

PAKISTAN IDEOLOGY AND FOREIGN POLICY

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Ideology is an important determinant of foreign policy. It purports to embody the truth, a world-view, and aspirations for the future. These major elements of an ideology serve as a screen through which policy-makers observe the international system and its dynamics. Ideological postulates not only have a deep impact on the interpretation of developments at the international, regional, and national levels but also shape the responses to these developments. Since all ideologies are self-justifying, purporting to contain an ultimate truth and a state's most cherished goal(s), they are used as evaluative criteria by both leaders and followers.

The ideological approach causes problems when other factors impinging on foreign policy (e.g., geopolitics, human and material resource constraints, and power politics) conflict with the dictates of ideology. The compulsions of the two sets of factors do not always converge. The perceptual framework derived from an ideology can distort the hard realities existing in the world and undermine a realistic appraisal of the concrete situation. There may also be periods when environmental variables are not conducive to the pursuit of certain elements of an ideology, or there may be a need to play down ideological tenets.

The policy makers in a state which is identified very closely with an ideology are constantly engaged in an effort to harmonize the imperatives of ideology and the concrete realities of international politics. The two sets of factors are each important in their own right. The inability to do so often brings forth either the charge of neglect (and betrayal) of cherished ideological principles or that of non-pragmatists and the pursuit of a

one-dimensional foreign policy. The latter pertains mostly to the state's role in international politics while the former often has greater implications for domestic politics.

There has always been a strong ideological imprint on the foreign policy of Pakistan. The close association of Islam with the establishment of the state and the emotional fervor which the developments in the wider Muslim world generated amongst the Muslims of South Asia in the pre-independence period¹ led Pakistan to project Islamic identity in foreign policy and forge close ties with other Muslim countries. The first Prime Minister of Pakistan (Liaquat Ali Khan) clearly outlined the relationship between ideology and foreign policy.

Pakistan came into being as a result of the urge felt by the Muslims of the sub-continent to secure a territory however limited where Islamic ideology and the way of life could be practised and demonstrated to the world. A cardinal feature of this ideology is to make Muslim brotherhood a living reality. It is therefore part of the mission which Pakistan has set before itself to do everything in its power to promote closer fellowship and cooperation between Muslim countries"². This spirit was also reflected in all the permanent constitutions of Pakistan which underlined the need of strengthening "the bonds of unity among the Muslim countries "³

The Initial Enthusiasm and Disappointment

Pakistan moved aggressively to champion the cause of the Muslims anywhere in the world and to promote Muslim brotherhood. It supported Indonesia, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria against their colonial rulers and identified with their struggle for independence. Similar support inside the U.N. and the outside was extended to Libya, Sudan and Eritrea. It supported Egypt's right to nationalize the Suez canal and always upheld the Arab and the Palestinian cause in their struggle against Israel.

organization representing all Muslim countries. It organized several conferences of Muslim countries during the first decade of independence. These included ^HInternational Islamic Conference (1949), two sessions of the World Muslim Conference (motamar-e-Alam Islami) (1949-1951), the Congress of Ulema-i-Islam (1952) and the International Assembly of Muslim Youths (1955).⁴ When it came to Pakistan's efforts to organize a government-level conference of the Muslim states for the purpose of creating a permanent international Muslim organization, the response of other Muslim states was discouraging. Some states ignored the proposal, others extended a cautious approval, still others did not favor the idea of such an organization. Only a small number of countries expressed willingness to cooperate with this venture. This proposal never materialized.

The initial enthusiasm shown by Pakistan for the pursuance of its ideology in international relations was unrealistic and did not fully take into account the political realities obtained in the Muslim world in the fifties. The decision-makers in Pakistan took several years to realize why their efforts did not get a positive response from several Muslim, especially the Middle Eastern states, despite the fact that Pakistan did not identify with their concerns and problems.

Islam did not play the same strategic role in the nationalist movements of most Middle Eastern states as was the case in Pakistan. For most of them it was a straight struggle against a colonial ruler. They were not a minority community and did not feel that their social, political and economic interests were threatened by a non-Muslim ^Mmajority. Thus, Islam did not appear prominently in their struggle for nationhood. It was ^{NOT the} raison d'etre of their state and nation. The intensity of the Hindu-Muslim conflict in South Asia in the pre-independence period conditioned the perspective of the Muslim League

leaders in such a way that they did not fully appreciate the various forces shaping political dynamics in the Middle East in the fifties. There were personality, dynastic, territorial and ideological conflicts in the Muslim world which made the achievement of unity and harmony as desired by Pakistan rather a difficult goal. Moreover, Pakistan's efforts to promote unity in the Muslim world created a suspicion that perhaps Pakistan was aspiring for the leadership of the Muslim world. Pakistan could not remove this doubt about its intention in the minds of several key political leaders of the Muslim world. Gamal Abdul Nasser in particular was not favorably disposed toward the concept of Muslim unity. He felt that any such forum would be detrimental to his concept of Arab nationalism and Arab socialism and that his leadership within the Arab world (not to speak of the Muslim world) would be threatened. Discussing Egypt's relations with other countries, Nasser talked of three circles as the "theatre" of activity.⁵ The first circle comprised the Arab world which was the most important area of activity. The second circle included Africa. Other Muslim countries came in the third and the least important circle.⁶ Others interpreted Pakistan's efforts as steps designed to undermine the Arab League.

The ideological imperatives also came in conflict with other foreign policy strategies and goals, i.e. the search for security and ties with the West. Pakistan suffered from a deep sense of insecurity because of the hostile regional environment, especially its acrimonious relations with India and Afghanistan. It entered into ^a security arrangement with the U.S. and joined two West-sponsored regional security pacts, SEATO and the Baghdad Pact. These strengthened Pakistan's defense arrangements but had negative consequences for Pakistan's relations with a number of Muslim countries. With the exception of Iran, Turkey and Iraq (members of the Baghdad Pact) most other states of the

Middle East were critical of Pakistan's decision to join the West-sponsored security pacts. ~~The~~ conservative state like Saudi Arabia described Pakistan's participation in the Baghdad Pact as "a stab in the heart of the Arab and Muslim states"⁷ Others especially Egypt were more vocal in their criticism of Pakistan's pro-West policies. Many Arab states were convinced that Pakistan was promoting the cause of Muslim unity at the behest of the Western powers to neutralize those Muslim states (especially the Arabs) which did not see eye to eye with the Western states.

Pakistan was disappointed by the lukewarm and/or negative response to its proposal for Muslim unity although it continued to support the Islamic cause at international and regional forums. What hurt Pakistan most was that a neighboring Muslim country (Afghanistan) made irredentist claims on its territory. Further, some Muslim leaders i.e. Nasser and Seokarno (late 1950's and early 1960's) found greater identity of views with Nehru and developed closer ties with India than with the leaders of Pakistan. Pakistan found it difficult to understand why a number of Arab states did not support Pakistan in its disputes with India—a non-Muslim state. These Arab states on the other hand evaluated Pakistan's ties with the West in the backdrop of their problems with the West and wondered how could a Muslim state (Pakistan) develop such close ties with their adversaries and regard itself a friend of these Arab states.

These "disappointments" led the leaders of Pakistan to make a thorough and dispassionate appraisal of the operational problems they had to face in the course of their efforts to project ideology in foreign policy. They soon realized that the discrepancies in the past experiences (especially the colonial experience) the present political dynamics and future political aspirations of the Muslim states made the Muslim world very heterogeneous. All

these states did not operate in the same geopolitical milieu and ideological framework. These "hard realities" were not taken into account while devising foreign policy. An overzealous pursuance of ideology was thus bound to result in poor communication and misperceptions regarding their foreign policy goals and strategies amongst the Muslim states. Ayub Khan was correct in identifying the dilemmas of Pakistan's relations with the Muslim world in 1961

The Muslim countries have their problems with the colonial powers and they have their problems mutually. In the solution of these problems Pakistan is not in a position to exert a decisive influence. They do not always understand our point of view. Their quarrels are amongst themselves or with their previous colonial powers. Our quarrel is with the next door Asian power. This is the fundamental difference between our situation and theirs. At times when we find that other Muslim countries do not see things as we do we ought to realize that their circumstances are different from ours.

Pakistan's initial enthusiasm for the projection of ideology in foreign policy was replaced by a low key policy of cultivating close ties with other Muslim countries on a bilateral level by identifying ^{or} common religious and [✓] cultural heritage as one of the common denominators, not the only or the most important commonality. Pakistan extended support to the causes of the Muslim world especially the Palestinian question in the U N and other international forums. These efforts were appreciated and reciprocated by the Muslim states on a bilateral basis. Pakistan's ties with Iran and Turkey developed into a strong multilateral and multi-dimensional relationship and they worked together in CENTO and the R C D ⁹. Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Indonesia came out openly on the side of Pakistan during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war although most other Muslim states either adopted a neutral posture or showed only a slight tilt towards Pakistan.

Transformation of Environment, Ideology and Other Goals

The late 1960s and the 1970's witnessed several changes in the

international system in general and the Muslim world in particular. These changes facilitated the projection of Islam in international politics by the Muslim states—something Pakistan always desired in fact attempted to do in its early years of independence. Pakistan once again was in the forefront of the movement for bringing the Muslim countries on a common platform and thus making them a political force to reckon with. What facilitated Pakistan's active role was a clear shift in its foreign policy strategies. From a policy of alignment with the West it moved towards a policy of bilateralism and non-alignment and played down its participation in the West-sponsored security arrangement. Thereafter the states which had suspected Pakistan's bona-fides as the champion of Muslim unity now responded favorably towards these diplomatic ventures.

The most significant set of changes that reduced the gap between the environment and the ideological map of Pakistan's foreign policy were a number of developments which created a strong feeling amongst the Muslim states more so in the Arab world in favor of creating a common forum for all the Muslim countries. These developments included the 1967 Arab defeat and occupation of their territories by Israel, the burning down of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969 in occupied Jerusalem and the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 at the hands of a non-Muslim state. A strong feeling of insecurity was created in the Muslim world that if some steps were not taken to arrest these trends they might face greater problems in the future. This underlined the need of pooling their resources and harmonizing their strategies to deal with their common problems. Nasser dropped his opposition to the creation of an all-embracing Islamic platform which made it possible to hold the first summit conference of the heads of state/government of the Muslim countries at Rabat in 1969.¹⁰ This was converted into a permanent body named the Organization of Islamic Countries

(O I C) with its headquarters at Jeddah The 1973-1974 oil embargo and the ability to raise petroleum prices without evoking any retaliation from the West gave the Arab countries a sense of power They realized that the mighty West was also vulnerable The enhanced prices of petroleum brought enormous funds at their disposal which they used for modernization of their societies and contributed to the economic development of other Muslim countries

The transformed political environment was conducive to Pakistan's identification with and pursuance of Islam at the international level Now it was not merely an advocacy of an ideological theme but it fitted well with the political economic and security goals of Pakistan in the period after the establishment of Bangladesh

The dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 with the active support of India was the greatest political military and psychological set-back to Pakistan during the 34 years of its independent existence 1947-1971 In addition to the loss of its eastern wing over ninety thousand soldiers and civilians were made prisoners of war and it had lost about 5000 miles of its territory to India in the western sector In this "vulnerable" situation Pakistan looked towards the Middle East for moral political and economic support In January 1972 the new civilian President of Pakistan (Z A Bhutto) visited eight Muslim countries Later in May-June 1972 he paid visits to fourteen Muslim countries The major goal of these visits was to inform these governments of Pakistan's stance on Bangladesh Iraq recognized Bangladesh after the signing of the Simla Accord in July 1972 Several others waited till the process of normalization was well underway Iran Turkey Libya Jordon the U A E and Saudi Arabia extended recognition to Bangladesh only after it was recognized by Pakistan

The decision to hold the second summit conference of the heads of

states/governments of the O I C at Lahore (Pakistan) in 1974 was to boost Pakistan's morale and underline the importance the Muslim world attached to this country. This support was extremely useful to Pakistan for counterbalancing India's military ascendancy in the regional power structure during the post-Bangladesh war period. It will be no exaggeration to suggest that the support of the Muslim world to Pakistan helped to restore its confidence after the 1971 debacle and improved Pakistan's position during the process of settlement of the problems resulting from the 1971 war.

The emphasis on pan-Islamism and identification with the Muslim world especially the Middle East has been beneficial to Pakistan in the economic field. There was hardly any direct financial assistance from the Middle Eastern states prior to 1972. Since then Pakistan has received soft credits interest-free loans and financial grants from a number of oil-rich Middle Eastern states especially Saudi Arabia, Iran (pre-revolution), Kuwait, the U A E and Libya. By 1976-77 Pakistan had become one of the "prime recipients of aid" from oil producing countries.¹² Saudi Arabia and the U A E have invested capital in industrial enterprises in Pakistan. The most important benefit of Pakistan's ties with the Middle East has been the absorption of Pakistani manpower in the oil-rich Gulf states and Libya. This has reduced the pressure on the unemployed or under-employed mass of people on the domestic political system of Pakistan. The remittances from the Pakistanis working abroad have become the single largest source of foreign exchange earnings. The induction of the money earned in the Middle East into Pakistan has a profound impact on the life style and consumption pattern of the concerned population and helped the middle-level business. But this has also generated new social tensions in the society. Much attention has not been paid to the cumulative impact of all these developments (more funds, the changes in life style and

social tension) on the political system

Pakistan's shift towards the Middle East was also necessitated by the fact that the loss of East Pakistan meant the loss of a quite big market for Pakistani goods. Pakistan needed an alternate market for its products which it found in the Middle East and the Gulf states. The export of agricultural products and industrial goods to these states increased eleven times during 1972-75.¹³ Pakistan's exports further increased in the following years which made this region extremely important for Pakistan.

The seventies have also seen a growing realization amongst the decision-makers of Pakistan and the Gulf states that their security is inter-dependent because of geographic proximity, the linkages that have developed between these states, and the sharing of views on the growing pressures on the region by the policies of the extra-regional powers, especially the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. Pakistan has neither entered into any security treaty with the Gulf states nor joined the newly formed Gulf Cooperation Council.¹⁴ but it has maintained close contacts on defense and security affairs at a bilateral level. A number of officers and men of the Pakistan military have been serving with the armed forces of several Gulf states and other Middle Eastern states since the late sixties and the seventies. Some of these states send their men for training in Pakistan's military institutions. Pakistan also supplied small arms and weapons to several Gulf/Middle Eastern states and provided 'useful help' to the Arab states during and after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Pakistan also obtained some Western weapons through these Middle Eastern states.

The diplomatic support extended to Pakistan by the Muslim world in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a source of great strength for a country whose security situation was gravely worsened by the event. The

two meetings of Foreign Ministers of the O I C held in Pakistan in January 1980 and May 1980 and the Taif Summit of January 1981 demonstrated general support for Pakistan and the need for a political settlement of the Afghanistan crisis. The Muslim countries have also provided financial assistance for the maintenance of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. All external assistance (provided by the Muslim countries, other states and international organizations) comes to about 50% of total expenses which the Pakistan Government has to bear for extending humanitarian assistance to the Afghan refugees.

What is evident is that in the 'seventies the changes within the region and the Muslim world were more conducive to the effective projection of Islamic identity and ideology in foreign policy. Moreover, there has been a greater convergence of the ideological, economic and strategic foreign policy goals of Pakistan than was the case in the fifties. This enabled Pakistan to successfully employ its Islamic identity and pan-Islamism as core themes in its foreign policy and improved Pakistan's stature in the international and regional systems in the post-1971 period. This new diplomacy was also an asset in the domestic political context as well and it is significant that Pakistan's foreign policy has not substantially altered despite a major change in regime in 1977.

The New Stresses

The consensus which developed in the Muslim world in the seventies to work together on a common platform came under strain during 1980-81 due to the resurfacing of political polarisation in the Gulf region in the background of the Islamic revolution in Iran. The revolution brought into being a government in the Gulf region whose political philosophy and strategies were totally dissimilar to other conservative, monarchical and pro-American regimes of the area. The leaders of Iran often talked of spreading the message of the Islamic

revolution outside the territorial boundaries of Iran. This perturbed the Gulf sheikhdoms which felt threatened by the anti-monarchy mass oriented and radical Islamic character of the Iranian revolution. The containment of the spillover effects of the Iranian revolution thus became the major concern of the Gulf states. The contours of the new polarisation became clear during the course of the Iraq-Iran war (September 1980 to the present). Most pro-west monarchical regimes of the Middle East joined hands with Iraq vis-a-vis Iran. Some of the states i.e. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Jordan and Sudan openly provided military and economic assistance to Iraq. Iran was able to obtain the support of the so-called radical Muslim states -- Syria, Algeria and Libya.

These developments have cast a shadow on the pan-Islamic movement and undermined the ability of the O I C to pursue goals of peace and cooperation among its member states. As for Pakistan, the new stresses in the Muslim world have created some difficulties in the projection of its ideology in foreign policy. Pakistan now finds it more difficult to maintain a balance in its relations with the 'conservative and pro-West' Muslim states and the 'radical' Muslim states. If anything, it has become identified with the conservative monarchical and pro-American regimes of the Middle East and the Gulf especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This is quite evident from the number of diplomatic exchanges at the highest level between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia since 1978-79. The official and personal visits of General Zia-ul-Huq to Saudi Arabia outnumber his trips to other Middle Eastern states. This clear tilt towards the monarchical regimes in the Gulf especially Saudi Arabia can be partly explained with reference to the financial support Pakistan has received from these states. The conservative Islamic disposition of the present Pakistani regime and the strong personal reverence General Zia-ul-Huq feels for the House of Saud. The growing proximity of their views on regional

security and their ties with the U S in the field of defense and security also contributed towards the improved relations between them. On their part the Saudis have declared their firm support for the independence and territorial integrity of Pakistan¹⁵. They are reported to have agreed to provide funds to Pakistan for the purchase of F-16 aircraft from the U S during the next five years. Pakistan is reciprocating by providing several thousand military personnel to Saudi Arabia. The official sources disclosed in December 1982 that there were 1 500 men from the Air Force, 3 000 to 4 000 from the Army and a few hundred from the Navy whose services had been put at the disposal of Saudi Arabia¹⁶. Un-official sources place these figures at a higher level ✓

If the present trend continues — polarisation in the Muslim world and Pakistan's identification with the conservative Muslim states — Pakistan will run the risk of being embroiled in the regional and local conflicts of the Gulf area. As a result its efforts to project an Islamic identity and ideology in foreign policy may meet with disappointments similar to those faced in the fifties and the early sixties. Good relations with one set of Muslim states will adversely affect its relations with another and different set. Pan-Islamism will remain as the major feature of Pakistan's foreign policy but a number of Muslim states will become skeptical of Pakistan's efforts to promote unity in the Muslim world.

NOTES

1 The Muslims of the South Asian Sub-continent expressed sympathy for the Ottoman empire on numerous occasions i e the Russo-Turkish war (1877) the Greek-Turkish war (1897) the Italy-Turkish war (1911) the Balkan war (1912). Soon after the conclusion of World War I the prospects of Turkey being stripped of its possessions by the Allied powers caused political agitation in India. This ultimately led to the Khilafat Movement and the Hijrat movement. In 1933 the Muslim League passed a resolution in its Delhi session criticising and condemning the British efforts to make Palestine the national home of the Jews in the subsequent years (1933-1947) the Muslim League repeatedly supported the cause of the Palestinians vis-a-vis the Jews and the British.

2 S M Burke Mainsprings of Indian and Pakistani Foreign Policies (Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press 1974 p 116)

Outlining the foundations of Pakistan's foreign policy Liaquat Ali Khan stressed "Our relations with the Muslim countries should not only be friendly but brotherly and that they should be made stronger everyday because the mission of Pakistan can achieve its success only when we make other Muslim countries join it" (Speech on August 14 1950) M Rafique Afzal (ed) Speeches and Statements of Quaid-i-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan 1941-1951 (Lahore Research Society of Pakistan 1967 p 432)

3 The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1956 Part III directive principles of State Policy Article 24 "The state shall endeavour to strengthen the bonds of unity among Muslim countries" Ibid 1962 part 11 Chapter 2 Principles of Policy No 21 "The bonds of unity amongst Muslim countries should be preserved and strengthened" Ibid 1973 part 11 Chapter 2 Principles of Policy Article 40 "The state shall endeavor to preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic unity"

4 For details see Burke Mainsprings pp 134-135 Keither Callard Pakistan's Foreign Policy (2nd edition New York Institute of Pacific Studies 1959 pp 27-29) Mohammad Ahsen Chaudhri "Pakistan and the Muslim World" Pakistan Horizon (Vol X No 3 September 1957 pp 156-166)

5 Gamal Abdel Nasser Egypt's Liberation The Philosophy of Revolution (Cairo Government Printing Offices n d p 51)

6 Ibid pp 51-52 53-54 67-68

M. 7 S M Burke Pakistan's Foreign Policy An Historical Analysis (London Oxford University Press 1973 p 204) For an analysis of the impact of Pakistan's participation in the West-sponsored pacts on its relations with the Middle east see Sisir Gupta "Islam as a Factor in Pakistani Foreign Policy" in S Rajan and Shivaji Ganguly (eds) Sisir Gupta India and the International System (New Delhi Vikas 1981 pp 88-110)

8 Mohammad Ayub Khan "Essentials of Pakistan's Foreign Policy" Pakistan Horizon (Vol XIV No 4 Fourth Quarter 1961 pp 263-271)

9 Pakistan withdrew from CENTO in 1979 Iran also dropped out after the Iranian revolution in 1979 Since then the R C D has also become inactive but it has not been formally abandoned

10 Nasser did not attend the conference Egypt was represented by Sadat After Nasser's death in 1970 Egypt became quite active in the O I C

11 For details see Zubeida Mustafa "Recent Trends in Pakistan's Policy Toward the Middle East" Pakistan Horizon (Vol XXVIII No 4 Fourth Quarter 1975 pp 1-17)

12 M G Weinbaum and Gautam Sen "Pakistan Enters the Middle East" Orbis (Vol 22 No 3 Fall 1978 pp 595-612)

13 Rashid Ahmad Khan "Security in the Gulf Pakistani Perspective-II"