

The Foreign Policy of Ayub Khan

States."¹⁶ But Pakistan's main political objective in the alliance—Washington's unequivocal support for the forced implementation of the United Nations decisions of August 13, 1948, and January 5, 1949, on Kashmir—was never achieved.

Until 1961, President Ayub seemed ready to support the Western defense system against any eventual Communist expansion. In commenting on the tense situation in Laos in December 1960, he pledged that "if Pakistan (as a SEATO member) is called upon to shoulder its burden and responsibility, we will never hesitate to do it."¹⁷

This close relationship between the distant allies suffered a serious setback with the change of administration in Washington. Many leading Democrats were never convinced that the military semidictatorship in Pakistan should be supported by American money and weapons. Ayub Khan, in turn, failed to charm with his wit and common sense the dogmatic liberals of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Eastern academic establishment.

The crisis came in the Fall of 1962 as an aftermath of America's involvement in the defense of India against Chinese aggression. In particular, the Pakistanis found it impossible to understand why neutralist India should suddenly be treated better than ideologically committed Pakistan, and why American leaders refrained from attaching effective political strings to their decisive military assistance, which was—according to their conviction—sooner or later certain to be used against Washington's longtime ally. This lack of consideration, as he saw it, for Pakistan's vital interests finally convinced Ayub that the Kennedy Administration had decided to build India into the dominant power in South Asia. In Ayub's words:¹⁸

At the same time, there grew a feeling among the allies of the United States—not in Pakistan only—that, in a variety of ways, they were increasingly being taken for granted. Gradually, as a result of this change in American thinking, neutral India became by far the largest recipient of US economic aid, while she

¹⁶ Qutbuddin Aziz, "Pakistan Seeks Aid from East and West," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 4, 1966.

¹⁷ Khalid B. Sayeed, "Pakistan and India and the Scope and Limits of Convergent Politics," in A. M. Halpern, ed., *Policies Toward China* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 232.

¹⁸ Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, p. 132.

continued freely to castigate the United States in the United Nations and outside, whenever opportunity offered. Pakistan watched this transformation in American foreign policy with increasing perplexity and dismay. Our concern arose from the fact that the Indian military build-up was aimed largely against Pakistan. The pronouncements of Indian leaders and the continuing massing of India's army on Pakistan's borders clearly suggested that.

Ayub took every available opportunity to persuade Washington that "Pakistan should not be taken for granted," and that aid for India should be used as an instrument to force a final solution of the Kashmir dispute. But to no avail.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, appointed Foreign Minister in January 1963, became the main architect of rapprochement with Communist China at the expense of the United States. Relations between the erstwhile allies steadily deteriorated. Washington was particularly annoyed when Pakistan gave permission for Chinese jets to use the American-built Dacca airfield, calling it an "unfortunate breach of Free World solidarity," and subsequently postponed a \$4.3 million loan for further improvements and extension of the important East Bengal installation. The announcement that the United States intended to send the Seventh Fleet into the Indian Ocean in 1964 provoked strong opposition in Pakistan. Reversing his previous policy, President Ayub made clear in an interview with the BBC that, in the event of a serious confrontation between China and the US over North Vietnam, Pakistan—in spite of its SEATO obligations—would not become involved.

American criticism of Chinese activities in Pakistan was answered "with a barrage of editorials in official and nongovernment papers accusing the United States of attempting to use foreign aid to coerce other nations into following the United States right down the line."¹⁹ The eventual American reaction was inevitable. First, President Johnson angrily postponed, on very short notice, the scheduled state visits of both the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan. This was followed by a unilateral announcement, early in July 1965, post-

¹⁹ Dupree, *loc. cit.*, p. 23.

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poning an Aid-to-Pakistan consortium meeting scheduled for July 27, 1965. The latter came as a sharp blow to Pakistan's expectations of continued assistance for the newly launched Third Five-Year Plan.

On the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan in September 1965, American military and economic aid to the belligerent countries was immediately suspended. But both armies made full use of the military equipment already supplied by the United States, in spite of solemn commitments to the contrary. Pakistan considered Washington's hands-off attitude as a betrayal of US obligations under the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement of 1954. The suspension of military aid was especially resented, inasmuch as India's military hardware came primarily from the Soviet Union and East European countries, while Pakistan's supplies were largely from the United States.

Washington's active role in the United Nations Security Council in promoting the September 20 cease-fire resolution helped the situation somewhat, and President Ayub's visit to the United States in December 1965 effected some further improvement in US-Pakistan relations. President Johnson took the occasion to reaffirm US support for the independence and integrity of Pakistan as vital to world peace; and he assured Ayub of America's continuing interest in Pakistan's economic and social development, which indicated that assistance would soon be resumed. US endorsement of the Tashkent settlement of January 1966 also helped to sustain US-Pakistan relations during the remainder of the Ayub era on a workable, though no longer cordial, basis.

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Pakistan has no common frontier with the Soviet Union *sensu stricto*, being separated from the Central Asian, predominately Muslim, Republic of Tadzhikistan by the narrow, rugged strip of Afghan territory known as the Wakhan Corridor. But the proximity of the Russian giant, and the old Trotsky idea that "the road to Paris and London lies via the towns of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Bengal,"²⁰ make the whole problem of relations with the Soviet Union a vital issue for the Pakistanis. Originally, Pakistan maintained a posture of indifference with

²⁰ Quoted in George Jan Lerski, *Origins of Trotskyism in Ceylon, A Documentary History of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party* (Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1968), pp. 161-162.

regard to Cold War issues, while conducting a resolutely anti-Communist policy in domestic politics. Military alignment with the West in 1954–55 was bound to provoke an angry response from Moscow. It coincided with the general reappraisal, after the death of Stalin, of Soviet foreign policy toward the developing countries and a softening of the rigid "two-camp" approach with regard to the emerging, nonaligned Third World. With Pakistan now firmly in the Western camp, the Soviets retaliated by endorsing India's claim that no plebiscite was necessary or possible in Kashmir, and by supporting Afghanistan on the issue of Pushtunistan. The Soviet Union also began to give large amounts of military and economic aid to India and Afghanistan.

Though basically hostile in the 1950s, the Soviet attitude toward Pakistan was always flexible enough to leave the door open for possible rapprochement. Early in 1956, "Marshal Bulganin offered Russian assistance for the construction of a steel mill in Pakistan similar to the one which the Soviet Union had built in India. But Pakistan, for fear of incurring the displeasure of the West, rejected all Soviet offers of economic aid."²¹ In due course, Ayub Khan developed a policy of "bilateral equations," which he explained later in his autobiography as follows:²²

The objective was to establish normal relations with the four major powers involved in Asia without antagonizing any one of them. A simple strategy was evolved to achieve this objective. We should endeavor to set up bilateral equations with each one of them, with the clear understanding that the nature and complexion of the equation should be such as to promote our mutual interests without adversely affecting the legitimate interests of third parties.

But the development of friendly relations with Soviet Russia was far from smooth. New offers of massive economic assistance to India and increased Russian collaboration with the anti-Pakistani government of Prime Minister Daud in Afghanistan alarmed the strategically oriented Ayub. Thus a joint Khrushchev–Daud communique in March 1960 pro-

²¹ Zubeida Hasan, "Soviet Arms Aid to Pakistan and India," *Pakistan Horizon*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Fourth Quarter, 1968), p. 345.

²² Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, pp. 118–119.

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voked the Pakistani President to warn that such collaboration seemed "to aggravate problems in this part of the world," and to "pave the way for the age-old attempt of the North to dominate the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and areas surrounding it."²³ In April 1960, Soviet-Pakistan relations reached a crisis point when an American U-2 spy plane launched from Peshawar, West Pakistan, was shot down deep inside Soviet territory.

A major breakthrough in relations between the two countries came a year later, with an agreement in March 1961 to cooperate in prospecting for oil in Pakistan. That subtle but significant shift seemed to be determined primarily by the growth of tension between the USSR and China. The Russians were clearly worried over Pakistan's new orientation toward China. In January 1963, Khrushchev reiterated in a conference with Zafrullah Khan the Soviet desire to improve relations with Pakistan, despite the existing Soviet entente with India. Barter agreements were signed on August 30 and September 28, 1963, and an aviation agreement on October 7. The latter provided for operations by Pakistan International Airlines and the Soviet Aeroflot in each others' territory. Thereafter, a barter agreement was signed with Warsaw, and trade agreements with Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Diplomatic relations were also established with the East European regimes. S. P. Seth has pointed out, however, that the Russians had to offer more than mere mere economic incentives to the Pakistanis:²⁴

Pakistan would not have responded to the Russian overtures, however, if the latter had continued to show pronounced "partiality" toward New Delhi in regard to Indo-Pak disputes. This obliged the Soviet government to avoid taking sides openly on the Kashmir issue. During his visit to India in June 1964, President Mikoyan went so far as to suggest directly to Premier Shastri that it was time for India and Pakistan to seek a settlement of their disputes. India was also discreetly told by Soviet Vice Premier Kirill Mazurov during his visit to India that it should not expect Russia's relations with Pakistan to be conditioned by Indo-Pak affairs.

²³ Sangat Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

²⁴ S. P. Seth, "Russia's Role in Indo-Pak Politics," *Asian Survey*, vol. 9, no. 8 (August 1969), p. 616.

Although far from pro-Soviet, President Ayub welcomed these changes as he cautiously tried to strengthen his country's position *vis-à-vis* India. His policy began to bear fruit. In October 1963, the USSR hinted for the first time at a possible change in its stand on Kashmir. A year later, President Ayub suggested that the normalization of relations with Russia was contingent upon whether Moscow continued to aid India militarily.

Foreign Minister Bhutto was sent to the Soviet capital in January 1965; and in April, President Ayub paid a state visit. While Kosygin and Brezhnev offered no significant modifications of policy either on Kashmir or on Russian arms aid to India, the visit proved useful. Ayub made clear his view that the Soviet veto in the Security Council was the key factor in India's flouting of UN resolutions on self-determination for Jammu and Kashmir.²⁵ Kosygin, in turn, emphasized "that the Soviet Union would not like to see a situation of military confrontation develop in any part of the world, much less in our own region."²⁶ Chinese or American intervention on behalf of Pakistan might seriously affect the precarious balance of power in South Asia, and gradually involve Soviet armed forces in a part of the world that was not the most important from the point of view of their immediate interests.

When the September 1965 war broke out, Kosygin seized the opportunity to play the role of peacemaker between the two belligerents. In identical communications to the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan, the head of the Soviet government expressed his country's concern over an armed conflict "in an arena directly adjacent to the borders of the Soviet Union." Since it was "hardly appropriate . . . to seek to determine who is right and who is to blame," he advocated that India and Pakistan simply stop hostilities and withdraw their armed forces "behind the cease-fire line established by agreement" in 1949. Thereafter, the belligerent parties "should enter into negotiations for peaceful settlement of the differences that have arisen between them." Kosygin, expressed the conviction that "all disputes, *including the question associated with Kashmir*, can be settled more effectively by peaceful means alone."²⁷

²⁵ Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, p. 171.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

²⁷ *Pakistan Horizon*, vol. 18, no. 4 (Fourth Quarter, 1965), pp. 424-426. Italics added.

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In a subsequent Tass release, the Soviet government offered its good offices "if both sides deemed it useful." On September 17, Kosygin again wrote to Shastri and Ayub proposing direct talks between the two leaders at Tashkent, in Soviet Uzbekistan, or any other place in the USSR "in order to achieve agreement on the reestablishment of peace" between India and Pakistan. He also offered to take part in the meeting "if desired by both sides." The objectives of Soviet policy at this point have been summarized by Professor Griffith as follows:²⁸

Moscow's minimal objective was the containment of both Peking and Washington; its maximum aim was to detach India from Washington and Pakistan from Peking while moving both closer to Moscow, and finally, to improve relations between the Indians and Pakistanis so that together they might devote their energies to containing China rather than to fight each other.

The historic meeting took place at Tashkent, January 4-10, 1966. According to an account by an Indian observer:²⁹

What Kosygin did was precisely "to bring to bear on the two leaders his tremendous power of persuasion to make them see each other's point of view in the interest of peace in the Indian subcontinent." This did the trick.

After Tashkent, relations between Pakistan and Russia continued to prosper. The Soviets increased the level of their economic assistance during 1966; and a year later, a small military aid program was also initiated. According to Gibert and Joshua:³⁰

In an effort to counter Chinese influence and activities, the Soviet Union in 1967 supplied about twelve Mi-6 helicopters as well as military trucks to Pakistan. A small group of Pakistani airmen was sent to the USSR for training. To soothe Indian nerves, the Soviet Union announced that it would not make any lethal weapons available to Pakistan. But the following year, the USSR took a more radical step and agreed to sell Pakistan

²⁸ William E. Griffith, *Sino-Soviet Relations, 1964-1965* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967), p. 117.

²⁹ Sangat Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-150.

³⁰ Stephen P. Gibert and Wynfred Joshua, *Guns and Rubles, Soviet Aid Diplomacy in Neutral Asia* (New York: American-Asian Educational Exchange, 1970), p. 29.

tanks and artillery. Not wholly unrelated to this move was Pakistan's termination of its agreement with the United States on the American intelligence base at Peshawar.

A second exchange of visits between Ayub and Kosygin served further to cement the new relationship.

But Ayub's success in "neutralizing" the Russians proved to be shortlived. Sick since February 1968, and frustrated by a lack of support from shortsighted, quarrelsome politicians and bureaucrats, he resigned the presidency on March 26, 1969, after having held the office much longer than any of his predecessors. His policy went with him. In 1971, while the Pakistan Army attempted forcibly to repress political opposition in East Bengal, the Soviet Union signed a far-reaching military agreement with India, under the terms of which it supplied the sophisticated weaponry that contributed so significantly to Pakistan's defeat in the disastrous December war and the loss of its eastern territories.

VII

When the heat of argument over various shortcomings of his domestic program subsides, most observers may come to recognize that Ayub was a rare master of the intricate game of foreign politics in the patient and pragmatic application of his policy of "bilateral equations." During his ten years and five months of power, Ayub successfully safeguarded the precarious integrity of his geographically and politically divided country, both by fostering the development of Pakistan's backward economy, and by significantly improving Pakistan's relations with all the major world powers, and with all its immediate neighbors except India. Alas, the crucial problem of self-determination for Jammu and Kashmir could not be resolved, and this failure contributed to the downfall of the only leader who had any chance to strengthen Pakistan's international position *vis-à-vis* India.

With greater foresight and daring, Ayub might have projected a more revolutionary settlement, trading restive East Bengal for the territorially larger Valley of Kashmir, which is adjacent to the fertile northern part of West Pakistan. Leaving aside whether such a deal would ever have been acceptable to the Indians, it would also have

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signified a fundamental transfiguration of Muslim League conceptions as to the partition of British India, and would have required a more charismatic leader than Ayub to gain acceptance, even among the West Pakistanis.

Now, with Bangladesh independent and recognized as such by Islamabad, and with Ayub dead, one can perhaps safely conclude that he served his country well, being almost of the caliber of such Muslim statesmen as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Sir Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Liaqat Ali Khan—the real founders of modern Pakistan.