

Pakistan's Multilateral Diplomacy

An important factor in Pakistan's foreign policy formulation has been its unflinching support for international law and the principles and purposes of the UNO as spelled out in its Charter. Pakistan has also been an enthusiastic supporter of the UN system and the main international organizations. Pakistan has always held that disputes should be resolved through recourse to the internationally-accepted mediatory procedures including good offices, arbitration, and adjudication.

The founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah had stated in February 1948:

Our foreign policy is one of friendliness and goodwill towards all the nations of the world. We do not cherish aggressive designs against any country or nation. We believe in the principle of honesty and fair play in national and international dealings and are prepared to make our utmost contribution to the promotion of peace and prosperity among the nations of the world. Pakistan will never be found lacking in extending its material and moral support to the oppressed and the suppressed peoples of the world and in upholding the principles of the United Nations' Charter.¹

In addition to ideological considerations, Pakistan's attitude towards multilateral diplomacy has stemmed from its security anxieties, particularly with India, and the expectation that the UN and the world bodies in general would insist on the implementation of the principle of self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. In fact, Pakistan's endeavour has been to bring the weight of international opinion behind it in its disputes with India.

In the international arena Pakistan has, in general, played a high-profile role in the last fifty years of its independence. Indeed, a certain amount of over-ambitiousness—the quest for grandeur—has characterized Pakistan's diplomacy over the years. It has always been one of the more active countries on the world stage. In part, this has merely been an extension of the old rivalry with India into the international arena. Pakistan has always been keen to mobilize international support against India on the Kashmir dispute as well as on several other issues including those related to the 1965 and 1971 wars. In part, this high-profile role has been reflective of the Pakistani character.

The support secured by Pakistan in most international forums, apart from the OIC and ECO, has been rather unsatisfactory. The Non-Aligned Movement and the Commonwealth have rarely adopted any position or resolution favouring the Pakistani point of view against India. In fact, bilateral problems are not supposed to be raised in some of these forums.

As for the UN, Pakistan's efforts to secure support on Kashmir have followed the pattern of the law of diminishing returns. The resolutions on Kashmir passed by the UN in the early phase (1948-1957) calling for an impartial plebiscite, have never been reaffirmed in any subsequent resolution. It is highly unlikely that Pakistan can secure today any resolution at the UN on Kashmir similar to the earlier UN resolutions. In legal terms, the old UN resolutions remain valid but with the passing of time, these resolutions seem rather antiquated and are in effect ignored. It is notable that Pakistan failed in its efforts in 1994 and 1995 to get any kind of fresh endorsement by a UN body of the Kashmiris' right of self-determination or even the mere condemnation of human rights' violations in Kashmir by Indian forces. Such is the apathy—or reluctance to take sides—of the majority of UN members on the Kashmir issue.

It is not surprising that at the UN as well as in other forums, the Indo-Pakistan disputes have often produced bitter debates between Pakistani and Indian delegates. Sometimes the work of conferences has been held up while Indian and Pakistan delegations have gone hammer and tongs against each other.

Consequently, it is becoming evident that a certain amount of fatigue has developed in many countries with respect to the dispute between India and Pakistan. In fact, the majority of countries have, with the passing of time, tended to adopt a neutral position on Indo-Pakistan issues.

This kind of international fatigue has worked to Pakistan's disadvantage since it suits India that the Kashmir issue is not debated in international forums. In the case of many countries India's larger size, its greater attraction for trade and investment purposes, as also its military prowess have tilted the balance in its favour, even though, in principle, these countries might, at least, disapprove of India's suppression of the Kashmiri people and its disregard for the UN resolutions on Kashmir.

These are the harsh realities of international diplomacy where a country's self-interest comes above everything else. Pakistani public opinion has found it difficult to understand this reality and there is always a tendency to look for scapegoats and, in particular, Pakistani diplomats have often been accused of failing in their jobs. In recent years, parliamentarians and politicians have been sent on foreign junkets to lobby 'more effectively' for the Kashmir cause. They have singularly failed in these endeavours and have even drawn ridicule for being novices in the field of diplomacy. The failure of the parliamentarians and non-diplomats to change the international realities became manifest when the ill-considered bid of the Benazir Government in 1994 and 1995 to revive the Kashmir issue in UN forums produced discouraging and even counter-productive results.

The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) has all along extended strong support to Pakistan on Kashmir and other Indo-Pak issues. This has been a source of strength for Pakistan. The OIC meets annually at the level of Foreign Ministers and, since 1981, it has held Summits every three years. It has a large membership, constituting over one-fourth of the UN member states, and includes several oil-rich countries in its ranks. This is the OIC's major strength. However, the OIC has shown a propensity to adopt resolutions much too liberally. Time has shown that a member country can get practically any resolution

adopted by the OIC, provided it is not against another OIC member state. This has tended to deflate the importance of OIC resolutions since member countries have often adopted different stances at the UN or other forums which are diametrically opposed to the position contained in the resolution adopted by them at the OIC meeting. This has reflected a certain non-serious attitude towards the OIC by its members, treating it more as a kind of a debating society of Muslim brothers.

The resolutions on Kashmir adopted by the OIC have had less significance than what has been claimed by the various ruling governments in Pakistan, some of whom have tended to use the OIC as a propaganda platform, mainly to score points at home against their domestic political opponents. They have tried to convince Pakistani public opinion that all is well with Pakistan's policies in terms of international support, by citing the given resolution passed by the OIC. But this too has, in many cases, become more of an illusion of widespread support coming from Islamic countries rather than solid reality.

From the outset, Pakistan has been a leading exponent of the Palestinian and Arab cause at the UN and elsewhere. Its first Foreign Minister Sir Zafrulla Khan played a notable role in the advocacy of the cause of liberation of Muslim countries in North Africa. His eloquent articulation of the Palestinian case won for Pakistan, and for him personally, the abiding gratitude of the Arab world. After the Arab defeat in the 1967 War, Pakistan was one of the authors of Resolution 242 which later became the basis for peace talks in the Middle East. Pakistan was also mainly responsible for the Security Council resolutions on the status of Jerusalem or Al-Quds, which have pitted the international community against Israel's expansionist designs over the third holiest city for the Muslims.

Pakistan's membership of the US-sponsored military pacts prevented it from becoming a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) till 1979. The seeds of non-alignment were actually laid in the Bandung Conference in 1954 in which Pakistan played an active role. At about this time, the rise of military pacts around the world overtook events. Pakistan

PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

decided to join the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO) as well as SEATO, not so much out of concern against any imminent Communist aggression but rather to strengthen itself militarily in case of Indian aggression. As a consequence, countries like Egypt and Syria, which had opposed the military pacts, gravitated towards India and the Soviet bloc.

NAM, in an institutional form, was set up in 1961 by India, Egypt, and Yugoslavia. In the period of the Cold War between the West and the Soviet communist bloc, many countries in the Third World sought to join NAM as a third option. However, under the influence of Nehru, Nasser, Nkrumah, and Soekarno, NAM did at times adopt positions which were overly critical of the West. The main reason was that many of the Third World countries were struggling against colonialism and racialism where the West was more often the culprit. This attitude was obviously to the liking of Moscow and worked to its strategic advantage. The fact that the East European countries were like satellites of the Soviet Union hardly drew any comment from the NAM. The concept of neutrality or non-alignment was initially opposed by the US, which saw the Soviet bloc as an evil force seeking to bring the whole world under its subjugation. With the passage of time, however, the US moved away from the policies associated with John Foster Dulles and his 'pactomania' during the 1950s. In fact, NAM had a membership of over one hundred states including big countries like India, and the US could not afford to ignore it or oppose it. With the election of President Kennedy, non-alignment became 'respectable' in the US, which decided to adopt a more even-handed attitude towards NAM.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's membership of the military pacts kept it out of NAM and thus its case in this large international body went unrepresented. It seemed rather unfair that while Pakistan was excluded because of its membership of two nearly moribund military pacts, countries like North Korea, Cuba, Ethiopia, and South Yemen were members of NAM despite having active military alliances with the Soviet Union. India itself signed a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with the Soviet Union in