

# The Foreign Policy of Ayub Khan

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**F**IELD MARSHAL Ayub Khan, the benevolent dictator of Pakistan for over ten years, stated in his political autobiography, *Friends Not Masters*, that "the principal objectives of Pakistan's foreign policy are security and development." In spite of the futile armed conflict with India in 1965, Ayub proved on the whole more successful in implementing those "principal objectives" of his country's external relations than in his ambitious endeavors to evolve a viable political system at home.

To understand the magnitude of Ayub's reorientation of an originally sterile foreign policy, one must constantly keep in mind Pakistan's position as a political construct divided by 1,000 miles of unfriendly territory. For Pakistan, "the problem of foreign policy was the problem of survival." Its overriding concern was the safety of its long and exposed frontiers; and this, in turn, involved its relations with India, mainland China, and the USSR. Of these, by far the most absorbing was the highly explosive confrontation with India, which since independence had dominated Pakistan's relationships with all the rest of the world.

## II

The Indo-Pakistan confrontation has its roots in centuries of communal tension between the Hindu and Muslim populations of the subcontinent, and in the rather highhanded partition imposed by the British in 1947. The latter resulted in a common border over 2,500 miles long, second in length only to the equally explosive Sino-Soviet border in East and Central Asia. The intransigence of the Indian National Congress, and particularly Nehru, with regard to self-determination for Kashmir also contributed to the mounting anti-Indian obsession of the Muslim elite of West Pakistan.

From the outset of his tenure of office and up to the tragic events

<sup>1</sup> Mohammed Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters: A Political Autobiography* (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Mushtaq Ahmad, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy* (Karachi: Space Publications, 1968), pp. 5-6.

of 1965, Ayub consistently—and more than any other Pakistani leader—worked for a rapprochement with New Delhi. In Professor Palmer's words:<sup>3</sup>

After Ayub Khan came into power in Pakistan, there were high hopes for a real improvement in Indo-Pakistan relations. Pakistan had a leader who could hold his own with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and who genuinely wished to resolve the many issues in dispute between the two countries, most of all the Kashmir question.

Ayub began with a few practical issues that seemed relatively less difficult to handle, in order to create a better climate for dealing with the major roadblock, namely, a plebiscite in Kashmir under international control. In particular, he proposed a settlement of the long-pending Indus water dispute, and suggested a strategic plan for joint defense of the entire subcontinent from possible invasion by the Communist powers to the north. Palmer states:<sup>4</sup>

While India was in a state of excitement because of the Chinese takeover in Tibet, Ayub Khan called attention to the need for India and Pakistan to resolve their differences and to cooperate in the defense of the subcontinent. He even offered to "consider joint occupation without having pacts or treaties," or without having "some sort of paper agreement." This suggestion was welcomed by some persons in India, including Jayaprakash Narayan and General Cariappa, but it was coldly received by Nehru, whose standard retort to all proposals for joint defense was: "Defense against whom?"

In his autobiography, Ayub described his approach to the problems of regional security in the following terms:<sup>5</sup>

On 24 April 1959, I said that in the case of external aggression both India and Pakistan should come together to defend the sub-

<sup>3</sup> Norman D. Palmer, "Pakistan's Mood: The New Realism," *Current History* (November 1962), p. 268.

<sup>4</sup> Norman D. Palmer, *South Asia and United States Policy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), pp. 206-207.

<sup>5</sup> Ayub Kahn, *Friends Not Masters*, pp. 126-129, *passim*.

*The Foreign Policy of Ayub Khan*

continent . . . I first tried to assure the Indian leaders that the proposal did not violate the "nonalignment policy" professed by India. The crux of the proposal, I stated in unequivocal terms, was that, once differences between the two nations were resolved, the Indian and Pakistani forces then facing each other could be released to defend their respective territories.

The Indian Prime Minister, however, refused to see any merit in resolving disputes with Pakistan or living at peace with her.

Ayub was more successful in his efforts to solve the Indus water dispute, particularly with regard to the tributary rivers of the Indus in the Punjab area. Thanks to the good offices of the World Bank, one of the major stumbling blocks in the way of improving relations between the two countries was removed after eight years of negotiation by the signing of the Indus Water Treaty in September 1960. In a joint communique, Nehru and Ayub declared optimistically "that the settlement of the Indus Basin water question and the elimination of their border disputes presented to their two governments an unparalleled opportunity to direct their policies towards the promotion of mutual understanding and friendly cooperation between their two countries."

But it was not to be. In spite of some partial successes in minor border rectifications and settlement of the Indus water question, relations between India and Pakistan "began to go from bad to worse."

Perhaps because he was unable to obtain concessions from Nehru regarding Kashmir, President Ayub Khan and other Pakistani spokesmen began to take a harder line toward India. The Pakistani press, which was operating under the controls of martial law, became increasingly vitriolic in its attacks on India, and its criticisms were matched in kind, if not quite in degree, by the Indian newspapers.

During the 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict, President Ayub, although skeptical of official Indian interpretations as to its magnitude, refrained from any aggressive measures against India, and did not take advantage of the situation to improve Pakistan's position in Kashmir.

<sup>6</sup> Palmer, "Pakistan's Mood: The New Realism," *op. cit.*, p. 268.

As late as March 1962, he still hoped for a joint Indo-Pakistan defense plan for the subcontinent. In this, he was supported by his ex-colleagues of the British Indian Army who were now commanding independent India's armed forces. He warned that "pressure from the Soviet Union and Red China will continue to mount during the next decade, and it is absolutely essential that we get India's and Pakistan's armies pointed in the right direction. An unsolved Kashmir question prevents it."

The Pakistanis were disappointed by the unconditional military support that Britain and America gave to neutralist India during the 1962 Sino-Indian War. For the first time, Ayub found himself under strong pressure from Pakistani public opinion, particularly when it was announced in Washington that \$525 million in military aid would be extended to India. This probably marked a turning point in Ayub's foreign policy, which up to now had been oriented primarily toward the liberation of Kashmir. Even during the fighting between India and China, three fourths of India's best-equipped forces remained massed on Pakistan's border. In an article in *Foreign Affairs* in January 1964, Ayub claimed that in December 1962, Nehru himself had admitted that "Indian military preparedness had been directed primarily against Pakistan."<sup>2</sup>

### III

As a major Muslim state situated at the center of the "Islamic Crescent" (which extends from Morocco to Indonesia), West Pakistan nurtured from the beginning a vague ambition to lead a world Muslim bloc of half a billion coreligionists. Such a Pan-Islamic goal, even if not overtly or officially propounded, in fact permeates Pakistani politics, and acquires special significance from the circumstance that Pakistan's second longest frontier is with its Muslim neighbor to the northwest, Afghanistan.

The kingdom of Afghanistan, with some 15 million people, does not have the power seriously to threaten any of its neighbors. But Kabul's traditional policy for preserving independence has been to

<sup>1</sup> Louis Dupree, "First Reflections on the Second Kashmir War," *American Universities Field Staff, South Asia Series*, vol. 9, no. 5 (1965), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Mohammed Ayub Khan, "The Pakistan-American Alliance: Stresses and Strains," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 42, no. 2 (January 1964), p. 206.

### *The Foreign Policy of Ayub Khan*

play one foreign power against another. During the Cold War period, the Afghans adroitly maintained a balance between Washington and Moscow, getting economic assistance from America and military equipment from Soviet Russia. Moscow, in turn, sought to improve its position in the country by supporting Afghan claims to Pathan tribal territories in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province. The Russians declined to recognize the Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan; and in December 1955, Bulgarian bluntly declared: "We sympathize with Afghanistan's policy on the Pushtunistan issue." Thereafter, the Soviet Union on several occasions reiterated its support for the self-determination of all Pathan tribes right up to the confluence of the Kabul and Indus Rivers. Worried by Moscow's position, Ayub sought and obtained American support for Pakistan's claims. The joint communique of a SEATO Council meeting held in March 1956 stressed the recognition by member governments "that the sovereignty of Pakistan extends up to the Durand Line, the international boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan." At least in this important respect, the Western alliance proved beneficial to Pakistan.

In the meantime, Soviet military assistance to Afghanistan increased, reaching the sum of \$240 million by 1959. The Afghan Army was fully equipped and trained by the Russians, and strategic roads linking the Soviet Central Asian republics with the heart of Afghanistan were also under construction. Ayub became more and more concerned over the worsening of relations. At the press conference held in London on March 17, 1961, he revealed that Afghan troops equipped with Russian arms were massed on the Pakistan border in the Kunar Valley. In April 1961, Afghan Prime Minister Daud visited Khrushchev in Moscow, and obtained from the latter an unequivocal statement concerning the "complete identity of views (between the two countries) on international problems, including Afghanistan's claims to Pakistan territory."

Afghanistan is a landlocked country dependent for its commerce on West Pakistan land routes through the Khyber Pass along the Kabul River and the Indus Valley leading to the port of Karachi. In reprisal for Kabul's harassment of Pakistani consulates in Afghanistan, the Ayub regime closed down all Afghan consulates in Pakistan. This, in turn, provoked a severance of diplomatic relations on September 6, 1961. The

military superiority of Pakistani forces, and a change of cabinet in Afghanistan following dismissal of the pro-Soviet Prime Minister Daud, gradually worked toward a detente between the two Islamic countries. Hostilities subsided, and diplomatic relations were reestablished on May 29, 1963, through the good offices of the Shah of Iran. Thereafter, until the end of Ayub's regime, relations between the two countries remained normal.

Pakistan also shares a 450-mile frontier across Baluchistan with another Muslim neighbor, Iran. Although its population belongs to a different Islamic sect, relations between Iran's Shia and Pakistan's Sunni Muslims have been much closer than between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This was particularly true after signature of the Baghdad Pact of 1955, later renamed the Central Treaty Organization—CENTO—following Iraq's withdrawal from the alliance in July 1958. The Baghdad Pact tied Pakistan closely to Turkey as well; and economic relations among the three Muslim states also prospered. It should be observed, however, that Pakistan's loyal support of the Arab countries against Israel was never fully appreciated or reciprocated by Cairo and Damascus, while it provoked a good deal of animosity among the American Jewish community.

#### IV

At the outset of Ayub's rule, China was still inclined to support neutralist India over Pakistan, which was considered an important link in America's anti-Communist containment policy in that part of the world. Ever since talks between Muhammad Ali Borge and Chou En-lai at the Bandung Conference in April 1955, Pakistan had tried to reassure the Chinese Communists that its alliance with the United States and United Kingdom were motivated primarily by fear of Indian revisionism, and not by animosity toward them. Similar approaches were made during Prime Minister H.S. Suhrawardy's visit to Peking, but Ayub's offer of a joint defense pact with India was bound to cause substantial displeasure. In the event, it took several years to establish friendly relations with mainland China.

For a long time, and particularly after the Chinese takeover of Tibet, Ayub was deeply concerned by the danger of Chinese expansion. Professor Sayeed points out that "Chinese incursions beyond the

*The Foreign Policy of Ayub Khan*

McMahon Line, and Chinese occupation of territory around Aksai Chin in Ladakh, had a sobering effect" on Ayub, who told a British correspondent that a "Russian-Chinese drive to the Indian Ocean is a major aim in the Communist drive for world domination." Apparently as late as November 1959, Ayub had not fully taken into account the growing split between the two Communist giants. Even during the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict, he was prepared to offer his country's good will to India:<sup>9</sup>

The intensive military activity on India's frontier was endangering the peace and stability of a region in which Pakistan was vitally interested. He also assured Mr. Nehru that Pakistan was wedded to peace and friendly relations, "especially with India." It is said that his attitude enabled India to transfer some of the troops from the Pakistan frontier to the Chinese border.

On the other hand, Ayub decided to take some advantage of the Sino-Indian situation by asking Peking for a delimitation of the border between China and Pakistan in the Sinkiang and Baltistan areas. On January 15, 1961, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Manzur Quadir, disclosed that China had agreed to this; and he added that the settlement was not inconsistent with Pakistan's membership in defensive alliances with the Western powers. By December 27, 1962, an agreement had been reached in principle that included the Pakistani-occupied areas of Kashmir. This greatly irritated the Indians, who were deeply involved at the time in their war with China. India had never recognized Pakistan's right to hold even the northwestern "Azad (Free) Kashmir" part of the disputed state.

The Pakistan-China boundary agreement was signed on March 2, 1963. Syed states:<sup>10</sup>

China ceded to Pakistan 750 square miles of territory beyond the main watershed of the Karakorum range. Pakistan surrendered no part of the territory under its control. . . . But the agreement was far more significant politically. It removed an

<sup>9</sup> Khalid B. Sayeed, *The Political System of Pakistan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), p. 273.

<sup>10</sup> Anwar Syed, "Sino-Pakistan Relations—An Overview," *Pakistan Horizon*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Second Quarter, 1969), p. 111. Similar border agreements were signed by China with Nepal and Burma, while Pakistan also signed border treaties with Burma and Iran.

irritant in Sino-Pakistan relations. It provided the occasion for China to reject unequivocally the contention that Kashmir belongs to India.

At about the same time, Pakistan and China entered into a series of other agreements, including trade (January 1963) and civil aviation (August 1963). Under the latter, Pakistani commercial planes, unlike those of Britain, were accorded landing facilities in Canton and Shanghai in exchange for Chinese use of the American-built Dacca airfield in East Pakistan.

In February 1964, Pakistan reversed its policy on Chinese representation in the United Nations, for which the reward was Peking's support of Pakistan's claim to Kashmir. In July of the same year, China extended a \$60 million long-term, interest-free loan to Pakistan, to be repaid mainly with cotton and jute, in order to finance purchases of Chinese coal, cement, and heavy machinery. In March 1965, the President of Pakistan paid a state visit to Peking, where he was extolled, despite earlier animosities, for his "consistent friendship."

At the outset of the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, the Foreign Minister of China, Chen Yi, declared his country's full support for "Pakistan's just action in hitting back at armed Indian provocations," and complete sympathy with the "Kashmir people's just struggle to resist Indian tyrannical rule."<sup>11</sup> But otherwise, the Chinese played no significant role in the outcome; and they were powerless to obstruct Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin's proposal to President Ayub Khan and Prime Minister Shastri to negotiate a settlement of the war on Soviet territory at Tashkent. While the Pakistanis could claim, therefore, that China was their staunchest friend during the Indo-Pakistan conflict, the pragmatic President of Pakistan had to realize that it was not Peking, but Moscow, that could effectively intervene to save his country from the consequences of a disastrous war.

Despite their opposition to the Tashkent settlement of January 1966, the Chinese continued to strengthen their influence in Pakistan through economic and military assistance programs. During Ayub's era, the two governments also started to build a hard-surface highway through the Karakorum passes to link their respective road systems and

<sup>11</sup> Sangat Singh, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy, An Appraisal* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1970), p. 117.



thereby facilitate the movement of men and goods between them. Summarizing the Ayub regime's perspective on relations with Communist China, Anwar Syed points out that "Pakistan needs China as a counterpoise to India, a counterpoise that the United States or the Soviet Union will not supply."<sup>12</sup> But he adds:

Pakistan (also) wants to maintain balanced development in its relations with China, the Soviet Union, and the United States. This policy of balance implies limits beyond which commercial and political relations with none of these powers may grow.

## V

Of the two successor states of British India, it was Gandhi's and Nehru's secularist India that caught America's imagination and sympathy, not the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. By the late 1950s, American liberals wholeheartedly supported India's political and economic development, and contrasted the "world's largest democracy" with the Pentagon-supported "military dictatorship" they conceived Pakistan to be. Political conservatives, on the other hand, generally showed much more understanding for the political and security needs of the Muslim state.

For reasons of grand strategy, the Eisenhower Administration decided to take advantage of Karachi's interest in a military alliance with the United States. This interest apparently dated at least from Summer 1951, when General Ayub Khan, then Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, suggested a pro-Western policy to his political superiors. A Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement was signed on May 19, 1954. In September 1954, Pakistan became an original member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO); and, in February 1955, joined the so-called Baghdad Pact (renamed CENTO in 1958). Thus Pakistan became the only Asian member of both the anti-Communist military alliances conceived in the Anglo-Saxon capitals. In adopting this policy course, Pakistan "made it embarrassingly plain that she was doing so primarily in order to strengthen her position against India."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Anwar Syed, *loc. cit.*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>13</sup> Leicester Webb, "Pakistan's Political Future," in Bertrand de Jouvenal, ed., *Futuribles, Studies in Conjecture* (Geneva: Droz, 1963).

The Eisenhower Administration took its commitment to Pakistan much more seriously than is usually recognized by Pakistani critics, who like to grumble about the alleged disparity between US political and economic aid to its ally and to neutralist India. Actual per capita aid to Pakistan was much higher. According to Dr. Weekes:<sup>14</sup>

US military aid arrived through Karachi faster than men could be trained to use it. Supersonic jets—better than India's—and the latest tanks gave the American-advised armed forces a strength undreamed of by the original commanders. By 1963, the cost of this military hardware and personnel training exceeded \$1 billion. Economic aid in the form of cash gifts and loans, surplus food and industrial equipment, and thousands of technicians, landed in Karachi and Dacca to help Pakistan bolster their languishing economy.

Professor Sayeed cites the following figures on American assistance to Pakistan:<sup>15</sup>

In terms of the badly needed military hardware, the total assistance extended to Pakistan from 1954 to 1965 amounted to between \$1.2 to \$1.5 billion. But economic assistance in the form of Public Law 480 or other agricultural commodity programs, grants for economic development, technical assistance development grants, and loans of various kinds was much larger. Over the period from 1947 through June 30, 1965, economic assistance of this nature amounted to \$3 billion. It may also be noted that out of a total development outlay of \$5.5 billion during the Second Five-Year Plan, the United States contributed \$1.7 billion in the form of loans, grants, and other assistance, or about 30 percent of the total outlay.

To these figures should be added the international assistance channeled since 1960 primarily through the World Bank's Aid-to-Pakistan consortium. Between 1960 and 1965, "the consortium's aid pledge to Pakistan totaled \$2.103 billion, nearly half of which was from the United

<sup>14</sup> Richard V. Weekes, *Pakistan, Birth and Growth of a Muslim Nation* (New York: Asia Library, 1964), p. 258.

<sup>15</sup> Sayeed, *op. cit.*, p. 270.