

Indian Foreign Policy during the Initial Days of Cold War With Respect To Pakistan

By

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Abstract

India since its inception as an independent nation tried hard to rewrite its colonial foreign policy, in which the British Indian Government framed rules for the South Asian politics. It ignored that it was the natural legatee of British's role for peace, stability and hegemony in South Asia. The first and foremost thing India has done after the transfer of power is to dismantle the power structures with neighbor states which the British build for years. Nehru's frequent anti-West rhetoric on the international forums in the name of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism alienated India. Pakistan which was born out of partition followed the pragmatic foreign policy which helped it in withstanding India. Its policy ensured it with credible allies and aid. It entered into strategic relationships with both the US and China, during its early days, bringing the Cold War to the borders of India. This made India to move close with the Soviet Union formally. The Chinese aggression at the borders forced India to redraw its foreign policy options. This paper examines Indian foreign policy during the initial days of Cold War with respect to Pakistan and presents us a critical view on the Indian foreign policy.

Keywords: India, Pakistan, Nehru, Cold War, the US, Soviet Union, China, Pragmatism.

Introduction

India and Pakistan were born out of the conflict that changed the world system, the Second World War. This just war ensured in the emergence of a new world order with the Soviet Union and the United States at the helm, replacing the British Empire. The war entered the next level with the arrival of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the US in December 1941. Though these two powers were on the same board as the Allies in defeating the Axis, the post war world placed them as the opposite poles of the loose bi-polar world. Around the same period, the foundations are being laid for the next World War, the Cold War. As the popular say goes; one war sows the seeds of the other, the Second World War sowed the seeds of the Cold War. India, as an independent nation entered the international arena in this phase of the world politics. The relationship distance between the Soviet Union and the US even during the war was not in good faith. Mutual interest in checkmating Nazi Germany made them to join the Allies. The Potsdam Conference in August 1945 decided in breaking up the Nazi Germany into four zones. These zones were distributed to the UK, France, the Soviet Union and the US. (Beevor, 2003: 402) With the Soviet Union creating a Marxist state in the zone under its control (East Germany), the UK, France and the US merged their zones into Trizone (West Germany) and created it as a liberal democracy with civil & political rights. Thus the Cold War begun. The Truman Doctrine in March 1947 made the Cold War official. President Truman declared that it must be the policy of the US to support free people who are resisting attempts of subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure. (Michael, 2006: 194-199) Though there was no direct conflict or war between the two powers, they exhibited their power through their proxies. They engaged themselves in the regional conflicts by siding with one party each. The Korean Crisis (1950-53), the Hungarian Crisis (1956), the Berlin Crisis (1961), the Cuban

Crisis (1962) are some to be mentioned. Though they had not engaged in the India-Pakistan conflicts in full spirit, their mark was clearly evident. The reason for its disinterest in the Indo-Pakistan affairs can be read from the CIA report of September 1947. It placed India and Pakistan in the fourth and last column, as areas important to the American Security, after Western Europe, the Near and Middle East, and the Far East. (McMahon, 1994: 14) While India tried hard to avoid any formal alliance with any of the two super powers, Pakistan tried hard to form a formal alliance with the US led Western Bloc. While India emphasized on preserving its sovereignty, Pakistan emphasized on preserving its new nation state.

British India and its Bifurcation

For several reasons the Indian Muslims as a body held aloof from the Indian National Congress. This separatist attitude laid foundation for the Muslim League in 1906 under the leadership of Khwaja Salimullah, the Nawab of Dhaka. They advocated the partition of British India from 1930s on communal lines. The Lahore Resolution of 1940 advocated for separate homeland for Muslims and ultimately achieved it in 1947. The Congress even though dominated by Caste Hindus, tried to remain as an irreligious body by employing men from the Muslim community as its office bearers. This Hindu domination in the Congress ultimately alerted Muhammad Ali Jinnah in demanding a separate space for the Muslim community. He was convinced that Muslims, who plays the second fiddle in the Congress, had to play the same role in future India after its independence. 'It is only a dream that the Hindus and Muslims could ever evolve a common nationality. The Muslims were not a minority community, but a nation and they must have their homeland, their territory and their state', stated Jinnah during the Lahore Declaration.' (The Indian Annual Register, 1940: Vol.-01, 308-10)

Along with the Independence, what the Muslim League under Jinnah was able to achieve was a separate Muslim state. The Mountbatten plan announced on 3rd June 1947 partitioned British India into India and Pakistan. The Princely States were given an option of joining the either of the two nations, India or Pakistan. The case of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir was a peculiar one. It was a Muslim majority state with a Hindu Maharaja. The Muslims constituted of 77 per cent of the population while the Hindus were 20 per cent. The remaining 3 per cent were Buddhists and Sikhs. (Stein, 1998: 368) Maharaja Hari Singh tried to remain independent from the two nations. Within three months, a tribal rebellion erupted in the North West hills of Kashmir with the support of the Pakistani Army. They marched towards Srinagar, the capital city to capture it. In these circumstances, the Maharaja pleaded Viceroy Mountbatten and the Indian Government for assistance. He ended up in signing the Instruments of Accession on 26 October 1947. The Indian Army was able to restrict the Pakistanis from any further conquest. The regions capture by them remained in the control of Pakistan thereupon. Thus unofficially Kashmir too was bifurcated. Kashmir remained the bone of contention between the two nations. Thus India and Pakistan were born out of conflict and were in a continuous state of conflict.

Cold War and its role in Indian Foreign Policy Making

The British rule in India, helped it becoming a functional popular democracy after its independence. India mostly continued its governance with the institutions and systems established during the British Raj. Given this fact, the Western Bloc policy makers assumed that India will stay in their sphere of influence. But Nehru was the man with the Communist and Socialist fascinations. His anti-West rhetoric in the name of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, even after India became independent embraced the policy makers of the West

much to the appeasement of the Second and Third Worlds. With India trying out to remain out of the influence of the Western Bloc, the US Ambassador Henry F Grady was quick enough to advice Nehru against it. Reporting to his Department of State in December 1947, he said that 'I told him (Nehru) that India should get on the democratic side immediately.' (McMahon, op. cit.: 40) However Nehru's India continued with its formal neutral plank and informal anti-West rhetoric.

Pakistan was partitioned from British India after the British Administration concluded that the split & differences between the Congress and the Muslim League were natural and were irrevocable. The founders of the Pakistan are pragmatic in decision making since their League days. Led by Jinnah, Aga Khan and Liaquat Ali Khan, they successfully emerged victorious in winning their sole goal, Pakistan. They continued with the same pragmatic policy even after its formation. They are smart enough to realize that Pakistan can continue to remain as a nation state, only by employing alliances with one of the super powers.

The US strangled to choose between India and Pakistan. The American policy makers were sharply divided on this question. Some preferred close cooperation with Pakistan, largely due to its strategic location. In one way, Pakistan is the gate way to the Muslim World. But most of them rated India as more valuable diplomatic prize, making the US to lean towards India. (McMahon, op. cit.: 11) After the conclusion of the Korean War in 1953, the American strategy of containment was extended to South and Southeast Asia. The American administrators tried hard to lure India into their sphere of influence, but in vain. With India's refusal in joining the Western Bloc, Pakistan squeezed this opportunity. With India's rejection, the US was free to align with the largest democratic Muslim country in the world, Pakistan. By forming formal alliances with great powers, employing conventional military strategies & asymmetrical warfare, Pakistan was mostly successful in containing India.

Before formally inviting Pakistan into its military system, President Eisenhower personally wrote to Nehru, that this alliance was not directed against India. He once again requested him thus; If your government should conclude that circumstances require military aid of a type contemplated by our mutual security legislation, please be assured that your request would receive my most sympathetic consideration. (Letter to Prime Minister Nehru) Pakistan continued to strengthen its ties with the US led Western Bloc by joining the Manila Pact (SEATO) in September 1954 and Baghdad Pact (CENTO) in February 1955, which bought the Cold War to the Indian borders. Even though Pakistan was an ally of the US, what India was able to secure in large volumes was the American aid. Of the total external assistance India had received between 1951 and 1966; Fifty one per cent was sponsored by the US, thirty eight per cent by the other Western powers and only eleven per cent by the Eastern Bloc including the Soviet Union. (Nick, 2007: 59-90) Pakistan, if not materially, at least notionally supported and joined the US led anti-Communist alliances like CENTO and SEATO. These alliances secured a position to Pakistan against India. It is no secret that Pakistan was less concerned about a communist threat to its security than a possible attack from India. In remittance to its support, Pakistan received substantial economic and military assistance from the US. (Dennis Kux, 2001: 70-74)

With Pakistan being made a member of SEATO & CENTO, India with no other option left have to tilt towards the Soviet Union led Eastern Bloc. The Soviet Union under Stalin refused to entertain India, as it saw it as a sponsored state of the Western Bloc. It saw India with little importance in their strategic calculations. (Donaldson, 1974: 114-118) Things changed with the demise of Stalin and the emergence of Nikita Khrushchev as the General Secretary. Nehru's continuous rhetoric against the West in the name of anti-imperialism was

liked by him. His Indian visit in December 1955, along with his Prime Minister Bulganin had an everlasting impact on Indian foreign policy. Consequently Nehru employed more anti-American rhetoric.

The Indian answer to the Cold War was made clearer with its stand on the Suez Crisis and Hungarian Crisis. While India condemned the West on the Suez Crisis, it backed the Soviet's invasion of Hungary, terming it as an internal issue of the Soviet Union. This clear response of India was observed by John Lewis Gaddis, who was hailed by The New York Times as the Dean of Cold War Historians as 'With the Indian responses of the 1956s Hungarian and Suez crisis, there was nothing to hide in the name of non-alignment.' (John Lewis Gaddis, 2005: 154) In addition to forging military alliances with the US, Pakistan also was pragmatic enough in forging strategic relationship with China. At the Bandung Conference, Pakistan informed China that its alliance with the US was not directed against it. This situation with India under the influence of the Soviet Union and Pakistan under the strategic system of the US continued till the late 1950s. The Chinese aggression at the Indian borders altered this policy to some extent. The subjugation by China and silence by the Soviet Union, forced India to engage with the US.

Conclusion

India played a larger than life role in international affairs during the Nehru's premiership. India and Pakistan acted as the proxies of the Eastern and Western Blocs during the Cold War. With Pakistan actively engaging with both the US and China, India had to join the Soviet Union formally. While Indian foreign policy in its initial days was designed to protect its Sovereignty & independent decision making, Pakistani foreign policy was designed to protect and survive its nation state. By joining military alliances with the Western Bloc, maintaining strategic relationship with China, employing conventional military strategies & asymmetrical warfare and acquiring nukes, Pakistan, a weak and smaller nation when compared to India successfully contained India. The endemic problem of Kashmir continues to haunt the two nations. The Kashmir conflict had severely tarnished India's international reputation.

While it is true that it was Pakistan that influenced the Indian foreign policy the most, the Chinese aggression at the borders somewhat altered it. Pakistan aligning with China formed one of the basic structures of the Asian international system. The Chinese aggression forced India to reach the US for its support. Had India maintained strategic relation with the West since its inception without employing anti-West rhetoric, China would not have dared to attack India. Had the foundations of Indian foreign policy are laid on pragmatism, India's position in the present world order would have been better off.

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