

CHAPTER 4

Governance: The External Factor

AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN PAKISTAN'S POLITICS

Following the restoration of democracy in Pakistan, in December 1988, the question of American involvement in national politics was much discussed. There were statements issued by the American Ambassador, Robert Oakley, in Islamabad regarding the 'important role' that his country played in the period leading up to the elections in November, 1988.¹ After the induction of the PPP Government, there was speculation regarding the appointment of certain key personnel at the behest of the United States. There is little doubt that the American involvement in the politics of Pakistan is long standing and has a basis in the past history of Pakistan-American relations.

An interesting pointer to this fact has been the publication of a 500-page volume on South Asia by the US Department of State as part of its series on Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955- 57. Under American law, official documents are declassified after every thirty years and these include diplomatic correspondence, memoranda of conversations between American officials and foreign leaders plus dispatches from their embassies. This volume, based on original official documents of the United States Government, is quite instructive and informative in that it brings out with candour the American interests and activities in Pakistan during that period, the US attitudes towards various individuals, particularly those it was trying to promote politically, plus the manner of interaction between leaders of Pakistan with US officials and diplomats.

In an assessment prepared in March 1955 on probable devel-

opments in Pakistan. “the US felt that” after more that two years at’ recurrent crises, political power in Pakistan has been openly assumed by a small group of British-trained administrators and military leaders centering around Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad and his two principal associates, General Iskandar Mirza and Ayub Khan”. The assessment, written four years before Pakistan first formally granted bases to the Americans, adds. “We believe that the present leadership would be favorably inclined towards US peacetime development of air bases for US use”. Ayub Khan seems to be a special focus of American interest, much before he became President. In a despatch sent to the Size Department. By Ambassador Horace Hildreth (the daughter was to many the son of Iskandar Mirza), Ayub Khan is referred to as the “final arbiter of the destiny of Cabinets.” In a following despatch in October 1955, it is said that “we should strengthen Ayub’s pos in Pakistan” and calls him “a statesman with integrity”. However, the Americans k) not seem to be unmindful of Ayub’s political power base as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and die need to meet his request for military aid. In another assessment in November 1955, Ayub is referred to as “an extremely powerful figure in the country” and there seems to be concern that “he may be strong enough to bring about, if be chooses, a general feeling of disappointment and frustration to- wards the United States by asserting that w have failed to keep our promise to Pakistan.”²

The Americans seemed to be quite clear during that period regarding who “their boys” were arid those deserving favourable treatment as compared to those who were not quite in their camp and who should, therefore, be treated accordingly. For example, soon after die induction of Ch. Mohammad All as Prime Minister in August 1955, an American official memorandum said. “The combination of General Mirza (who had become Governor General) aid Ch. Mohammad All represents a top leadership very friendly to the United States”. Conversely, the United Sizes seemed to be suspicious of politicians like Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy and Abdur Rab Nishtar.

They fell in the category of those who were then derided by the

Americans as being “neutralists”. In an August 1955 despatch sent by Ambassador Hildreth to the State Department, regarding the possibility of the inclusion of Suhrawardy in the Cabinet, it is stated in a somewhat imperial tone: “Ambassador (of the US) has told Iskandar Mirza, and it will be made clear to Suhrawardy by others, that the United States has no objection to inclusion of Suhrawardy in a high Cabinet Post”. The apparent reason for this NOC to Suhrawardy is because the US desired that “One Unit legislation be done on non-partisan basis and Suhrawardy’s talents and cooperation as legislator could be of utmost importance”, in this regard. The assessment of Ambassador Hildreth regarding his own country’s role in Pakistan and attitude towards Suhrawardy in the same despatch is even more interesting. It continues: “While fully understanding the necessity to avoid US involvement in internal politics through any public stand, the fact is that US relationship is so important to Pakistan that complete non-involvement is impossible. If Embassy officers ignore Suhrawardy, for example, for the next two weeks this may well be interpreted here as official policy indicative of disapproval of his inclusion in Cabinet, if he is cultivated by the Embassy even on a purely social basis, an interpretation of US approval may be placed on such actions. Conclusions, in the light of our appraisal are: (1) we should encourage Suhrawardy through third parties to take a Cabinet post under the new Prime Minister, protecting our public position at all times. (2) Embassy officers should make some effort to maintain pleasant personal social contacts with Suhrawardy”. In another despatch, Hildreth refers to Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar as ‘no friend of the West or US’.³

Despite the apparent intimacy between the two government, occasional suspicions also crept in regarding each other’s mien lions For example, in a February 1956 despatch, Ambassador Hildreth wrote: “The US Embassy is convinced there is del effort at least encouraged by the government of Pakistan to stage a campaign prior to the visit to Pakistan of the US Secretary of State (Dulles) to squeeze the US for additional aid and probably a substantial element of Pakistan officials and public opinion ear neatly believe the best way to get the most from the US is to

emulate the example of Afghanistan, India and Egypt and try to play both sides.” However, the US Ambassador added that if this was the game that Pakistan may want to play, then it should be told by the US in no uncertain terms: “If now you wish to follow the same course as India then Pakistan, considering its size and resources necessarily must become the tail of the dog and our interest in Pakistan will tend to diminish and our interest in India increase.”⁴

The most unflattering portrait of any Pakistani leader that emerges from these declassified documents is that of President Iskandar Mirza. He comes across as bending over backwards to appease the American is critical of his own Prime Minister (Ch. Mohammad Au) before the US, has a first-name relationship with the American Ambassador is critical of the Chinese, of Gamal Abdul Nasser and is contemptuous of ‘neutralists’ and reaffirms to the US that he ‘would not stand for change in Pakistan’s foreign policy’. Worse still, as a September 1956 despatch by Hildreth clearly indicates, Iskandar Mirza showed Hildreth and his British counterpart a copy of a four-page letter that he had drafted, but had not yet sent to Suhrawardy regarding foreign policy. In other words, the President of Pakistan showed a private. Official communication addressed to his Prime Minister to the foreign ambassadors even before it was seen by the Prime Minister! Perhaps, even more unbecoming than this breach of security, is Iskandar Mirza’s assessment of his Prime Minister (then it was Ca. M Ali) which he conveyed to Ambassador Hildreth and which the Ambassador sent to Washington in a telegram in February 1956. Calling Ch. Mohammad Ali “timid, weak and perhaps cowardly”, he even went to the extent of telling Hildreth to advise US Secretary of State Dulles to talk “very bluntly with the Prime Minister and scold him for allowing an official of the Foreign Office for publicly saying that the reception given to Chinese Vice-President Madame Sun Yat-Sen was greater than that given to Vice-President Nixon.”⁵

While the conduct of Pakistani leaders, as manifested in these documents, is not befitting leaders of a sovereign state, some American self-images are also interesting and perhaps even rele-

vant to the period after Zia's death. There is, for instance, an American assessment contained in a November 1957 despatch that "the only reason why Pakistan is able to keep going is US aid." And finally, there is an interesting reference in a May 1957 despatch from the American Consul-General in Lahore which mentions a slogan then making the rounds in Pakistan that "the real Pakistan Prime Minister is a person named Hildreth"⁶

THE INDIA FACTOR

Given the conflicted relationship between Pakistan and India, which is an abiding feature since the two countries emerged as sovereign states in 1947, the domestic consequences of these adversarial ties have been considerable. The biggest manifestation of this conflict was during 1971 when the Pakistan military action in East Pakistan led to an exodus of Bengali refugees into West Bengal and the concurrent fomenting of a revolt inside East Pakistan by India through what was known as the Mukti Bahini (Liberation Forces). Such a direct linkage between an external power and domestic insurgency had hitherto not been seen in South Asia before, although this was re-enacted on a smaller scale in Sri Lanka during the mid 1980s when the Tamil Tigers received encouragement from India in their running battle with the Sinhalese majority community.

The removal of the Bhutto government in 1977 through a military coup and the execution of the former Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1979, spawned the Al-Zulfiqar organization, a militant offshoot of the PPP created and led by the sons of Zulfiqar All Bhutto. The Al-Zulfiqar organization which initially had its headquarters in Kabul later developed links with a support from the countries, India, Syria and Libya and a number of Al-Zulfiqar activists received training while in exile in India as well. Indian empathy for the Pakistani political opposition including Al-Zulfiqar was manifested during the mass upsurge in Sind against the Martial Law regime which was led by the MRD in October 1983, when the Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi issued a public statement expressing solidarity with the struggle in Sindh.

This action convened what was an indigenous struggle for democracy into a foreign policy issue through this “linkage” with India and ensured that it would not extend into the other provinces, particularly Punjab and NWFP, where it was perceived as “Indian interference in internal Pakistani affairs”.

As Sind had been the home and the power base of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, it was viewed by India as a vulnerable point for Pakistan. This aspect was clearly evident during the largest military maneuvers ever held in South Asia, initialed by India, known as “Exercise Brass Tacks”, which began in the fall of 1986 and whose direction and point of pressure was the province of Sind. This Exercise reinforced the impression in Pakistan that Sind had been singled out by India for “special attention”.

A more recent phenomenon has been the emergence of what is perceived as a ‘Triple K’ linkage of Karachi, Khalistan and Kashmir. According to this view, the unrest in Kashmir and the insurgency in the Indian Province of Punjab, for which India blames Pakistan, in turn, has led to violence in Karachi and in other parts of Sind which is encouraged and abetted by India. In effect, domestic strife both in Pakistan and India has also now become victim to the tension-ridden bilateral relations between both the countries. On 2nd November 1991, Pakistan’s Foreign Office, in a statement publicly referred to India’s involvement in terrorism in the provinces of Punjab and Sind. Recently, during the trials by speedy courts established under the 12th Amendment to the Constitution, there have been convictions of those who are charged with sabotage and subversion allegedly at the behest of RAW, India’s Research and Analysis Wing the premier intelligence organization of that country.

An important new feature of the injection of the India factor in domestic destabilization in Pakistan, apart from “Triple K” factor is the eruption of the Kashmir uprising. Since Kashmir like Afghanistan has a contiguous border with Pakistan and the insurgency there seems to be taking on a protracting nature, an inexorable process of “Afghanising” of the Kashmir conflict is apparently in the offing. Three sets of consequences are now clearly visible for Pakistan, smaller in scale but similar in scope to the

violation of the insurgency in Afghanistan. There is, first of all the inflow of refugees from Indian held Kashmir into Azad Kashmir, with unofficial figures listing the number up to 20,000 men, women and children, some of whom are housed in refugee camps and others with their relatives. Additionally, there is a pressure from Kashmiris, who are Indian citizens, and who have difficulty in getting their visit-visas extended indefinitely. They are then keen on acquiring Pakistani citizenship or seeking such a citizenship. This is similar to the process that helped Afghans to achieve the same sort of Pakistani nationality, owing to the conflict in Afghanistan.

Finally, the Kashmiri political organizations like the Afghan Mujahideen groups have established offices in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir as these groups range from the Jammu and Kashmiri Liberation Front (JKLF) to the Hizbul Mujahideen. In fact, earlier this year, a prominent political figure of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front had his offices bombed in the heart of Rawalpindi city. Dr. Haider Farooq was rocked by a bomb blast, thus replaying a cycle of terrorism on the Kashmir Issue within Pakistan similar to that witnessed in the case of the Afghan Mujahideen.

FALLOUT FROM THE MUSLIM WORLD

With the major geo-political changes taking place in the region around Pakistan, particularly the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the resultant rivalry between Iran and most of the Arab countries, Pakistan, perhaps more than any other country in the Muslim world, felt the fallout of all those tensions, rivalries and conflicts. In addition to influences from various Muslim countries on Pakistan's body politic, particularly on different religiously oriented political parties, was a direct consequence. This was manifested through an ideological affiliation with another Muslim country, sectarian solidarity, financial support and different kinds of political and theological linkages.

Although this process reached its peak during the regime of

General Zia-ul-Haq, its basis was laid during the days of the tottering regime of Prime Minister Zulfiqar All Bhutto when, in a move unprecedented among Muslim countries, the Saudi Ambassador in Islamabad, Riaz Al-Khatib, was invited both by the PPP and PNA to mediate in a political dispute among two rival forces in April 1977. This was apparently the first ever mediation in an ii political dispute by the Ambassador of a fellow Muslim country and since it was undertaken with the initiative of both the protagonists, the principle of foreign involvement in domestic conflict in Pakistan was given an element of credence and legitimacy.

During the 1980s, three separate but related aspects contributed wed to the emergence of Pakistan as a country at the receiving end of sectarian politics, whose origins were to be found externally. These three aspects included the process of Islamization initiated by the Martial Law regime of General Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan which caused a cleavage in Pakistani society on sectarian line since the Shia community saw it as an attempt to impose a particular brand of jurisprudence to regulate their public and private lives in contrast to their Fiqh (School of Jurisprudence). In fact, the first serious threat that the Zia regime faced in terms of popular pressure emanated nor from any political party but Irvin the Shia agitation in Islamabad in July 1980 which virtually dosed down government offices in the Federal Capital for two entire days, something without precedent in Pakistan's history.⁷

Concurrent with this upsurge of Shia protest directed against the Islamization policy of General Zia was the fallout of the Islamic revolution in Iran which, at one level, inspired Muslim masses in Muslim countries that Islam could serve as a catalyst for revolutionary change but, at another level, it generated a certain fear among the Muslim regimes regarding its impact on their own people. Often, these contrasting reactions were reflected through divisions on sectarian lines, with the Shias sharing an empathy for the Islamic revolution and the non-Shias feeling threatened. This process was sharpened through the Iran-Iraq war when Iraq and its Arab allies, made a conscious effort to present the conflict with Iran as one between Shias and Sunnis or between

Arabs and non-Arabs

In a more recent reflection of the infighting in the Muslim world which has been felt in Pakistan is the ideological and the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia which was aggravated by the violent clashes in Mecca during the Haj in July 1987 as a result of which Iranian pilgrims and Saudi Security numbering 400 in all were killed.⁹ It was after this episode in Mecca, that the political temperature between Iran and Saudis was raised to new levels. The Saudis, for instance, made it clear after this development that “we will fight Iran on all fronts — politically, economically, ideologically and spiritually.” Conversely, Ayatullah Khomeini made it clear in a famous speech in Iran a few weeks after the Mecca violence that “I can forgive what Saddam has done to Iran and I can even forgive what the Zionists are doing in Palestine, but I cannot forgive what the House of Saud has done to the Muslims of Iran in the House of God.”

The result for Pakistan has been the unleashing of a proxy war in which different religious organizations assumed a sectarian colouring and promoted the political goals of various Muslim countries. For instance, the primary battle in Pakistan has been between organizations such as the Tahrik-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh Jaafria (TNFJ), which is a Shia and a pro-Iranian party, with the Anjuman-e-Sipah-i-Sahaba, which is a Sunni and pro-Saudi and pro-Iraqi party, in the small southern city of the Punjab, Jhang serving as the main battle ground. Since the violence began in 1988, at least seventy four persons have lost their lives in sectarian clashes which have transformed the city of Jhang area into a mini-Beirut, with the transfer of population and demarcation of religious localities on sectarian grounds, complete with patrolling of these neighbourhoods by their respective armed gangs. The TNFJ and ASS, other religious organizations have had close links with the Muslim countries such as the JUP with Iraq, the JUI with Libya and the Ahl-e-Hadith with Saudi Arabia.

These affiliations are often publicized and demonstrated during violence. For instance, in March 1987, when a leader of Ahl-e-Hadith, Allama Ehsan Illahi Zaheer, was critically wounded in a bomb blast in Lahore, the Saudi monarch, King Fahd, sent his

personal plane to fetch him for medical treatment in Saudi Arabia. Allama Ehsan Illahi Zaheer succumbed to his injuries en route to Saudi Arabia. And again, in 1988, when the leader of TNJF. Allama AM Al-Hussaini was assassinated in Peshawar, a high level Iranian delegation flew in a special plane to attend the funeral of the slain Shia leader. Similarly, in August 1991. when the pm-Saudi Afghan leader who was leading the Al-Dawa party, Maulvi Jameel-ur-Rehman was assassinated, the Saudi government sent a special delegation for his funeral and sought the reconciliation of Al-Dawa with its principal antagonist, the Hizb-e-Islami of Gulbadin Hikmat Yar which also enjoyed Saudi patronage.¹⁰ In October 1991, a former Frontier Governor, Lt. General (Retd.) Fazle Haq was assassinated. Although his assassins remained untraced, his son filed a complaint with the Police alleging that the Iranian diplomat based in Peshawar was one of these who “conspired” to kill their father.¹¹

Another manifestation of the fallout of the Muslim world politics on Pakistan was during October 1989 when the opposition led by UI moved a no-confidence vote in the National Assembly to remove the government of Benazir Bhutto. Benazir Bhutto privately approached Muslim countries such as Libya and Saudi Arabia urging them to put pressure on the UI to disassociate them from such a movement, an initiative that implicitly acknowledged the role and influence of these two Muslim countries on particular political parties in Pakistan. Libya, for instance, was approached to influence the JUP so that JUI would urge its members not to participate in the vote of no-confidence against the government while similar soundings were made to Saudi Arabia as well.¹² Hopefully, the recent rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia would lay the basis for promoting sectarian harmony¹³ in Pakistan and ensure that the country ceases to be a battleground of a rivalry between these two Muslim countries with divergent political and ideological perspectives.¹⁴

NOTES

1. US Ambassador Robert Oakley's interview with Arif Nizami.

- Nation 14 December 1988.
2. Foreign Relations of the United States. 1955-57 (US Government Printing Office Washington, DC). p. 447.
 3. Op. cit., p. 459.
 4. Op. cit., p. 456.
 5. Op. cit., pp. 457-458.
 6. Op. cit., p. 480.
 7. Sec Chapter on 1 Regime' in Pakistan's Politics: The Zia Years by Mushahid Hussain, pp. 107-138.
 8. Mushahid Hussain "Changing Face of Pakistani Politics — MQM and TNJF". The Nation, 19 July 1987.
 9. Mushahid Hussain "Eye-witness in Mecca", The Washington Post, 20 — 1987.
 10. "Leading Afghan Leader gunned down", The Muslim, 31 August 1991; see also 'Mujahideen infighting in Kashmir escalates', The Muslim, 26 August 1991.
 11. "Fazle Haq shot dead", The Muslim, 4 October 1991; "Iran Centre attacked in Peshawar and 'Sajid denies TNFJ link with murder". 1 Muslim, 5 October 1991; "Iran to take legal action against "propagandists: The Muslim, 7 October 1991.
 12. According to authoritative sources, PPP leader Mustafa Khar wait to the Libyan Ambassador in Islamabad and Pakistan's Ambassador to the Un States, Air Chief Marshal (Reid.) Zulfiqar Ali Khan, talked to his Sandi counterpart in Washington. DC, Prince Bandar bin Sultan.
 13. The government has been making efforts for sectarian harmony at the highest level being aware of the gravity of the problem.. See: 'Ishaq decries kafir-dubbing slogans'. The Muslim, 27 August 1991; "PM voices concern over sectarian violence'. The Muslim, 9 September 1991.
 14. At the height of the Saudi-Iran ideological conflict, a sample of criticism in Iran's press wan illustrative of the deep chasm: The British colonialists had rightly apprehended that the Saudis were the most proper dynasty so rule over the oil-rich peninsula as they were obedient to act along with the British interests", quoted in "Press attacks against Saudis continue", Tehran Times, 9 July 1989.