

# PAKISTAN

SIX IMPORTANT PHASES  
OF FOREIGN POLICY

1947 till Present



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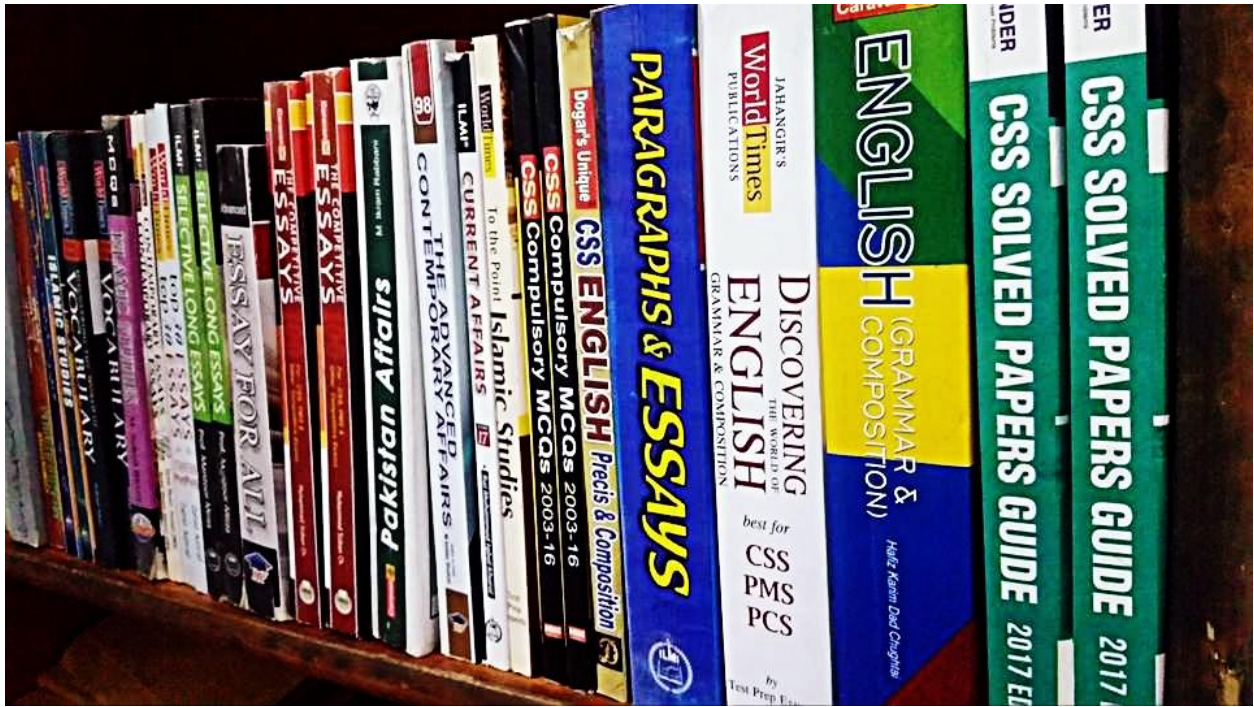
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## **Six Important Phases of Pakistan's Foreign Policy**

Taking the major trends into account, Pakistan's foreign policy can be divided into six phases:

1. Era of Neutrality (1947-1953).
2. Era of Alliances (1954-1962).
3. Era of Bilateralism (1963-1978).
4. Era of Non-alignment (1979-1989).
5. Era of Post-Cold War (1990-September 11, 2001).
6. Era of Global Antiterrorism (September 11, 2001- till present)

### **1. Era of Neutrality (1947-1953)**

The international system that emerged after the Second World War was characterized by cold war and tight bipolarity. The foreign policy of the first few years of the existence of Pakistan can be labelled as the non-aligned years, because Pakistan was essentially trying to maintain neutrality in the ongoing cold war during this period. Both the USA and USSR were inviting Pakistan for support in the cold war alignments. However, Pakistan was itself beset with the task of putting things together in the promised land. It was confronted with all sorts of economic, political and religious problems. So it was not in a position to set for itself an important role in the international arena.

Pakistan during that period tried to overcome multiple security threats *i.e.* from India and Afghanistan. Its economic position prevented to allocate substantial resources for defence. During that period Pakistan faced following problems which affected its foreign policy resulting in its future economic and military dependence on foreign (western) powers:

1. Hostile relations with India. In 1948 there was a war between two countries on the Kashmir dispute. The matter was referred to the UN and under a resolution passed by the Security Council, both India and Pakistan agreed to hold plebiscite in Kashmir; however, India refused to implement the resolution and since then has occupied a major portion of Kashmir.
2. There was a dispute between India and Pakistan over the division of assets and the distribution of river water. The refugee's problem and the weak administrative and economic position of Pakistan also created problems during the formative phase of Pakistan's foreign policy.
3. Just after the establishment of Pakistan, Afghanistan demonstrated its hostility against its eastern neighbour *i.e.* Pakistan. Afghanistan was the only country which had objected on Pakistan's membership in the United Nations. The bone of contention between the two countries was the so-called Pakhtunistan issue and

the Afghan refusal to accept the Durand Line agreement signed by Great Britain and Afghanistan in 1893. That agreement was reaffirmed in 1919 according to the treaty of Rawalpindi by the then Afghan ruler. Afghanistan, backed by Moscow and New Delhi, tried to instigate the Pakhtun-Baloch tribes in Pakistan and created instability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, Pakistan was able to withstand the Afghan pressure.

In the period of neutrality, majority of the Muslim countries were under the colonial subjugation. Owing to their weak position, Pakistan couldn't expect any support from the Muslim World.

Because of the immediate security threats and weak military strength, Pakistan had four options to protect its security:

1. To remain neutral.
2. To rely on the Muslim countries.
3. To join the Soviet bloc.
4. To join the western alliance system.

Owing to two main reasons Pakistan opted for the fourth option:

1. The US offered Pakistan to join the alliance system which was meant to contain communism. Although the western alliance system was aimed to check the spread of communism, yet Pakistan hoped to acquire substantial economic and military aid.
2. The elite of Pakistan was under the western influence. A strong pro-west lobby had advocated Pakistan's joining the western alliance system. Ideologically, Pakistan was more akin to the US than to the Soviet Union.

## **2. Era of Alliances (1954-1962)**

Pakistan joined SEATO (South East Asian Treaty Organization) in 1954 and CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) in 1955. In 1959, Pakistan and the US signed a Defence Pact in which the latter guaranteed the security of Pakistan in the event of a communist attack. Pakistan's inclusion in western alliance system offended India, Afghanistan, Soviet Union and Egypt. Pakistan was termed as a 'US protege' during the period of alliances. Pakistani Prime Minister Husain Shaheed Shorwardhi was so overwhelmed that he declared Pakistan to be the "most allied ally" of the United States.<sup>2</sup> Pakistan received substantial economic and military assistance from the US. Pakistan tried to modernize its military with the western existing. However, Pakistan could not achieve its main objective i.e. security by joining these alliance systems. Although CENTO and SEATO were directed against the communist powers, yet Pakistan hoped to acquire western support to solve the Kashmir issue. The US did not put any pressure on India to hold plebiscite in Kashmir. Moreover, few important developments forced Pakistan to reconsider its pro-western stand, viz:

1. The U-2 (the US spy plane) incident of 1960 had exposed the insecurity of Pakistan in the event of the Soviet attack. The Khrushchev threatened to wipe out Peshawar from where U-2 had flown over the Soviet Union. The American bases in Pakistan had created embarrassment for Islamabad.

2. The 1962, Sino-Indo border war forced Pakistan to seek alternate options than depending on the western alliance system. The US massive military support to India, notwithstanding reservations shown by Pakistan, added frustration among policy makers in Islamabad. Pakistan protested to the US that the American/Western military assistance to India would be used against Pakistan.
3. After 1962, the global political climate had changed from cold war to *Detente* and peaceful coexistence—CENTO and SEATO were the legacies of the cold war and after a political settlement between the US and the Soviet Union, many countries began to delink themselves from super power rivalry. Realizing the new situation, Pakistan also reoriented its foreign policy on practical and rational lines.

Pakistan's membership of the CENTO put it to a difficult test of its Islamic enthusiasm verses national interest. The entire Arab world (except Iraq) kept safe distance from the Pact because they realized the United States and Britain to be the powers behind Israel. Pakistan's decision to join the Pact isolated it from the major Arab nations which was further reinforced by its support of the British and French in the Suez crisis of 1956.

The period of alliances had pushed Pakistan heavily under the US influence. The cost of alliance was more than actual gain. Pakistan earned ill will of a number of countries. It forced Pakistan to minimize its participation in SEATO and CENTO and open new avenues for a more assertive role in world affairs.

Despite its strained relations with the Arabs, its friendship with Turkey and Iran, two other non-Arab countries of the region, continued to grow during this phase due to their common pro-western policies. Even during this period, however, it consistently supported the cause of the Palestinians in all international forums.

### **3. Era of Bilateralism (1963-1978)**

The policy of bilateralism was the reaction of Pakistan's active involvement in the politics of cold war. Bilateralism could be defined as the conduct of relations between states in such a way that equidistance with all super powers is maintained. That there should not be a tilt towards any specific power.

During that period, Pakistan lessened its dependence on the western alliance system and developed close and cordial relations with China as an alternative source of support against India. Pakistan's reappraisal of the pro-western foreign policy orientation was carried further during the second Indo-Pakistan war of 1965. The United States adopted an even-handed policy toward the Pakistan and India and subsequently suspended military assistance to both countries.

During this phase, Pakistan was looking for new friends in the international arena because the old alignments appeared inadequate in terms of its security requirements. It responded to Soviet gestures of friendship and its relations with the Soviet Union improved considerably. After the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, Moscow offered to mediate between India and Pakistan. Soviet Union played a vital role in the Tashkent agreement of January, 1966. Also, it once again turned to the Third World and Middle East countries. Its relations with the Arab world started to grow

stronger. During the 1967 Arab-Israeli war it extended all out support for the Arabs. Pakistan also tried to cement its traditional friendship with Iran and Turkey outside the framework of the CENTO and formed the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in 1964. Besides the RCD, it cultivated close relations with Saudi Arabia and Jordan, two important pro-western monarchies of the Middle East.

With the assumption of power by Z.A. Bhutto, Pakistan charted a new course in its foreign relations. Immediately after coming to power, he took a tour of 20 Muslim countries of the Middle East which he called 'a mission of renaissance of relations with the Muslim world'.<sup>3</sup> In 1972, Pakistan withdrew from the Commonwealth, SEATO and recognized the Socialist Governments of North Korea and North Vietnam.

Bhutto missed no opportunity to extend total support for Arabs during the Ramazan war of 1973 against Israel and readily exploited the situation to enhance Pakistan's role in the Islamic world by hosting the second Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore in 1974.

It is very interesting to note that Pakistan followed the policy of bilateralism while maintaining its membership in CENTO. Except the sympathetic policy of Nixon administration towards Pakistan during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war, Pakistan-US relations were not as cordial as they were during 1950's and early 1960's. Twice the US suspended military aid to Pakistan, i.e. during 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pakistan wars. One of the advantages which Pakistan achieved in following the policy of bilateralism was its increasing economic and political relations with the Third World and the Socialist Countries.

#### **4. Era of Non-Alignment (1979-1989)**

The US military, economic and political influence was liquidated in Iran in 1979. After the revolution, Iran announced its withdrawal from CENTO. Besides this, CENTO had become ineffective owing to the top priority given by the United States in the Middle East and the Gulf. After Iran's withdrawal Pakistan also decided to quit CENTO. With Pakistan's withdrawal from CENTO, there was no technical hindrance in Pakistan joining the NAM. Pakistan was included in the NAM at the Havana Summit of September, 1979. Pakistan joined the NAM because of three main reasons:

1. The changing geo-political situation in south-west Asia. The Marxist revolution in Afghanistan (April, 1978) and Islamic revolution in Iran (February, 1979) compelled Pakistan to end its so-called association with the western alliance system. The ineffectiveness of CENTO also contributed in Pakistan's withdrawal from the organization.
2. Pakistan did not want to remain cut off from the mainstream of politics in the Third World. By joining the NAM, Pakistan hoped to acquire recognition and prestige in the Third World.
3. Internally, several political groups had demanded Pakistan's withdrawal from the western alliance system. The groups wanted Pakistan to join the NAM.

Pakistan's relations with US had deteriorated especially after the suspension of American economic aid in 1979 as a protest against Pakistan's nuclear programme. But the situation dramatically changed after Russian intervention in Afghanistan which forced USA to reorient its relation with the Pakistan. Asia emerged as a region of high priority for the US policy-makers. While maintaining its membership in the NAM, Pakistan signed a 3.2 (1982) and 4.02 (1986) billion dollar package deal with the US. After Russian intervention in Afghanistan, the US did not object Pakistan's nuclear programme—in fact it received a big boost.

During this period, following were the main objectives of Pakistan foreign policy:

1. Friendly and cordial relationship with the People's Republic of China.
2. Close relations with the United States.
3. Better economic and political ties with the Muslim countries.
4. Policy of Non-Alignment in world affairs.
5. Security.

### **5. Era of Post-Cold War (1990-September 11, 2001)**

The cold war era which lasted for around 45 years collapsed in 1990-1991 as the result of following events:

1. Gulf crisis and Gulf war which proved the supremacy of US-led coalition against Iraq. The UN Security Council passed several resolutions against Iraq without any resistance from Moscow or Beijing.
2. The dismantling of Warsaw Pact and Soviet disunion. The collapse of communist rule in the former USSR and the subsequent emergence of 15 sovereign states (six Muslim and nine non-Muslim) also encouraged the United States to assert its position on the following issues:
  - (a) Nuclear Proliferation, particularly in some developing countries.
  - (b) Action against Libya.
  - (c) Seeking economic concessions from Japan and West European countries to overcome its economic problems.
  - (d) Break-up of Yugoslavia and civil war which exposed the helplessness of Europe *vis-à-vis* ethnic and racial upsurge.
  - (e) Inability of developing countries to seek justice from the developed world on economic and political matters.
  - (f) Frequent intervention of the West in the internal affairs of weak and small states.

When the cold war ended in 1990, Pakistan lost precious time in adjusting to the new realities. As the result Pakistan was isolated, pressurized to roll-back its nuclear programme, threatened with the terrorist tag, silenced on Kashmir, abandoned in Afghanistan, and seen with suspicion even in parts of the Arab and Islamic world.

For Pakistan, the post-cold war situation has led to many challenges *vis-à-vis* its relations with India, United States and China. The end of a bipolar world has completely changed the geo-political scenario of South and West Asia. The US



military and economic aid suspension against Pakistan, new trends in US-Indo relations and that in relations between Beijing and New Delhi should be seen in the perspective of new development priorities. It was pointed out by President Ghulam Ishaque Khan of Pakistan that if the New World Order means the domination or monopoly of one power on the rest of the world then it couldn't be acceptable to Pakistan. But given economic, military and technological superiority of the West *vis-à-vis* the developing world, Pakistan and other countries belonging to the non-western world are not in a position to challenge unfair acts of big powers. There were also reports with regard to the refusal of G-8 countries (composed of US, Britain, Canada, Japan, Italy, Russia, France and Germany) to render economic and technological assistance to the developing world. In this situation, developing countries, particularly least developed should take knowledge of the situation and adopt measures for the settlement of their disputes and promotion of cooperation in important fields. As long as weak and small states continue to squabble with each other and remain dependent on the west for technology and aid, it will be difficult to change the course of things in the world politics.

On May 18, 1998, and again on 30 May, 1998, Pakistan successfully conducted nuclear tests at Chaghi hills in Balochistan in reaction to Indian nuclear bomb testing. As the reaction of this event USA clamped economic and military sanctions on Pakistan under the Pressler Amendment (which widened the conventional gap between India and Pakistan). That same year the intensification of the freedom movement in occupied Kashmir led to the massive deployment of Indian troops in occupied Kashmir. But the next two years witnessed important developments in Pakistan's foreign policy. These included: the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's initiative to resume bilateral dialogue with India, to have some agreement on nuclear issue that radically altered the security environment of South Asia, the security dialogue with the United States and the crises in Kargil.

## **6. Era of Global Antiterrorism (September 11, 2001- till present)**

Pakistan faces grave foreign policy dilemmas in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on the morning of September 11, 2001. Pakistan's strategic policy brought it face to face with the United States' ultimatums, namely: Pakistan should discard the Taliban, discard Islamic *Jehad*, discard Islamic fundamentalists and become an accomplice in the American military intervention in Afghanistan or else face the consequences.

Pakistan boldly decided to join the international coalition against the war on terrorism and became a frontline state in this fight.

In November, 2001 the US led multi-nation force succeeded in removing Taliban from power in Afghanistan and a multi-ethnic interim government under Karzai has been installed in Kabul. In this campaign Pakistan provided bases for launching military operations against Taliban—once Pakistan's ally in Afghanistan. In March-April 2003, USA and Britain forces also invaded Iraq and dislodged anti-American Saddam regime.

In these two events first President Musharaf and later President Asif Ali Zardari

fully supported USA. By seizing the opportunity, Pakistan strengthened its efforts towards reaching a position of eminence on the international stage. The decision has had a significantly positive impact on Pakistan's standing in the international community. Pakistan's stance has earned the appreciation of the international community.

Now there is a need to examine the functioning of foreign policy, not just foreign relations demonstrated by interaction among leaders through summits or statements.

Three elements are vital in this context. First, for any foreign policy to be successful, it has to be rooted in its domestic base which includes political stability, national consensus, sound economy, effective deterrence and, above all, quality of leadership.

Second, relations with distant Godfathers are no substitute for bonds in the region of a country's location. For instance, Pakistan's Taliban policy had already isolated the country within the entire region, both among friends and foes, and 9/11 merely formalised its burial in the wreckage of the World Trade Centre. Pakistan can have the best relations with the US but if it loses out in its neighbourhood, with hostility from Iran and Afghanistan, distancing from Central Asia and a cooling off with China, then it would end up undermining its core interests.

Third, countries deflect pressures and threats through skilful diplomacy, using innovative and novel means to promote their interests. "Traditional diplomacy" does not suffice in such a situation.

In the past 65 years, Pakistan's foreign policy has largely revolved around a triangle of India (countering the adversary), China ("the enemy of my enemy is my friend") and the US (serving Washington's interests, as in the 1960s, 1971, 1980s and currently seeking its involvement in the war against terrorism, bomb and drugs, or through invoking fear of "fundamentalism" like all post-Zia governments).

In 2011, instead of resting on the laurels of an American connection which is more tactical than strategic, Pakistan needs to look beyond the current breather by building more solid and enduring foundations of its foreign policy.

Pakistan must also learn from the broadened reach of Indian foreign policy. In the last few years, India has built bridges with Iran, China, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and the United Arab Emirates in Pakistan's vicinity, while at the same time expanding its diplomatic leverage by forming a new "India, Brazil, and South Africa Dialogue Forum" (IBSA).

Pakistan need not play catch up with India, but its priority should be a foreign policy that has no disconnection either with domestic politics or with regional realities. An effective foreign policy requires domestic stability and a national consensus on issues.

Along with challenges, there are also opportunities in the emerging world scenario. However, an effective foreign policy is not possible unless we can keep internal differences and rivalries within rational limits and evolve a national consensus. Economic and technical development on the basis of self-reliance is equally important to advance the welfare of our people and to back up our international position.