

There was an understandable expectation that the US should come to Pakistan's help in case of aggression from India, a country enjoying strong diplomatic and military support of the Soviet Union. In this context, it needs to be recalled that the US-Pakistan Agreement of March 1959 had stated that the US 'regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of Pakistan.'<sup>17</sup> This pledge was to be repeated by the US Government on several subsequent occasions. There were also some assurances given to Pakistan by US officials, though not in the form of written agreements, that the US would assist Pakistan in the event of Indian aggression.<sup>18</sup>

In actual fact the US was always reluctant to take sides between India and Pakistan. Some top US policy-makers evidently believed that the total alignment of India to the Soviet bloc, after China had become communist in 1949, would be a major blow to Western interests in Asia and the world at large. It was only after Washington became increasingly disenchanted with India in the early 1950s due to its attitude towards the Japanese Peace Treaty and the Korean War that the US turned towards Pakistan. US Secretary of State, Dulles, was now engaged in building a chain of military pacts around the world to 'contain' Soviet expansionism. It was in this context that Pakistan was viewed by the US as a strategically important country and was encouraged to become member of the two military pacts.

India's size and importance continued to attract many American strategists. Despite its own military alliance with Pakistan, and inspite of India's special ties with the USSR, the US was unwilling to let go of India because of its immense size as well as for its democratic, non-communist political system. The liberal school of thought in the US including top Democrats was also of the view that the US should support democratic India and not the military dictatorship in Pakistan as a counter-weight against China. Hence, when President Kennedy came to power, Washington was eager to woo India. Ayub Khan's visit to the US in 1961 helped in restoring some balance in Kennedy's

attitude. But in the wake of the India-China border war in 1962, substantial Western military assistance was rushed to strengthen India, in contravention to the understanding given to Pakistan by Kennedy that it would be consulted before any arms aid was given to India.

This fateful decision to send Western aid to India, in disregard of the feelings and security concerns of Pakistan, which was then the West's 'most committed' military ally in Asia, brought an end to the special relationship between Pakistan and the USA. Pakistan could have taken advantage of India's border war with China by stirring up trouble in Kashmir. But the US and the UK appealed to Pakistan to show restraint. To mollify Pakistan they persuaded India to open talks on Kashmir. Several rounds of such talks were actually held between India and Pakistan but there was no real progress. As the fear of war with China subsided, India felt no compulsion to make any kind of concessions to Pakistan, particularly because the West, apart from initiating the talks, showed no real interest in taking these negotiations towards a meaningful conclusion.

Disappointed with these events, Pakistan now looked increasingly towards China to bolster up its security. Pakistan's relations with China had remained quite warm in the 1950s even though Pakistan was a member of SEATO, a military pact aiming to contain China. Unlike the Russians, the Chinese had little difficulty in understanding that Pakistan's membership of this pact was basically meant to strengthen itself against India rather than being motivated by any crusading instincts against communism. As China's relations with India soured in the late 1950s, followed by actual border clashes in 1959 and a serious border war in 1962, the stage was set for Pakistan to forge a closer relationship with China. India argued bitterly that the logic that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' had brought Pakistan and China closer and that Pakistan had been guilty of 'collusion' with China in its bid to oppose India. However, India itself had shown no hesitation in joining hands with the Soviet Union against Pakistan in the 1950s and, in the 1960s, to turn to the US and the West for military aid against China.

Pakistan was deeply frustrated when the West rushed to help India disregarding the latter's strong links with the communist Soviet Union. Under these circumstances, Pakistan felt it had no option but to get closer to communist China. Unfortunately Pakistan's overtures to China were not judged by the Western countries by their own yardstick. It was all right for them to support India in spite of its close links with the Soviet communists but wrong for Pakistan to get closer to the Chinese communists, even though this was clearly being done for strategic reasons rather than due to any ideological affinity. In fact, there was deep resentment in the US towards Pakistan when it embarked on a policy of closer ties with China. Pakistan felt bitter that its security concerns were not appreciated by Washington. This estrangement increased when US military aid to Pakistan started to dry up and was altogether stopped in 1965. Indeed the 'special relationship' between the two countries was never restored.

This disenchantment with the US in the 1960s should not obscure the fact that US military aid did improve Pakistan's military capability. As Z.A. Bhutto himself conceded: 'While it is true that military assistance was not made available for use against India, nevertheless its possession did act as a deterrent against India.'<sup>19</sup> Moreover, though US military equipment had been received to fight against communist aggression, this did not prevent Pakistan from fully using it in the 1965 war against India. The equipment received by India from the West to fight China was also used by it against Pakistan. It was thus quite ironic that the US military hardware supplied as aid to both Pakistan and India, to fight against Communist aggression, was actually used by both against each other. This was clearly a major failure of US diplomacy and made the US look ridiculous for having been taken for a ride by the two South Asian rivals. Pakistan felt bitter that the US, its military ally, had declined to come to Pakistan's help when it was attacked by India, insisting that the military pacts could be activated only in case of communist aggression. In fact, the US adopted a neutral position in the 1965 War and put an embargo on the supply of

arms to both Pakistan and India. In effect, this hurt only Pakistan since India was not getting its arms from the US around 1965. There was deep anger in Pakistan on this account, particularly at the popular level, and many Pakistanis accused the US of betrayal.

It was primarily due to this growing estrangement with the US that Pakistan made a bid in the early 1960s not only to strengthen its relations with China but also to befriend the Soviet Union, which had been antagonized against Pakistan since 1954 due to its membership of the military pacts. Characteristically, it was the search for an equalizer which influenced Pakistan's bid to grow closer to the two communist giants in response to India's turning to the West for military assistance against China. This illustrated well the old maxim that in diplomacy, there are no permanent friends or enemies, but only permanent interests.

Pakistan's relations with the Soviet Union had started to mend with the signing of an agreement in 1961 for co-operation in the exploration of gas and oil reserves in Pakistan. Moscow was beginning to get worried by India turning to the West for arms and sustenance after the border war with China in 1962. The Soviet Union now took greater interest in mending fences with Pakistan, which seemed simultaneously to be slipping out of the Western-sponsored military pacts. Trade and air services agreements were signed with Pakistan during 1963 and President Ayub Khan was invited to visit the Soviet Union. The new Soviet leaders, Brezhnev and Kosygin, were more willing to revise the pro-India tilt of their predecessor. Moscow decided to promote relations with Pakistan without placing any pre-conditions that Pakistan must first renounce the military pacts.

The 1960s were, therefore, the decade of what was termed 'bilateralism' in Pakistan's foreign policy when it sought to establish, with some success, equally good relations with the leading powers in the world—the USA, the USSR, and China—even though these three were deeply antagonistic to each other. This balancing act was a high point in Pakistani diplomacy. Indeed, during the decade of the 1960s, Pakistan appeared to be more genuinely non-aligned than India.

It was no mean achievement of Pakistan's foreign policy that, despite its hitherto special relationship with India, the Soviet Union adopted a relatively neutral position, firstly, when there were Indo-Pakistan clashes in the Rann of Kutch in April 1965 and, a few months later, during the 1965 War. In fact, the Soviets made serious efforts to halt the 1965 War.<sup>20</sup> Their offer of mediation was readily accepted by Pakistan and, a little reluctantly, by India. The Tashkent Agreement of January 1966, brokered by the Soviet Union, marked a high point of Moscow's diplomacy in the subcontinent.

## NOTES

1. S.M. Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, pp. 30-31.
2. *Dawn*, 27 September 1956, cited by S.M. Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed., 1994, p. 67.
3. *Dawn*, 15 April 1960, cited by S.M. Burke, p. 304.
4. Prime Minister H.S. Suhrawardy's speech on 9 December 1956, cited by S.M. Burke, op. cit., p. 252.
5. *New York Times*, 18 August 1947, cited by S.M. Burke, p. 147.
6. *Pakistan News*, 11 June 1949, cited by S.M. Burke, p. 99.