbours.

Whether one may like it or not, the most important neighbour to Pakistan is India, in relation to which Pakistan has consistently had an adversarial relationship. The legacy of strained, and at times overtly hostile, relations with India is, no doubt, a two-way process in which the input from India has been as much negative and counterproductive as from Pakistan. However, there is a qualitative difference in the two inputs. India, the bigger component of the equation, has never suffered from the fear factor that has routinely blighted Pakistan's policy and posture against India. The vested interest in Pakistan, with deliberate design, has allowed enmity with India to simmer on the front burner. The fear card, of an India determined to overrun Pakistan and snuff out its independence and sovereignty, has been wielded so that no questions should be asked about Pakistan's bloated military and defence establishment. The same card has also been played over and over again to trump the country's democratic culture and its evolution in the name of augmenting order and security, both internally and externally.

That the military oligarchy of Pakistan did not favour the country's politicians pursuing a course vis-à-vis India outside the military-okayed box was in full evidence in the manner the army brass literally pulled the rug from under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's initiative to turn a corner

in the tortuous course of relations with India. The Pakistani top brass, led by the newly-appointed Chief of the Army Staff, General Pervez Musharraf, boycotted the Prime Minister's reception for his Indian guest, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, in Lahore in February 1999.

General Musharraf's defiance of the civilian government's peace initiative was in keeping with the oligarchic ambitions of the army generals who must always cry wolf on India in order to have justification for maintaining the large army that Pakistan can ill-afford at the cost of badly needed inputs into social infrastructure, like public health and education. Pakistan's Human Development Index (HDI) is one of the lowest in the world—lower even than some of the poor countries of Africa—largely because of the heavy disparity between expenditure on defence and that on socio-economic indices. In the 2006 HDI report of the UN, Pakistan ranked 134 out of 175 member states of the UN surveyed, ranking below Laos, Comoros, Botswana, and even a cloistered country like Myanmar (Burma); it ranked only above countries like Bhutan and Papua New Guinea.

The cataclysm of 9/11 may have caused distress to many. To General Musharraf, however, it was a heavenly intervention to put an end to his diplomatic isolation. Literally overnight, he was bestowed the title of a front line soldier in George W. Bush's open-ended 'war against terror.' No doubt, this was a remarkable change of fortune for a general who, until that moment, was shunned by the world to such an extent that President Clinton would not agree to have himself photographed with him during a four-hour hectoring halt in Islamabad. George Bush's memory of the general was so weak that, at a widely reported television interview during the 2000 presidential campaign, he could not recall the Pakistani leader's name and famously sufficed to refer to him as 'the general.'

Without a modicum of doubt, General Musharraf's rise to international stardom was a reprise of General Zia-ul-Haq breaking loose from his isolation in 1979. But in equally identical fashion, the change of status remained entirely personal, and almost totally devoid of a national consensus backing the transformation of a leader's fortunes. Just as Zia-ul-Haq had cast the die in favour of joining America's war against the rival superpower of his own bat, Musharraf, too, took the plunge into George Bush's 'crusade' entirely on his own. If one goes by the account of the sequence of events following the apocalypse of 9/11, as recorded in his book, *Bush At War*, the Watergate-famed Bob Woodward argues that General Musharraf relented, then and there, to each one of the US

demands catalogued by Secretary of State Colin Powell in his telephone call, the third day after 9/11.¹

Did Musharraf try to ascertain the wishes of the people of Pakistan on the sea change he was going to bring about in the country's policy on Afghanistan? Were any representatives of the people consulted before the seismic volte-face in Pakistan's international posture was made? Was any thought given to what impact Pakistan's role reversal in Afghanistan will have on its standing in the global community, especially in the Muslim world to which Pakistan paid so much lip service? The answers to all these questions must be in the negative.

The only light guiding General Musharraf's path was his own status and stature. His sole concern, before 9/11, was rivetted on seeking the legitimacy and recognition he lacked in the comity of nations, especially in the West. Joining Bush's crusade was going to make him a 'legitimate' player on the global stage. That feeling was enough to sway him off his feet and drive him into the waiting arms of the US war lobby.

Let us, briefly, see what 'rewards' General Musharraf's decision has brought to Pakistan? He may have become, briefly, the toast of the town in Washington, given the patina of a front line soldier vital for the success of the war against terrorism. But his charm offensive soon turned into an open offensive against his policy in regard to Afghanistan. As the US got caught up in the bog of Afghanistan and the Taliban's counter-offensive punctured the American facade of a 'quick fix' in that war ravaged country, Musharraf's image in the American media changed. The General has since been routinely pilloried in the establishment media, which now rules the roost in Washington, as 'not doing enough' and 'playing on both sides of the street.'

The Bush administration, for its sake and with an eye on its campaign against the Afghans, may still hail Musharraf as a steadfast ally and front line soldier but the media and Washington's think tank-based intelligentsia holds a different opinion and subscribes to the myth, wholeheartedly, that Musharraf's heart is not in the US and NATO-led campaign in Afghanistan.

While Musharraf may take some satisfaction from what he might regard as his still intact rapport with the American government, especially with the incumbent of the White House, this has not been the fortune of the Pakistani people or the Pakistani nation. Pakistanis in the US became a favourite target of America's Islamophobia in the immediate

¹ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2002), p. 59.

aftermath of 9/11. Tens of thousands of them were rounded up on charges of immigration law violations; thousands were deported peremptorily and unceremoniously to Pakistan; thousands others made a beeline to the Canadian border to seek asylum.

Nobody knows how many Pakistani nationals were taken to the American Gulag, the notorious Guantanamo internment camp in Cuba. According to Pakistan's Home Minister, Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, at least 35 of them are still held there without any charges against them, despite five years of rigorous imprisonment. Human rights groups throughout the world have catalogued the inhuman treatment of these prisoners caught in the limbo of America's blatant disregard of the rights of POWs under the Geneva Conventions and its persistent violations of the norms of international law and convention.

Pakistan's image in general in the US, and among its European allies, is that of a country rife with religious fundamentalism. The US media has been in the forefront of painting this picture of Pakistan, with the tacit endorsement of the Bush administration. Pakistan is still a pariah as far as its credibility as a responsible nuclear power is concerned. Dr. Qadeer Khan has become a punching bag for those who cannot bring themselves to accept a Muslim state entering the exclusive nuclear club. Pakistan is being ruthlessly demonized as a purveyor of nuclear technology and knowhow to 'rogue' states.

No doubt Pakistan's foreign policy, over the last six decades, has meandered and followed a tortuous course. And yet there is one creditable success story: the lone 'silver star', so to speak, on its scorecard. The framers of Pakistan's foreign policy, both civilians and generals have, so far, successfully parried the enormous and crude American pressure and blandishments to cap off the country's nuclear capability and power. This is one creditable example of Pakistan standing up to an international bully in the defence of its national interest.

There is neither reason nor incentive for Pakistan to succumb to American arm-twisting to sign on to NPT or CTBT, especially in the face of Western reluctance to ask any questions about Israel's well-known nuclear arsenal or India's now American-sanctified nuclear expansion. The Bush administration simply would not countenance treating Pakistan, a front line 'ally' in the 'war against terror,' at par with India in the 'nuclear club.'

NPT, in any case, has been used by the Western nuclear powers to augment their nuclear monopoly at the expense of the legitimate and peaceful, civil-oriented, programmes of the developing countries. What is

being done to Iran, a signatory to NPT, is fully illustrative of this cartel mentality and hegemonic syndrome dictating terms to the non-nuclear world. Pakistan cannot, and should not, barter away its nuclear autarky and make it a prisoner to Indian whims or American pressure. This is one foreign policy card that must not be squandered. At stake is our credibility as a sovereign state.

The Bush administration has showered India with the status of a most favoured nation for the transfer of nuclear technology; it is not prepared to share even a shred of that with its 'front line ally,' Pakistan. It has been told, in so many words, that it should not expect to be on the same pedestal with India. In spite of so much denigration being heaped on Pakistan, General Musharraf has remained as steadfast a soldier of the US global imperial interests as General Ayub was in his days, or General Zia-ul-Haq in his.

On Musharraf's watch, and under relentless prodding from Washington, the Pakistan Army has been engaged, on a regular footing, in the tribal areas of Pakistan—the *prickly hedge* of the heyday of British imperialism in this part of the world. To date, the casualty toll of this adventure in the frontier land is a stiff 700 Pakistani military personnel, soldiers and officers, killed, according to the official tally; the actual toll could be considerably higher. But irrespective of how many lives may have been lost in the process of pleasing General Musharraf's neo-imperialist mentors, it has never been deemed 'enough' or sufficient by the power that be; the goalpost of expectations of Pakistan has been shifting all the time and Pakistan is being lambasted for 'not doing enough.'

And what about the people of Pakistan? Are they in accord with what the military regime has been doing in their name? The fact of the matter is that the chasm between the interest of the rulers and that of the people of Pakistan, the so-called silent majority, has never been greater than what it is today. The years-long military operation in the tribal areas has deeply fissured national cohesion and strained the fabric of allegiance to the state, not only in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and NWFP but also in Balochistan, where a quasi insurgency against Islamabad's edict is being fuelled by a crisis of confidence between the centre and the province.

Popular disapproval of the policies of the Musharraf regime are finding an echo in the swelling curve of anti-Americanism in the people of Pakistan. Dozens of independent surveys—American, European and Pakistani—have time and again arrived at the same conclusion: that the US, since 9/11, is seen by an overwhelming majority of people in our

'global village' as a dangerous, almost lawless, 'rogue' state, with no regard in its actions for international law or conventions. The negative image of the US is interpolated in the mind of a Pakistani with his government's subservience to Washington's *diktat*. The Musharraf regime, in the common sense of a Pakistani man on the street is nothing but a lackey of American global expansionism and neo-imperialism.

An average Pakistani is not swayed by the official rhetoric of 'enlightened moderation', whatever it may stand for. What he sees with his eyes is that Pakistan is burning its fingers in Afghanistan in trying to pull the American chestnut out of the fire. Pakistan still plays host to at least three million Afghan refugees on its soil, while the government stoutly refuses to bring one-tenth of this number of Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh for well over three decades—the so-called pariah Pakistanis, derisively named, and consigned to the blind alley of history, as Biharis.

The common man of Pakistan knows that his green passport is not worth much for American immigration, and getting an American visa is the most difficult for not only an ordinary Pakistani but, occasionally, for even the privileged and the powerful. So untrusting is the US government of its front line ally that no PIA aircraft is allowed to fly to a US airport non-stop from Pakistan; it must stop over somewhere in the West in order to qualify for landing rights in America.

Because of this accretion of disconnect between the ruling elite and the man on the street, Pakistan is being consumed by utter frustration and gloom about the direction of the country.

Indeed it would be unrealistic to deny that there is a very serious problem of religious fundamentalism in Pakistan. It is also true that Pakistan has become a crucible of militancy in the post-9/11 period. But the American-friendly policy of the present ruling order in Pakistan is the principal reason for the mushrooming growth of violence and terrorism. Zia-ul-Haq's intoxication with the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union—and in cahoots with the US—had spawned for Pakistan the bitter legacy of gun and drug culture that also, in the final analysis, bred the nightmare phenomenon of the Taliban. Pakistan and the Pakistanis are still grappling with the fallout of that shortsighted fervour of a military ruler. Ironically, Afghanistan ultimately became the tripwire for Zia-ul-Haq's tragic death. General Musharraf, in identical fashion, has used Afghanistan to promote his personal fortunes by making a 180-degree turn on his own erstwhile patronage of the Taliban and committing Pakistan on the side of the Bush's 'crusade.' In a re-run of the Zia era,

Pakistan is desperately trying to fend off the inevitable blowback of its involvement with a superpower's global interests.

The most ironic element in this dance in a circle foreign policy for more than half a century is that no Pakistani strongman seems ready to see the reality that a foreign policy shorn of popular sanction of the people of Pakistan is unlikely to serve the nation's interests. Likewise, any relationship between a global superpower and a middle rank country, like Pakistan, is bound to be bumpy and uneven. The latest reminder of this is implicit in the American crude pressure on Pakistan to desist from entering into a tripartite deal with Iran and India for importing Iranian natural gas.

The tragedy of the people of Pakistan remains unabated for the simple reason that their interests and aspirations are not reflected in the foreign policy practised and exploited in their name. The bane of Pakistan is not only its feudal and non-democratic culture but also a more dangerous culture of arrogance that has laced its firmly entrenched ruling elite's disdain for the will of the people. Recurring reliance on a distant and alien power, which has no brief for Pakistan's ideological underpinnings, and no empathy for its peculiar genesis, has spread despondency among the people and cursed its rollercoaster foreign policy. The result is a country groping in the dark for its interest and what must be done to secure it on a long-term basis.