

## **Pakistan's Foreign Policy Towards US and Afghanistan: An Analysis of Musharraf Era**

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### **Abstract**

This paper investigates Pakistan's foreign policy towards US, and Afghanistan, especially during the Musharraf era, which started in 1999 with a military coup and ended in 2008. There were strategic shifts and geopolitical changes in his era because of the terrorist attacks in USA which suddenly changed the political scene all over the world. As a neighboring country Pakistan and Afghanistan have strong and long history of relationships but being a key ally in War-On-Terror (WOT) with the US, Pakistan revisited his foreign policy towards Afghanistan.

To understand the strategic motivations behind the foreign policy of Pakistan, the realism and constructivism theoretical framework has been used. This paper analyses the military dominance over foreign policy and the domestic politics as well of Musharraf-led-military government in Pakistan and the consequences of the GWOT, taking side with the US by Musharraf.

The qualitative method is used with historical and analytical approaches.

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Foreign Policy, Musharraf, US, China, India, Afghanistan.

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## Introduction

Foreign policy of a country is designed to safeguard and protect the national interest of a country, its ideological goals, economic prosperity and national security. Due to anarchic nature of the international political system, every state in the world feels itself

insecure and unsafe. In international politics every state formulates its foreign policy according to its security and economic needs (N. Ahmad 2010). The foundation of foreign policy of Pakistan was laid down by Quaid-e- Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He said that the objective of Pakistan foreign policy is to ensure peace in the world and Pakistan has no aggressive intentions towards any state in the world. He said that Pakistan will follow the charter of United Nations Organization (UNO) and will contribute in the world's peace and prosperity. As the aim of foreign policy of a country is to move forward in the world, so the aim of Pakistan's foreign policy is to insure peace in the world. Pakistan lies in an important strategic location in the world, to its east lies its permanent enemy India, to the west is Iran to the South is People Republic of China (PRC) and to the north-west lies Afghanistan. From the very beginning the big powers of the world tried to implement its policies through Pakistan in the region because of its vital position in the region (Saleem 2019). After the inception of Pakistan in bipolar world, Pakistan chose to join the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and extended special relations with the Muslim countries, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan was not ready to accept the exponent design of India to engulf Kashmir. Another factor was the enmity with Afghanistan and the USSR which had good relations with India. The economic crisis, compelled Pakistan to join the American block, but the US showed a cool response in the time of need and could not care about the defence pacts of SEATO and CENTO between Pakistan and the US which were signed by the then defence minister as well as commander-in-chief of Pakistan army, General Ayub Khan (Katz 2015.).

The military is one of the important organs and institutions of the state. In some states the military has been involved extremely in politics of the country and dominated all other institutions through the gaining roots in politics (Agha 2007). From the very beginning the military has been enjoying the Pakistani politics and has been in government for many decades through military coups and takeovers. Pakistan has three periods of military rule since gaining independence in 1947: 1958 to 1971, 1977 to 1988, and 1999 to 2008. During these periods, the military has consistently worked to consolidate and centralize political power. The military also maintained significant overt and covert control over civilian authorities in both domestic and foreign affairs. One notable example is the military intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Pakistan has traditionally been a "security state," and the national military has played a significant role in the geopolitical arena due to the country's tense relations with India, which are centered on the long-running border dispute. Though communication with Western military and civilian organizations is strictly regulated, there is relatively little information available about Pakistan's armed services. The military and related security services of Pakistan maintain a culture of secrecy, which has a direct and indirect impact on civil-military cooperation and creates a challenging operational environment for humanitarian players (Balachandran 2014).

### **Pakistan Foreign Policy Towards US**

The foreign policy of Pakistan towards the US has been in ups and down (engagement and disengagement) since its independence in 1947. Tension with India over the Kashmir issue was continued in the late 1950. Pakistan was looking to defend its security. The joining of the defence pacts and alliances with the US was considered an opportunity by the political and military authorities in Pakistan. Concerns were raising about the independence by India thus Pakistan in early 1950 started negotiations with the US about a "mutual defence agreement" and signed the agreement "Pakistan

signed the Baghdad Pact alongside Iran, Iraq, and Turkey in 1955, after joining the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954. The Central Treaty Organization replaced the Baghdad Pact in 1959 when Iraq withdrew from the agreement. The defence pacts and alliances were built by USA in the region to contain the Communism as it was considered as ideological threat and the Soviet Union influence in the region in 1950. In 1959 to strengthen ties more with Washington, Pakistan signed again a bilateral defence cooperation agreement and between 1953 and 1961 obtained aid totaling about 2 billion US dollars, of which 508 million were for military purposes along with modern weapons” (S. Ahmad 2020). While India which was in neutral position was give more military aid and assistance, because of the conflict between India and China. At the very early-stage Pakistan lost its independent foreign policy and became just a satellite of the super power, “the US”. This was the major mistake in foreign and security policies of Pakistan that has never been mended yet (Amin 1981).

In 1962 the alliance with US suffered its very first setback, when the USA offered the military assistance to India after the border clashes between India and China. The offer of assistance to India opened an opportunity for Pakistan to assume an independent foreign policy and move forward towards China and other non-aligned countries like Libya and Indonesia. After the military aggression in East Pakistan by India, Pakistan demanded for assistance against the Indian military aggression according to the 1959 Cooperation Agreement, but refused by the US authorities that the cooperation will be carried out in the case of the communist aggression only. In the contrast the USSR provided India arms and vetoed the Security Council resolution about the withdrawal of troops and ceasefire implemented its treat with India.

After Bangladesh came into being Pakistan withdrew from SEATO in November 1972 and maintained its membership in CENTO. In September 1973, during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s visit to US, Pakistan was awarded by resuming the military assistance. When the USSR

invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the US again took interest in Pakistan which was considering a big opportunity for Pakistan for serious and intensive engagement (Aziz 2020.).

Pakistan-US ties returned to what they were prior to the Soviet invasion following the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Bush administration invoked the Presler Amendment, blocked the supply of spare parts for weapons and cut military aid in the 1990s. Initially the Clinton government showed some sympathy towards Pakistan and especially on the Kashmir issue, but the recognition and support of the Taliban government in Afghanistan and ties with some terrorist organizations the Pak-US relations became tensed once again (Kronstadt 2009).

After the nuclear explosions tests by Pakistan on May 28, 1998 (five nuclear tests), and on May 30, 1998 another, the president of US Clinton signed the declaration of sanctions on Pakistan on May 31, 1998. Japan, Canada, Sweden and Australia also extended sanctions towards Pakistan but UK, France and Germany refused regarding the sanctions on Pakistan. The military coup of General Musharraf on October 12, 1999, increased the isolation of Pakistan and attracted sanctions relating to democracy which resulted for bad economic situations in Pakistan. The isolation continued till the tragic incidents of 9/11 in US. The event of 9/11 ended the isolation of Pakistan but placed it in the center stage of international movement against terrorism. After the military operation in Afghanistan (October 2001), and in Iraq in 2003 tension increased between West and the Islamic World.

It is a strange coincidence in the political history of Pakistan, when there is a military rule in the country; Pakistan is required to participate in a great global game. There was a military rule of Ayub Khan (1958-1969) in Pakistan when the Cold War was in full might here in the Subcontinent and the US was preparing strategies to encircle the Soviet Union. Then the Soviet Union made invasion into Afghanistan in 1979 just after the martial law of General Ziaul Haq

(1977-1985). Then the US demanded for the support of Pakistan to defeat the USSR in Afghanistan and Pakistan done it with the help of thousands of mujahedeen.

Now after 9/11 when the USA with the help of its allies launched a major international war against terrorism in the region. General Musharraf the military ruler (1999-2008) in a hurry decision made Pakistan a front-line state and a strong ally of the US in the War on Terror (WoT) against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

The foreign policy and security experts should find out the solution about the dilemma whether the coincidence of the military rule in Pakistan, the interest and competition of the big powers in the region and becoming of Pakistan an ally is really accidental or not (Aziz 2020.).

### **The Incident of 9/11 and Musharraf decision**

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, changed the global political situation at once and the US defence and foreign policy adopted a new shape. The President of the US George W Bush with the help of the American Congress launched a global war against Al Qaida (led by Osama Bin Laden the master mind of the terrorist attacks in US) and the Islamic militants or the Afghan Taliban (came to power in 1994, the supporters of Al-Qaida and Bin Laden). In the response of the incident of 9/11 the US demanded for Osama Bin Laden, who was being sheltered by Taliban in Afghanistan to be handover to the US. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan refused for the extradition of their guest, Osama Bin Laden. In October with the help of allies, the US started a huge military operation and invaded in Afghanistan and the Taliban regime was removed. Pakistan had friendly relations with the Taliban government until 9/11 but the pressure from the US changed its policy towards Afghanistan when the US President Bush asked bluntly Musharraf “Are you with us or against us” (Rashid

2008) and thus Musharraf decided to extend his support for the US against Al-Qaida and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

General Musharraf was in a huge pressure at that time and there was no choice with him except to take side with the US and its allies in Global War on Terror (GWOT), if refused and denied the dire consequences were expected from the US military alliance. In the region India and Israel in the middle east were waiting for an opportunity against Pakistan, these grievances were stated by Musharraf to diplomats, politicians and retired generals in a gathering on September 18, 2001. On September 19, on a state television Musharraf said that his realistic decision for the sake of Pakistan strategic assets, defence of Kashmir, the Pakistan's posture on the issue of Kashmir and prevention Pakistan of being labeled a terrorist state from the world community.

Pakistan was demanded with the information regarding Osama Bin Laden and his followers in Afghanistan, Pakistani Airspace using for operation against terrorists in Afghanistan and logistic support to the US military. Pakistan provided its four air bases for logistic support, Shamsi (Kharan), Dalbadin, Jacobabad and Pasni. Pakistan also allowed the US to South and North Waziristan, Hindu Kush, Chitral as well as to Zhob for air space and gathering of intelligence (Shafqat 2005). The US authorities also demanded from ISI for information about Osama Bin Laden and other militants. General Mehmood was given a list of seven demands by Armitage from the Bush which was accepted at once without consultation with President General Pervez Musharraf, Mehmood said that he had known the intention of Musharraf about it. These seven demands were as under

- 1) Seize the supply of arms to Afghanistan through Pakistan, stop Al-Qaida operational activities from Afghanistan and cut up all the logistic support to Taliban government.
- 2) Extensive permission the use of air space and landing facilities to the US aircrafts in Pakistan.

- 3) The free access to the areas adjacent to Pak-Afghan, access to the air and naval bases of Pakistan.
- 4) Guarantee of sharing all the information and intelligence regarding the immigration.
- 5) To contain all the support regarding the terrorism and its elements, and condemn the terrorism on the state level.
- 6) Stop the Pakistani volunteers going from Pakistan to Afghanistan, cutoff the supply of oil to Taliban government.
- 7) Pakistan will have to cut off all the diplomatic ties and support with the Taliban government and will extend its full support to the US to eliminate Osama Bin- Laden and the Al-Qaida network in Afghanistan.

### **Pakistan Post 9/11 Foreign Policy towards Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is located in the North-west of Pakistan. Both the countries have a common land border that is about 2640 km (1640 miles) in length called the Durand Line, which was established in 1893 under the Durand Line Agreement (DLA) between the British government and Afghanistan and was renounced in 1944 by the Afghan government. The relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been remained ups and down from time to time due to mistrust between the two states because of the issue of Durand Line and the support of Pakhtunistan movement in North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) by the Afghan government.

Pakistan has been a major player in the offensive and proxy war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan being the part of the US camp to contain the Communism in the region and an important regional actor in international politics. The political chaos was created by the US after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, by backing out its support and interest in Afghanistan. In 90s the Taliban movement came to the scene and succeeded in establishing its government in 1996 in Afghanistan and gained control about 90 percent of the state area (Bruno 2008). Pakistan



has been affected from the civil war and political turmoil in Afghanistan. Always, Pakistan is of the view that Afghanistan should have a peaceful and stable political environment. This was the reflection of such desire to support the Taliban government came in power in 1996 (John 2001). The support for Taliban was a great compulsion for Pakistan, because there were different war worrier groups in Afghanistan, and they were the cause of instability, insecurity and terror in Pakistan. The Pakistan based religio-political parties were also in the backing of Taliban government in Afghanistan. Due to the extreme Islamic political system and legislation installed by the Taliban in Afghanistan, they failed in getting the support of international community (Ali 2013).

Since the Taliban regime's establishment in Afghanistan in 1994, Pakistan's foreign strategy has been predicated on its backing of that government. This policy was changed after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, also known as 9/11, in which 300,000 people were died approximately. The US made responsible Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaida as a main character behind the terror attacks in US and demanded the Taliban regime to handover Osama Bin Laden but the Taliban refused and declared their strong support for Osama and Al-Qaida. Pakistan ceased all its support from Taliban, making a strong decision. After the decision of General Musharraf to join the American War on Terror (WoT) against the Al-Qaida and the Taliban government, sympathies were still there for the Taliban regime in Pakistan, at official level and unofficial level as well. The Pakistan pro-Taliban policy was under a direct threat expected from the US and its allies in War on Terror (WoT) that is why Pakistan decided to join in the global war led by the US against Al-Qaida and its supporters, the Afghan Taliban. There was no option with Pakistan to change its Afghan policy and go with the international coalition led by the US. The Bush administration made a telephone call to Musharraf and asked for his opinion, either Musharraf support the Taliban regime in Afghanistan or want to become an ally with the US in War on Terror. In case of refusal of General Musharraf in support of the international coalition

against the Al-Qaida and the Taliban regime, the dire consequences were expected from the US and its allies for Pakistan. Pakistan was demanded with air space, logistic support, the landing facilities for the aircrafts and a comprehensive list of demands was handed over to Pakistan to fulfill as well. The CIA personals were allowed to make operations in Pakistan. Pakistan was in immovable position in its decision to send its forces in Afghanistan, instead deployed approximately two hundred thousand armed forces along the Afghanistan border to contain the terrorism (Khan 2007).

In October 2001, the US started attacks in Afghanistan with the support of its allies and NATO. The prominent leaders of Taliban along with Mullah Omar either fled to Pakistan or went underground and were bombed ruthlessly and estimated the deaths toll varied from 10,000 to three times as much. Osama Bin Laden escaped in the mountains of Tora Bora area and then went to Pakistan across the border. The entrance of Taliban and Al Qaida leaders were forbidden and arrested nearly 300 intruders, wanted to the US and handed over to CIA (Central Intelligence Agency of the US) accordingly. The Northern Alliance took control of Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif and Kunduz. The United Nations started the process for a new government in Afghanistan in December 2001. Consultation with Saudi Arabia the President of Pakistan prepared a paper and recommended that the expected incoming government in Afghanistan should be the representative of all the ethnic groups that the Pakhtuns are 42 percent, Tajiks 27, Uzbeks and Hunzas 9 percent. This paper was personally delivered by the Foreign Minister Saudi Arabia to the Secretary General of UN Secretary General, the US President, and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. The Bonn conference in Germany held on December 5, 2001 under the sponsorship of the UN and joined the Afghan elders; the conference provisionally approved a Pakhtun leader, Hamid Karzai as the interim Preside of Afghanistan. The prominent positions were given to Tajiks. Hazaras and Uzbeks were also allotted some positions but the Pakhtun received little share (Sattar 2020). Pakistan fully supported the US and its partners in the War

on Terror and the US was realized about the strategic location of Pakistan and the historical Pak-Afghan relations. The war lasted for thirteen years and formally ended in 2014. It was not a sudden end just was the gradual start towards the drawdown of the NATO/ASAF forces from Afghanistan and reassured that the Afghanistan forces will be provided all the trainings required for containing the terrorism in the country and the Al-Qaida and the Taliban will be eliminated from the soil before to complete drawdown (CNN 2009).

### **Challenges to Pakistan Foreign Policy: War on Terror to Operation Freedom Sentinel.**

The foreign policy of Pakistan (Pro Taliban Policy) shifted towards the US (Pro US) after the 9/11 terror attacks in the US, and brought the bad effects on the socio-economic and political situation of Pakistan. The drone strikes and the cross-border attacks by the US and its allies made the relations more irritant between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The security and sovereignty of Pakistan were questioned because of these attacks and demanded to stop these attacks, from time to time (Shah 2017). For the foreign policy of Pakistan, the main challenges were; movement of natives across the border, and militant's networks, organized transitional criminals, traffickers and smugglers. The activities can be controlled through the enhanced border management. The idea to make the border strict was denied by the tribal people and the Afghan government unfortunately. Regardless of opposition from different sides the government of Pakistan started taking steps from its own side; installed gates on exit and entry points, the movement of the people across the border was link with particular documents and the movement was prohibited without that, established check posts, fencing was installed in some areas and biometric identification and data collection were introduced. All these measures being adopted by trafficker, transitional organized criminals and smugglers succeeded to go to each other's countries and challenged the writ of the state. The complete fencing should be installed to stop the

unwanted and unlawful activities and movements on the border, as it is a long border to control (Coll 2012).

The Afghan refugees have been hosting by Pakistan in a large number since the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. After the incident of 9/11 some more refugees also crossed the border and entered into Pakistan. Majority of the refugees living in very bad economic situation and unable to earn their livelihood in a proper way and this is why they have been involved in criminal activities in Pakistan. Some militants are living in the shape of refugees, or the poor refugees may become the prey of the terrorists (Naoko Obi Saito 2004).

### **The objectives of Pakistan Foreign Policy in Afghanistan**

For the national security in both countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan are interconnected with each other as the security and peace situation is complex in the region. For Pakistan the Pak-Afghan border and the unwanted movement across the border is the major concern for the security and peace in Pakistan. The perception of the border-controlling shifted now towards the controlling of the Afghan politics; by extending cooperation to deal the terrorism. Due to the chaos in Afghanistan the interest of Pakistan foreign policy converted to challenges.

Pakistan is no longer ready to be a part of anyone's war in Afghanistan as the Pakistan foreign policy has become dynamic. This shift in policy is not an easy task as Pakistan has paid a huge price in shape of the losses of its citizens, security personals and the material property or buildings and national cohesion as well. As Pakistan has made its experience in the past, in the near future the role of Pakistan has been just a facilitator not a guarantor from any side.

The United States and its coalition in the War on Terror always blamed the Pakistani leaderships for not taking the solid and serious actions against the terrorists and its organizations in Pakistan but the

fact is different as Pakistan has carried out the military operations in Federal Administered Areas (FATA, now the part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) along the other parts of the country and faced thousands of casualties of citizens and the armed forces including police men. The government of Pakistan faced severe opposition from the political and religio-political parties against the military operations in the country and being an ally with the US in War on Terror (WoT) against the Taliban regime. A number of factors are involved in the complex regional security of Pakistan and Afghanistan that is why the suppression of terrorism in the region is so difficult (Rizvi 2004).

The Taliban was a fact and the main stakeholders in the War on Terror, which could not be denied and they have been always the center point of the Afghanistan politics. They are found on both sides; they are a particular mindset not a name of the group of the people. The stability and peace in Afghanistan were greatly interconnected with the Taliban issue and the US was not serious to solve this issue easily by political means. Pakistan affected badly and destabilized directly due to Afghan War as both the countries have common ethnicity groups and geo-politics. These groups have common aims and objectives and have strong connections with each other, that is why extend support to each other in terrorist activities in either country. The Afghan government rejected the Durand Line's recognition as Pakistan's international border; therefore, extensive negotiations between the two nations are necessary to address the issue of cross-border terrorism. Pakistan considers its position legitimate and lawful because of the successor of the British India. The permanent solution of the Durand Line is impossible when there is no involvement of international community, UK, USA and the UNO. Now when there are Taliban in government, they will not recognize the mentioned border as legitimate between the two countries and the tension is persist still now (Showkat 2013).

## Conclusion

Because of the sudden changes at world's political and security scenario after the terrorist's attacks on Pentagon and World Trade Center in the US the Musharraf regime was under a huge pressure from international community and the US. From the very inception Pakistan has diplomatic, security and strategic ties with US, paying a visit of Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan to the US instead to USSR and joining the SEATO and CENTO. Historically the relationships between the two countries have been ups and downs. Often the US has used Pakistan according to her self-interests in the region, to contain the Communism in the region, to reduce the Chinese influence in the region and to combat Al-Qaida and the Afghan Taliban in the region especially in Afghanistan. Pakistan was under the great sanctions from the US after the nuclear tests in 1998 and after the Musharraf's military coup in 1999 the Musharraf government was under the discussion in international media because he has overthrown the elected civilian government of Nawaz Sharif. But all the sanctions were released when the US needed Pakistan in the region for her interest. The military and economic assistance was provided to Pakistan in return Pakistan fully supported the US, and provided military bases, logistic support, intelligence sharing, combined military operations etc. Afghanistan is very close neighbor of Pakistan and has a strong and long history of relationships with each other but when Afghanistan became the hub of terrorists and the mediation of Pakistan was rejected by the Taliban government to hand over Osama Bin-Laden to America then there was no option with Musharraf except to take side with US and provide full support in War-On-Terror. In the case of refusal, the dire consequences were expected from the US and its allies. Therefore, Musharraf revisited the Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan and became a front-line ally in the war against terrorism with the US.

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The Musharraf government faced huge criticism in the country especially from the Islamic political parties. Becoming an ally in the war on terror the country faced implications politically and socially but the Musharraf's sudden and quick decision was very important for the security of Pakistan itself as the regional political and security situations were not in the interest of Pakistan.

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