

1971, under which massive Soviet military aid was flown to India which helped it to win the 1971 War against Pakistan.

Pak-American relations had been under considerable strain from 1962 onwards, unlike the special relationship existing between New Delhi and Moscow. In the mid-1960s, Pakistan had achieved a kind of parity in its relations with the US, the Soviet Union, and China which made it a more genuine non-aligned country than India. In fact, the record shows that on various issues, Pakistan had supported the US on fewer occasions than India did. Yet, Pakistan was dubbed an aligned country and kept out of NAM until 1979, whereas India has all along been a leading spirit in this body.

In the early 1970s, Pakistan quit SEATO and in 1979 CENTO was dismantled. It was only after this that Pakistan was able to join NAM at the Havana Summit. President Castro, the host of the NAM Summit, adopted a helpful attitude and the Indian government headed by Prime Minister Desai decided not to create any hurdles in the way of Pakistan's entry into NAM. (The contrasting attitude of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who succeeded Desai, was apparent from her vigorous opposition to Pakistan's re-entry in the Commonwealth soon thereafter.) At any rate, circumstances led to President Ziaul Haq taking Pakistan in the NAM, thereby filling the gap in Pakistan's international profile. Pakistan's exclusion from NAM, which seemed a stigma on Pakistan's foreign policy, had long bothered many Pakistanis, particularly the leftist circles. Moreover, Pakistan's absence from NAM had also left the field open for Indian manipulations in a large international body.

In terms of tangible results Pakistan's membership of NAM has hardly produced anything worthwhile. Indeed, NAM has all along been rather tall on rhetoric and short on substance. Nevertheless, it has been outspoken on political issues of the Third World like anti-colonialism and racial discrimination. This did contribute in the eventual elimination of both colonialism and apartheid, at least in a visible form. However, with the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1991, in some ways the *raison d'être* of NAM has come to an end. The old logic that NAM

countries were neither aligned with the East nor with the West is no longer applicable. Nonetheless, even in a uni-polar world, the issues of the Third World remain. NAM has a role to play in the context of such issues as development, favourable trade terms, and debt relief. Furthermore, in a uni-polar world where the US is the only remaining super power, NAM does articulate the concerns of the bulk of humanity living in the developing countries. In given instances, NAM can also play a role in defusing regional tensions, particularly among its own members. Pakistan can benefit from its membership of NAM. Above all, NAM is an important forum and provides an opportunity for Pakistan to project its point of view and make useful contacts. It is even arguable that the opportunity such a large forum provides for bilateral contacts between its members is more productive than any deliberations in the meetings of NAM itself. Of course, the same considerations apply in varying degrees to Pakistan's membership of the Commonwealth and other multilateral bodies.

Another dimension of international diplomacy needs to be taken into consideration. In international conferences, the Pakistani delegates are generally among the more articulate and knowledgeable participants and pursue their objectives very actively. While this can be viewed as a tribute to our diplomats, the tendency to try and outshine others is somewhat reflective of the Pakistani national character as also the country's latent quest for grandeur and the yearning to be centre stage. This gives credibility to the criticism that Pakistan is a relatively small country pretending to act like a big power. It is necessary to remember that a nation's real importance can be gauged from the harsh realities being faced at home and not through scoring personal points in multilateral forums.

Over the years Pakistan has shown a keenness to secure prestigious posts in international bodies, not only in the quest for prestige and influence, but also to satisfy the career ambitions of individuals. To achieve this, Pakistan has spent a lot of money as well as diplomatic energy. Special envoys have been sent regularly to all corners of the globe to woo for votes. By and large, this has been a sheer wastage of the country's meagre

resources, especially because Pakistan's efforts to secure such international posts have been generally futile. The opposition to Pakistan's repeated bids for international posts has generally come from India and Israel, supported by their many friends.

In the past fifty years, international diplomacy has spawned numerous conferences where, literally, thousands of resolutions have been passed. Most of these resolutions have been ineffective and even inconsequential with little or no attention being paid to them by the real policy-makers in most countries. This has not prevented the participants of such conferences from spending days and weeks arguing over every word and phrase in these resolutions, in an almost surrealistic exercise. They have rarely been discouraged by the scant attention paid to the resolutions passed by them or the sheer repetitiveness of the exercise. It is arguable that personal vested interests of the individual participants in such conferences have been the main reason for the continuation of such barren exercises. The delegates get to travel abroad to exotic places to attend such conferences and make some money by pocketing travelling allowances etc. There is a certain glamour and prestige involved in being participants of these conferences, often in a blaze of publicity. The participants of such conferences have little desire to downplay the importance of these meetings or to make any realistic appraisal of their intrinsic usefulness or otherwise. So this ritual of international conferences and the resolutions passed by them continues unabated.

Pakistani diplomats have always been amongst the busiest in this exercise of make-believe. Many phantom victories have thus been won (and lost) in the passing of such resolutions by international conferences which have at times become the overriding pivots of Pakistani diplomacy. In fact, over the years, a UN 'Mafia' has emerged among diplomats in most Foreign Offices, including that of Pakistan, who thrive in these ritualistic games. By and large, this has been nothing more than a case of chasing shadows and feeding illusions. The only problem is that while the affluent countries can probably afford such wasteful

activities, a cash-starved Third World country like Pakistan is severely financially burdened.

It can be said that Pakistan's high-profile role in international conferences has not been of much tangible benefit to the country. In fact, on the yardstick of cost-effectiveness, Pakistan's international diplomacy has brought meagre advantages weighed against the diplomatic energy spent and the heavy expenditure incurred in the process of chasing shadows rather than meaningful foreign policy objectives.

NOTES

1. Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, op. cit., p. 378.