

FOREING POLICY: FAILURES AND FALSE START

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There can be only two parameters for ascertaining the success or failure of a country's foreign policy: the first of which is about effectively safeguarding the interests of the country and the nation, and achievement of the desired objectives and targets; the second one is concerned with the standing in the international community, increase in the number of friends and allies, and decrease in the number of enemies and opponents, or at least a curtailment of their mischief. While our foreign policy has never been very successful, but with the start of an era of dancing to the US tunes during the Ayub regime, when we ignored our position of an independent and largest Muslim country in the world and, instead, relegated it to that of a vassal state bent upon furthering the US scheme, we curtailed much of our influence and room for maneuvering. This resulted in our indigence and dependence on others, which became manifest in the horrid events of 1971 when we were made to taste the ignominy of defeat and lose half of our country!

Despite this dark record, there have also been some bright aspects in the politics of foreign policy, however. These include: our role with respect to the issues of the Muslim world, our friendship with China, our support to Muslim and other countries in their struggle against British or French colonial rules, our help to the people of Afghanistan in the face of Soviet aggression, our role in the independence of the Central Asian Republics, and our efforts in raising the plight of the oppressed Muslims of Bosnia and Kosovo.

Need for an Objective View:

The policies that have been adopted under General Pervez Musharraf since 11 September 2001, which are not only continuing after the partial restoration of the Constitution and the establishment of Jamali-government, but rather are on the rise, have plunged the country into such an era of foreign pressure and internal chaos that is dark and poses great dangers for the future. This presents a morbid picture of failure and humiliation. On the one hand is an unenviable record of U-turns and head-over-heels because of the unprincipled positions, contradictions, and ad-hocism; on the other hand, the country is not only losing its friends and international public support, its dependence on others has increased by far than in any other period of our history. The proclivity to do the bidding of the United States has assumed such proportions that our independence, sovereignty, view of life, civilizational identity, defense capability, economic self-reliance, and regional interests are all endangered.

These circumstances call for an unhindered objective review of the foreign policy, to create among the policy makers a conscious understanding of both principles and interests, and to achieve

national consensus on the outlines of the foreign policy as it should be objectively shaped in the light of the international and regional situation and the challenges.

No doubt that the review and analysis should be done in the most objective manner. Here, General Musharraf rightly says that these matters cannot be decided in an emotional way. Yet, along with a realistic understanding of the ground facts, the formulation of foreign policy with the national objectives, goals and interests as the reference points is also necessary. And, this is the standard for assessing the present situation. This task can neither be done in an emotional way, nor should be done under the dictates of others' orders and their framework. It is necessary to carry out this task without slavish or subdued mentality. It should be done keeping in view the interests of the nation and the country, their needs, and, above all, with a sense of adherence to the principles of justice and truth. It should also ensure taking the entire nation, its political institutions, particularly the Parliament, and media along. As we consider mutual recrimination a sin, we also say that an escape from scathing review constitutes a crime against the nation, and that trying to make a virtue of a bad thing with the help of propaganda and ad-nauseam repetition amounts to dishonesty and disloyalty to the nation.

It is, therefore, imperative to review the prevailing situation with utmost honesty, intellectual uprightness, and keeping in view the ground facts, without any let up or weakness; to present before the nation, Parliament and the leadership those policies and targets that could save us all from committing mistakes of Himalayan proportions and, instead, take Pakistan and the Muslim nation on the road to its actual destination.

The Post-9/11 Scenario:

The nation and its leadership should realize that General Pervez Musharraf's U-turn soon after the incidents of 11 September 2001 under the warning of the US President and Secretary of State has completely derailed our foreign policy. Certainly Mr. Bush had said "you are with us or you are with the terrorists – and if you are with us, then you should not only hand over your land and air-bases to us but also give us the control of your heart and mind. If you fail to do so, then be ready to be sent back to the Stone Age." President Bush, whose policies are made by American Christian fundamentalists and Zionist academicians and politicians, is active in ensnaring the whole world in a new American colonial domination and the establishment of a new global imperialism. In contravention of the overwhelming international public opinion, only a few governments – with those of Israel, Britain, Spain, Australia, and Poland in the forefront – are siding with him for their own vested interests and designs. But, in this colonial game, General Pervez Musharraf has gone too far, and by far, in the Muslim world. The Arab countries that allied themselves with the US, kept certain distance, but the case of the General is different - he staked everything and got nothing in return. What are his achievements? Bush's praise and certificate for boldness and a meeting of a few hours in Camp David!

If the policy and what it has achieved are to be examined, it seems that what had begun with “Pakistan First” was reduced to “Mush First” and now has become “Bush First” policy. The low point is that the much-hyped \$3 billion aid, which was stated to begin with the US budget 2004-05 to be completed in five years, have been ‘blocked’ by a new bill in the US Congress. Now, the release of this amount is being linked to crushing the freedom struggle and restraining the nuclear capability. On the Afghanistan front, where the matter was stipulated to end in weeks, it has now been almost two years but we are descending deeper and deeper into the quagmire along with the US. The situation has come to such a pass that Pakistan’s embassy is attacked and remains closed for two weeks, tension along the Pak-Afghan border shows no signs of fading away, a war of words has begun instead, and the roots of sabotage events in Pakistan can be traced across the border.

Kashmir is our jugular vein and we have upheld our principled position in the face of all difficulties. But, now not only the US and its allies are saying what India says, the difference between “freedom struggle” and “terrorism” is blurred by General Pervez Musharraf’s speeches and diplomacy, though he may continue to deny this as well. The desire to do the dirty work for America has reached such a low point that talks about sending our troops to Iraq – to have our share of shame out of the ignominy and embarrassment the US and UK are facing there, and recognizing Israel in spite of its playing havoc with the lives of innocent Palestinians are making rounds of the corridors of power.

This situation makes it even more necessary to undertake an objective and impartial analysis of foreign policy, to elucidate the rightful stand on important issues, and to perform the duty of advice and conveyance of truth to the nation and its leadership. Qur’an makes this duty incumbent upon the adherents of Islam who uphold the right cause:

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against the rich or the poor, for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts);

“lest ye swerve, and if ye distort justice or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.”

(Al-Nisa 4:135)

Parliament and Cabinet Rendered Irrelevant:

Whether it is Pakistan’s foreign policy or internal policy, the irony is that the military leadership that had occupied power on 12 October 1999 is not ready to relinquish it even after the elections in October 2002. It is not ready to accept the results of elections and surrender to people’s verdict, and, instead, is bent upon keeping its grip on power as it had it during the military rule with wrongful use of force, coercion and military might. Economic development and increase in foreign exchange reserves are being presented as logic for continuation of its policies, while there is no concern over the fact that economy is, for all practical reasons, in a state of deterioration and that

common man is on the brink of disaster. Poverty is on the rise, as the latest statistics reveal that while the population's growth rate is 2.25 percent, poverty is increasing at a rate of 10 percent. (Dr. Shahid Javed Burki, Dawn, 16 July 2003). According to the UN Human Development Report 2003, published on 17 July 2003, Pakistan's position with respect to the Human Development Index has further deteriorated: till some years ago, we were at 120th position among the total of 190 countries, now our position is 144th. This means that we have moved backward and come behind 24 more countries. How can a country that is devoid of internal strength and stability with respect to politics and economy have a good ranking in the international community?

Mere accolades from the US leadership can never become the means for successful foreign policy. For its own interests, the US has always been patronizing dictators, who destroyed and weakened their own respective countries. From Theo of Vietnam, General Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, Marcos of the Philippines, Emanuel Noriega of Panama, Reza Shah of Iran, and Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to Pakistan's military rulers (from Ayub Khan to Pervez Musharraf) – all have had American blessings and it has been securing its interests with their help. In this context, it is clear that the way in which Pakistan's foreign policy has been subjected to American interests has endangered independence, security and ideological identity of the country.

General Pervez Musharraf has kept all powers in his own hands. Prime Minister, cabinet, and Parliament all have thus been rendered ineffective. While the distortion of the basic structure of the Constitution is itself an irony, it has also resulted in the concentration of the reins of both foreign and internal policies in the hands of the General. He takes into confidence only those of his selected few he wishes to confer with, but he does not heed to the advice of even his own chosen people and does what he wants to do, and the roots of his policies are ultimately matched with the wishes of the Bush administration. Though his presidency has no legality, he visits four Western and three Arab countries in just one month. Even if there had been no issue of legality of his presidency, the politics of foreign policy is not the forte of President according to his own LFO, let alone the Constitution. This is how Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and Parliament all have become irrelevant. This is the reason why the politics of foreign and internal policies cannot be left at the hand of one person, just as one person cannot be given right to amend the Constitution. A major cause of wrong policies and deteriorating situation is the decay of the whole process of policy-making and governance, and there is no way out except its rectification.

After stating this principle, we want to dilate upon the issues General Pervez Musharraf has raised before, during and after his tour of these seven countries, and invite the nation, Parliament and his close aides to ponder over their implications and to give up the obstinacy by accepting the principle and need for policy-making on the basis of facts and logic, and that they should adopt the path of policy-making through democratic and legal process and being accountable for it.

Detestable Conditions for the US Aid:

As we have written before on General Pervez Musharraf's visit to the US, we want to say it again that self-praise does not change ground realities, nor can bitter truths be covered by it.

What could be achieved for Pakistan at Camp David? And what was sacrificed for attaining the US pleasure? The balance sheet cannot be avoided forever. If there has been any amelioration in the plight of Pakistanis residing in America? What has been done for those Pakistanis who are confined in the Guantanamo for over two years? What support could be achieved for our stand on Kashmir and where we committed the wrong of including those who are struggling for freedom in the category that the US and India have specified for terrorists? It is unfortunate that the British Prime Minister for the first time used the words of 'terrorists' with respect to Palestine and Kashmir in his address to the US Congress, and that this all began after General Pervez Musharraf's itineraries in America and Britain. The \$3 billion in aid are much talked about but even before the start of the program, which had to be launched after one year and was to be spread over five years, a new bill has been moved in the US Congress under which the US President would confirm every year that:

- All training camps in Kashmir are closed;
- There has been no movement across the Line of Control;
- Pakistan is not assisting the freedom fighters;
- Pakistan's nuclear capability is under control and that the US directives (i.e. nuclear non-proliferation, which includes improvement and up-grade of our capability) are being fully complied.

General Pervez Musharraf had said with great fanfare that the aid is unconditional, though the spokesman of the White House had mentioned three conditions. Now, the condition of march towards democracy has been excluded, while every scheme of surrounding us on Kashmir is being employed. Is it what can be termed a success of the foreign policy?

Consequences of Afghan Policy:

While offering Pakistan's shoulder for American invasion of Afghanistan, General Pervez Musharraf had said that American operation would be brief and limited to specific targets. The truth is before all to see. Thousands of innocent Afghans have been killed, hundreds of villages have been destroyed in brutal bombing, and the country is once again in chaos and at the mercy of warlords. There has been a constant, rather ever-increasing, confrontation between the people and American and official forces. Above all, relations with Pakistan – a country for whose support during the Afghan Jihad the entire Afghan nation was grateful – and peace on our borders – that was there for the first time in our history – and an atmosphere of wholesome cooperation between the two countries all have gone with the wind. The controversy over the Durand Line has

once again raised its head, Pakistan's embassy in Afghanistan is attacked, tension along borders is increasing and troops have been deployed in Tribal Areas and armies are positioned on both sides. As if it was not enough, the US commanders have said that they are not satisfied with 50 percent cooperation and demand 100 percent, or even more, compliance!

The situation has come to such a pass that Mr. Karzai in his recent interview has expressed his distrust on General Musharraf. In his interview to London's daily Telegraph, he said that he expected "civilized" behavior from Pakistan.

No single event of border conflict could occur during the seven-year reign of Taliban, and whatever reservations the two countries had with respect to the Durand Line, they had not affected the relations between them. But, the action of closing the borders under the US directives and sending troops to the Tribal Areas has resulted in a situation that is adversely affecting the relations. Pakistan's interior secretary had come from US some two months ahead of General Pervez Musharraf's visit after deciding the issue of closing the borders. It is the implementation on this decision that is changing friends into foes.

Americans are utterly failing in Afghanistan. They have not achieved any of their targets. The gulf between the Northern Alliance's leadership and the people is widening, the writ of the Kabul regime is limited to only a few cities, anti-American sentiments are increasing, and the resistance against foreign forces and their local allies is gaining strength. Also, Indian influence is increasing in Afghanistan and Israel, too, is trying to get a foothold there. India got the opportunity to establish diplomatic missions in Jalalabad and Qandahar where terrorist activities against Pakistan are being planned. The once much talked about "strategic depth" has now been reduced to "strategic dearth". Pakistani troops have been deployed in large numbers – 50,000-100,000 according to a careful estimate – but in spite of all our services both the rulers in Kabul and American military command in Afghanistan are unhappy with us, while the Afghan people were already feeling resentment and dejection. This is the outcome of our post-9/11 Afghan policy.

Retreat on Kashmir:

Another big issue is Pak-India relations and a judicious, durable solution of the Kashmir problem. The blunder we committed here was that we neither explained our position on "terrorism", nor did we care to get the differences between our and American and Indian stands accepted while seeking good relations with them. We gave our support without giving a thought and the result is that we accept not to allow so-called infiltration across the Line of Control, that we would now allow our land to be used for terrorist activity of any kind, although the UN Human Rights Commission declares in its session for the year 2003 that freedom fighters cannot be bracketed with terrorists. In actual fact as well, we close all camps of Mujahideen and classify them with

terrorists. We even go to the extent of not talking about Jihad, and the leadership of the army whose very motto is “Jihad in the way of Allah” become dumb when it come to talking about Jihad!

India has taken full advantage of this situation and we have become entangled in a reactionary politics. The US ambassador in India has openly and perhaps for the first time declared the freedom struggle in Kashmir as terrorism and Pakistan as its patron. But our protest has no force in it. We are begging for talks, without any clear stand on real issues. General Pervez Musharraf has gone to such an extent that he talks about 10-12 solutions of the Kashmir issue and proposes, in the name of flexibility, for the adoption of “process of elimination”, or giving up an option that is not acceptable for both. In other words it means giving up the option of plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the people in the face of Indian obstinacy of not accepting the Kashmir is’ right to self-determination. If this is the politics of foreign policy, then there is no hope for the better!

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