

April 2004

Development of Pakistan's Foreign Policy:

Case Study of the Gulf Crisis-1990



CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

CONTENTS

Foreword Abbreviations and Acronyms Profile of the Author

Introduction		05
The Gulf Crisis 1990: Chronology & Background		05
-	Chronology of Events Background	06 06
Gulf Crisis: the Issues		07
-	Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait and Pakistan's Reaction American War against Iraq and Pakistan's Response	07 07
Development of Pakistan's Policy: the Leading Perspectives		07
- - - - -	The Policy Debate The Public Opinion The Political Leadership The Political Opposition The Civil-Military Bureaucratic Perspective Categorisation of Perspectives Pak-U.S. Relations	07 07 08 08 09 09
Conclusion		11
References		12

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CCD Cabinet Committee for DefenceGen General (Highest rank of the Army)GHQ General Head Quarters of the Army

PPP Pakistan Peoples' Party U.S. / U.S.A. United States of America

U.S.S.R. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UNSC United Nations Security Council

Case Study Gulf Crisis - 1990

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

FOREWORD RD

evelopment of Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Case Study of the Gulf Crisis-1990, is a special presentation by PILDAT in the context of the PILDAT Short Course for Parliamentarians and Politicians on *The Foreign Policy Process in Pakistan*. Developed by PILDAT, as part of the Pakistan Legislative Strengthening Consortium PLSC, supported financially by the USAID, the case study aims to identify the process of foreign policy formulation in Pakistan with special reference to the Gulf Crisis 1990. The objective of the case study is to identify major actors, their perspectives and their influence in shaping Pakistan's policy on the issue.

Authored by **Dr. Ayesha Siddiqa**, Defence Analyst, the case study attempts to present an objective and factual commentary, covering the issue in its entirety and the resultant shaping of foreign policy. PILDAT, as a staunch supporter of supremacy of the role of Parliament in shaping and reviewing policies, feels that Parliamentarians' knowledge and capacity needs to be developed to take a pro-active role in foreign policy formulation, review and analysis. The case study points out the various perspectives in the shaping of Pakistan's Policy during the Gulf Crisis.

Other than this case study, two other studies are prepared by PILDAT on shaping of Pakistan's Foreign Policy on *Comparison among Lahore, Agra and Islamabad Summits and the Recognition of Taliban by Pakistan.*

The author, PILDAT and its team of researchers have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the contents of this paper. PILDAT, however, does not accept any responsibility of any omission or error as it is not deliberate.

The views expressed in this case study belong to the author and are not necessarily shared by PILDAT, PLSC or USAID.

Lahore April 2004

Case Study Gulf Crisis - 1990

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990



PROPLE DE THE AUTHOR UTHOR

Dr. Ayesha Siddiqa is a defence analyst currently working as a visiting fellow at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute and correspondent Jane's Defence Weekly. She has a Ph.D. in War Studies from King's College, London and has also been a civil servant for eleven years including a two years' stint as Director of Naval Research at Islamabad. She is also the author of a book on Pakistan's military decisionmaking titled: 'Pakistan's Arms Procurement and Military Build-up, 1979-99.'

Dr. Siddiga has written in several international journals.

Case Study Gulf Crisis - 1990

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

Introduction

The Gulf Crisis in the early 1990s would be remembered in Pakistan as a moment when there appeared to be a degree of disagreement between the political government and the top military leadership. The public opinion and that of the military leadership seemed to be favouring a policy that would not support American military action against Iraq. Ultimately, the government did not make any major U-turn on its policy dealing with Iraq and the U.S. In many ways, this event is about Pakistan's U.S. and Middle East Policy. Moreover, the event represents a critical moment when the military's top leadership had tried to test out its policy of strategic defiance in the hope of carving global geo-politics according to peculiar assessments of how the American counter-attack on Iraq would play out.

This case study evaluates the dynamics of foreign policymaking during the period analysing the concerns of the various stakeholders and the nature of division within the establishment that had an impact on the final decision. The case study, in fact, would be used as a tool to evaluate the dynamics of Pakistan's foreign policy and the policymaking process.

The Gulf Crisis 1990: Chronology & Background

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and American reaction to the incident put the entire Muslim world in a quandary regarding their response to the events. What was basically a regional (Middle Eastern) crisis soon became an international crisis because of the position taken by the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Following is the chronology of events depicting the order in which these events unfolded.

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

Chronology of Events		
•		
Aug. 02, 1990:	Iraq invades Kuwait and UNSC passes Resolution 660, calling for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait	
Aug. 04, 1990:	Bush condemns the attack and states it as unacceptable	
Aug. 06, 1990:	U.S. Secretary of Defence Richard Cheney meets King Fahd of Saudi	
	Arabia. UNSC approves Resolution 661 imposing a mandatory and complete embargo of all investments and trade with Iraq	
Aug. 07, 1990:	U.S. President Bush orders deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia	
Aug. 09, 1990:	UNSC Resolution 662 declares invasion of Kuwait as null and void under international law	
Aug. 10, 1990:	Arab League decides to send forces to aid Saudi Arabia	
Aug. 12, 1990:	Saddam says he will pull out of Kuwait if Israel pulls out of occupied territories	
Aug. 12, 1990:	Saudi King's special envoy visits Pakistan to request for troops	
Aug. 14, 1990:	U.S. Army sends 101st airborne division	
Aug. 17-18, 1990: UNSC passes Resolution 664 calling on Iraq to release all foreign citizens		
Aug. 20, 1990:	Iraq says it is moving 'western' hostages to military	
Aug. 21, 1990:	U.S. announces desert shield - the largest airlift in history	
Aug. 28, 1990:	Iraq declares Kuwait as its 19th province	
Sept. 01, 1990:	Arab League in Cairo calls for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and pay reparations and allow	
	foreigners to leave Iraq and Kuwait	
Sept. 05, 1990:	Turkish Parliament permits its forces to be used during the Gulf Crisis	
Sept. 07, 1990:	Japan and South Korea promise funding	
Sept. 09, 1990:	U.S. President Bush-Russian President Gorbachev agree to free Kuwait	
Sept. 12, 1990:	Iraq announces 'holy war' against U.S. Forces	
Oct. 24, 1990:	General Elections in Pakistan take place resulting in victory for Mr. Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League	
Nov. 6, 1990:	Nawaz Sharif government takes charge	
Jan. 16, 1991:	U.S. launches attack against Iraq; 'Operation Desert Storm' begins at midnight	
Feb. 28, 1991:	Iraqi forces ousted from Kuwait	

Background

Having gained confidence due to years of support from the West and the Arab world, Saddam Hussein decided to sort out its problems with its smaller neighbour, Kuwait, militarily. Iraq was under a huge debt and Kuwait that had agreed to provide financial support had backed out. The confidence that the Iraqi government had gained regarding its superiority in the region determined the manner in which it chose to deal with its bilateral issues with its neighbour. The attack was condemned by the U.S. The then U.S. President George Bush immediately came up with a statement condemning the invasion and declaring it as an act that 'would not stand.' What gave a further twist to events was that early on during the conflict Saddam caught on to Muslim nationalism and played upon the sentiments of the Arab and the Muslim world by equating the issue of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait with Israel's occupation of the Arab territories. Largely, this served as a strong background in the Muslim World which looked more at Iraq as fighting American imperialism than as an invader of another Muslim Country. For instance, the people in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, or the Afghan Mujahideen were irritated by Saudi reaction towards the crisis. There was a general condemnation of all those political elements including the Saudi government that encouraged American presence in the Gulf and the Middle East.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was extremely destabilising for the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia. There was a concern in Riyadh regarding Baghdad's intentions towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In fact, one of the assessments of the U.S. was that if not discouraged or aggressively reprimanded for its act of violence towards Kuwait, Baghdad might be encouraged to invade Saudi Arabia as well. The deliberations between the various Middle Eastern

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

states and the U.S. helped in firming up the plan for an attack on Iraqi forces in Kuwait. The attack was finally launched on January 16, 1991 and resulted in the ouster of Iraqi forces from Kuwait on February 28, 1991.

Gulf Crisis: the Issues

The Gulf crisis pertained to two different issues:

- (a) Iragi invasion of Kuwait
- (b) American War against Iraq

Iragi Invasion of Kuwait and Pakistan's Reaction

As far as the first issue is concerned, the Pakistan government condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and responded positively to the Saudi request for dispatching troops for Riyadh's assistance for the defence of Saudi Arabia. In fact, Pakistan committed about 11,000 troops out of which the first batch of 2,000 was dispatched towards the end of August while another 3,000 and an armoured brigade were dispatched in October of 1990. The last batch of 5,000 troops was sent a week before America started its war against Iraq. Islamabad maintained that its troops were sent for the protection of Saudi Arabia and its opposition to the invasion of Kuwait was based on the principle of inviolability of a nation's frontier.

American War against Irag and Pakistan's Response

The second issue of supporting American war initiative was a dicier proposition. This was an issue that divided the various elements of both the state and the society. The newly elected government of Nawaz Sharif found itself caught in a highly sentimental debate with a realisation that Islamabad's decision would ultimately impinge upon its national security interests. While there was intense opposition to the idea of taking part in American war initiative and protests had started after January 17, 1991, there was also the fear of alienating the U.S. In the words of the then foreign minister, Shehryar Khan, a stance that supported Saddam would have alienated the U.S., the Saudis and the world community and consign 'Pakistan's fate to that of Muslim Albania.'

An analysis of the various perspectives and positions would throw greater light on the problems faced by the government of Pakistan during the Gulf crisis.

Development of Pakistan's Policy: the Leading Perspectives

The Policy Debate

Pakistan's initial reaction to the crisis was positively in favour of Saudi Arabia and American military operation in the Middle East. As mentioned earlier, Pakistan sent its forces to assist Saudi forces. The debate within Pakistan was at two levels: (a) the issue of assisting Saudi Arabia and providing for the security of its age-old Middle Eastern ally, and (b) the question of responding to an American call for countering Iraq's aggressive move in the region.

Ultimately, Pakistan dispatched its forces in support of Saudi Arabia that were primarily stationed at Tabuk, western part of Saudi Arabi, and were further away from the main battleground located away on the eastern border of Saudi Arabia. Although the troops were sent in response to American request, the forces were meant primarily to relieve Saudi forces that could then join the allied war effort. In addition, the troops were sent before a debate broke out amongst the policymaking circles and in the streets of Pakistan. It is important to point out that General Mirza Aslam Beg, who was the Army Chief of the time, had concurred to sending of the troops during a meeting of the Cabinet Committee for Defence. It was only later that he changed his stance and embarrassed the political government by issuing statements against America's war against Irag.

The Public Opinion

From Pakistan's perspective, what provided a major twist to the events was the Israel factor. In fact, Israel and its intelligence agencies were concerned that a victory in Kuwait would give Baghdad the confidence to strike Israel as well. The public opinion guided by major political and military stakeholders in Pakistan saw the development not as a bilateral crisis between Kuwait and Iraq that also impinged upon the security of Saudi Arabia, but more as an issue between Israel and Iraq. Furthermore, the American response to Kuwait's invasion was seen as the U.S.' bid to impose its hegemony over the Middle East. This was one of the key factors that resulted in all political forces, across the political spectrum, that were traditionally left and right of centre, aligning and protesting against Islamabad's support to the war effort of the allied forces.²

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

The Political Leadership

It is essential to take a look at Pakistan's political situation at the time. The initial decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia was taken by the interim government of Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi. This decision, however, was upheld by the incoming Nawaz Sharif government. The new government had found itself in a situation where the Army chief had taken a position almost totally opposed to that of the government's. In addition, the public opinion, led by the media, had built a case against Pakistan providing support to the U.S.

However, the issue was not just about providing assistance to American imperialism, but of taking a decision on Saudi Arabia's security concerns. Saudi Arabia continued its traditional role of a supporter to Pakistan. During the Gulf Crisis alone, Pakistan received a free supply of 50 000 barrels of oil daily for three months, plus Rs. 22 crore for rehabilitation of people hit by the earthquake in Chitral.³

The two issues that concerned the government were: (a) how not to alienate the U.S., and (b) to take a position that would not be totally opposed to the popular thinking. U.S. was already seen as warming up to India. The apprehension, hence, was that if Islamabad took a position totally averse to Washington, India might exploit the situation. In addition, Iraq was viewed as closer to India than Pakistan, an issue pointed out by Prime Minister Sharif as well. His objection to the pro-Iraq public protests was that while Pakistan had stood up for Islamic fraternity, Iraq had not done so in the case of Kashmir or Afghanistan. Nawaz Sharif emphasised resolving the crisis diplomatically. In an address to the nation in January 1991, Sharif framed it as a crisis between Saudi Arabia and Iraq and Kuwait.

The opposition and the media framed the issue of Pakistani forces' involvement into the crisis amounting to Pakistan supporting American imperialism that, in turn, would encourage Israel or its hostile policies towards the Arab world. The memory of Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osiraq also served to intensify the opposition's stance on the issue. The government, however, was of the view that if such a situation arises, it would support Iraq as a Muslim country. On February 20, President G.I. Khan announced that, 'if Israel attacks Iraq, Pakistan will side with the Muslim *Umma*.'⁴

The Political Opposition

The political opposition of the government was in the

forefront of leading demonstrations that started in the middle of January 1991 against the U.S. The popular parties like the PPP and the religious parties used the opportunity to negotiate greater political space with the ruling party. While both segments condemned Islamabad's approach to the Gulf crisis, there was a difference between the positions taken by the PPP as opposed to that of the religious parties. Benazir Bhutto, for instance, criticised the government for adopting a 'senile' foreign policy, but in reality her position was not very different from that of the government's. This was due to her sensitivity towards American influence visà-vis Pakistan. There were others opposing the American call to war as well. Their opposition was based on their assessment that the U.S.'s attack on Iraq would establish American hegemony that, in turn would unleash the fundamentalist forces in Islamic countries including Pakistan. In many respects, the secular political parties and forces bought into Saddam's argument regarding the linkage between the Kuwaiti Crisis and the Palestine question. In the political spectrum, there was also a deepseated suspicion of U.S. motives.

The main opposition came from the religious parties who faced the dilemma of choosing between the security of Saudi Arabia and Saadam's call against Israel. The Jama'ate-Islami, in particular, targeted the government, especially the foreign minister for a 'sell-out' to the U.S. The Jama'ate-Islami leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed organised country-wide processions, rallies and public meetings against the Government's Gulf policy.

The political stakeholders, that are traditionally not the key players in setting foreign policy objectives, took a position based on their evaluation of the second issue. For them, the question was that supporting any American initiative would tantamount to encouraging Western imperialism in the Middle East, especially threatening the Muslim world. There was hardly any debate to the response from the Middle Eastern states that, in any case, were seen as pursuing American interests. In fact, right wing parties like the Jamiat-e-Ulama-i-Islam (Fazl-ur-Rehman Group) and Jamiat-e-Ulama-i-Pakistan (Noorani Group) were in the forefront proposing a complete reversal of policy of U.S. support. Such views were largely supported by the public, which perceived the crisis in the Middle East a test of 'Muslim nationalism' in Pakistan as well.

Moreover, the suspicion of the U.S. had generally increased

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

due to the course that Pakistan-U.S. relations had taken. The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan followed by the break up of the U.S.S.R. had reduced Islamabad's strategic significance for Washington. On the other hand, America's relations with India were gradually improving. As a result the public and the opposition was of the view that there was a Hindu-Christian-Jewish lobby at work that aimed at marginalising the Muslim world. Therefore, there was little sense in supporting an American sponsored initiative that was bound to strengthen American influence in the Middle East and Persian Gulf regions. This, it was believed, would undermine the interests of the Muslim world in large and Pakistan in particular.

However, the noises in the corridors of politics cannot be viewed as the determining factor for Pakistan's policy on the Gulf crisis. In fact, most of the voices were influenced after a debate had erupted in the official circles. What happened was that some segments of the government, opposed to supporting American position, found partners in the political circles. The media and the parties on the right of the political divide have always had a better communication with the establishment, especially with the armed forces. The noise created by the political forces helped in creating an impression, as always, that the debate within the policymaking circles was reacting to popular public opinion.

The Civil-Military Bureaucratic Perspective

The debate in the government was influenced by two factors: (a) particular ideological orientation of various groups and their influence on policymaking and (b) the peculiar evolution of thinking within the military that has always been at the forefront in foreign policy and security decision-making.

A corollary of this heated debate in the country was the issue of the Army chief challenging the political authority. While the Prime Minister was on his peace mission to the Middle East, the Army Chief had criticised the allied coalition for not giving peace a chance. He claimed that after Iraq was defeated, the allies would try to impose a solution to the problems of the whole region including Pakistan. This speech of the Chief of Army Staff was perceived as disowning the decision to dispatch Pakistani troops to Saudi Arabia. It also seemed that by issuing such a statement, the Army Chief was weakening, 'civilian supremacy and control over foreign policy decision

making.' The fear was that the crisis might become a litmus test of the political leadership's strength or a possible excuse for the Army to take over. In fact, there were rumours in the country of a possible military coup. This, however, did not take place with General Beg retiring in August 1991.

The Army chief, Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg, took the lead in trying to change the government's position on the Gulf policy. He clearly opposed any alignment with the U.S. although he was part of the decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia. His argument was that 'Irag was encouraged to invade Kuwait by the U.S. which provided enough justification for initiating this war.' This, in his opinion, was done to find an excuse for establishing America's hegemony in the region. Supporting the anti-U.S. demonstrations in Pakistan, General Beg also stated in his speech that the protests were: 'quite understandable as these are expressions of our deep-seated religious sentiments.' Moreover, the demonstrations showed that 'the distrust of the U.S. among the people of Pakistan is because they fully know that Israel's security interests are dearer to them [U.S.] than anyone else.⁷ He argued that the U.S. intended to clip the wings of militaries of the Muslim countries and would try to 'clip Pakistan's wings' as well after it was finished with Iraq. This included curtailing Islamabad's nuclear programme in his view.

The Army chief made his position clear through issuing statements printed in the press. His position also reflected through a restricted paper of the Army titled 'The Gulf Crisis 1990.' Although his perspective would be discussed in the later part of this section of the study, it is worth noting that a consensus failed to emerge within the forces on his ideas. So, despite the opposition, it was not possible for the Army, which is the key player in policymaking, to change the Gulf policy drastically; firstly because domestic and international environment did not allow for major political shifts in Pakistan; and secondly, opinion was divided due to structural divisions within the policymaking circles regarding the position that could be taken vis-à-vis the US.

Categorisation of Perspectives

Divisions within the policymaking circle on this issue have been identified by some analysts. Dr. Samina Yasmeen wrote that there are three distinct groups that influence the security discourse: (a) surrender group advocates reliance on the U.S., (b) independence group advocates building linkages with other countries on the basis of the economic

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

imperative and (c) Muslim group proposes political and security alignment based on religious ideology.⁸

This categorisation is particularly relevant for understanding decision-making during the Gulf crisis. The military establishment's involvement with the war in Afghanistan during the 1980s had not only given it a certain confidence, but had also generated ideas regarding Pakistan's role in strengthening of a Muslim block. The fact that Pakistan could play a crucial role in the ouster of a super power was considered a major achievement. In fact, a section of opinion in the military held that Islamabad had played a significant role in the break-up of the Eastern superpower. Added to this was the confidence of the acquisition of nuclear weapons technology. It was believed that the military technological prowess gave Pakistan an opportunity to lead the Muslim block. This new understanding or consciousness was juxtaposed to the thinking that saw dependence on the U.S. as being crucial for Pakistan's overall security paradigm. Indeed, there was also an effort being made to get Islamabad on board the American security network on some kind of permanent basis. This thinking could be traced to Pakistan's dependence on the American weapons supplies, especially quality equipment that it could only procure on concessional terms from the US.9 This was one of the reasons that the GHQ had agreed to send about 5000 troops to Saudi Arabia at Washington's request. 10 However, it was made to look like Pakistani troops were sent for Saudi Arabian security.

The relationship with Washington was an important element of strategic thinking of the time. The U.S. had not only been a major source for weapons supply during the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1980s, but was an ally that was needed to ward off pressure from India whenever the occasion arose. In addition, dependence on Washington was somewhat deeply entrenched in the mindset of the establishment, making it difficult for government to adopt a policy against the U.S.

It is necessary to point out that such a division was significant in terms of the military establishment. Essentially the GHQ shapes the foreign policy in Pakistan, and the foreign office has never played a critical role in determining the course of a policy.

The development of strategic thinking within the Army

coincided with the Gulf crisis. It was within the first 60 days after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the American pronouncement to oppose Baghdad's decision militarily that the GHQ produced a restricted paper titled: 'Gulf Crisis 1990.' Written under the direction of the Army Chief, the paper provides an excellent window to look into the minds of the top Army management at that point in time.

While the paper correctly analysed the problem in America's policy towards Iraq, it delved into areas where the argument was hugely flawed. The paper stated that '...however, Pakistanis do not support United States' intervention [into Gulf Crisis], as regional issues should be decided regionally. 11 Instead of building on this argument the paper digressed into another area proposing something that dealt with higher policy and strategy, an subject that was certainly not the forte of the military leadership. The fundamental conclusions of the paper were based on one major assumption or miscalculation: it was assumed, even before the conflict began, that the U.S. was bound to loose its battle against Iraq. The Army had assessed that given the fact that the U.S. had no experience of fighting in the Middle East, American forces were bound to fail in a military encounter with the local forces in the Gulf. Moreover. considering the experience of American wars of the past such as Vietnam and Korea, the impression was that once casualties of U.S. troops took place, it would be difficult for Washington to sustain a major military operation in the region. Clearly, this calculation was out of sync with reality. The paper also denoted the fact that the calculations were not based on knowledge of the development of American strategic thought and technological advancements. There was certainly no notion of the concept of joint operational planning and massive use of air power to attain an objective.

The paper also made another huge assumption that having lost a battle against Iraq, the U.S. would surrender the Persian Gulf and the Middle Eastern regions to be occupied by some alternative force with greater military capacity or comparative military power. This erroneous assessment led to the unfolding of the concept of 'strategic defiance.' The fundamental idea was that the trio of Muslim states i.e., Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan could fill the space vacated by the U.S. Thus, this was an idea of a Muslim block headed by Pakistan due to its superior military technological capabilities. It would be worth pointing out that one of the reasons that General Beg had shifted his approach against the U.S. was because of his peculiar calculation of the

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

political worth of the nuclear weapons of Pakistan. His miscalculation can be attributed to his lack of political sensitivity and appreciation of matters of 'higher politics' or geo-politics.

Pak-U.S. Relations

The Gulf crisis coincided with a tense period in Pakistan-U.S. relations. An arms embargo was imposed on Pakistan in October 1990, about two months after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the debate within the U.S. Congress on Pakistan did not have a friendly tone. The eventual imposition of the arms embargo in October 1990 not only added to Islamabad's desperation, but it also encouraged certain elements to think more suspiciously of a continued alignment with Washington. The time factor was indeed crucial because with the disappearance of the Communist power, there was little hope in the policymaking circles in Islamabad of the revival of Pakistan's relevance for the U.S. security policy.

Based on the aforementioned assumption, one of the conclusions was that Pakistan must distance itself from Washington and make other alignments, especially with the emerging European financial powers like Germany and France. The other conclusion that flowed out from the above stated assumptions was that Pakistan had the military capacity to fill the strategic space that would be vacated after American defeat against Iraq.

The inclusion of Iran in this geo-political trio reflected the age-old military thinking that Iran would provide strategic depth for Pakistan in case of a conflict with India. It must be mentioned that at that point the tone of relations between Tehran and Islamabad had not started to change for worse as they did during the 1990s.

Clearly, there were serious problems of analysis in this new approach. Notwithstanding the erroneous assumption that the U.S. would loose its battle against Iraq, one wonders how the Army planners reached the conclusion that Pakistan would fill the gap in partnership with Iran and Afghanistan. Logically speaking, a victorious Iraq would have problems accepting such a formulation. Moreover, nuclear capability alone would not have necessarily been a qualification for heading this imaginary Muslim power block.

One of the results of the confusion created due to varied

positions taken by the government and the Army, was that it put the political leadership and the government in an extremely embarrassing position. Opinions expressed in the media and by the political parties supported a more aggressive approach to the question of whether Pakistan should side with the U.S.

The Army leadership, in its approach of strategic defiance, seemed oblivious to the country's economic dependence on the U.S., a matter that concerned the political government. This was in addition to the traditional dependence of key stakeholders on the U.S. for political legitimacy.

Conclusion

The Gulf crisis 1990/91 and the way it was played out in the policymaking circles generated a lot of interest and debate in Pakistan. However, one could draw a few conclusions from the way the decision regarding Pakistan's involvement in the crisis was played out. These are:

- a. A Lack of Internal Dialogue
- b. Traditional Policy Paradigm as a Determining Factor
- c. Limited Role Played by the Parliament
- d. Constraints on the Government due to the Army Chief's perception

The most interesting aspect relates to the impression that the political government had eventually had an upper hand. Contrary to this, one would argue that the apparent confusion was due to the debate within the policymaking circles, especially the Army where the top leadership was clearly divided between its traditional policy of supporting the U.S. or changing the direction. The issue was not just confined to supporting the U.S. in getting Iraqi forces out of Kuwait, but it was more about Pakistan 'changing lanes' and re-defining its position in the region and particularly in relation to the U.S.

There were clearly two issues that eventually got completely muddled because of the diverse positions taken by various elements of the government. For the government, the issue was how to balance a policy keeping in view the geo-politics of the region, popular sentiment and Pakistan's security interests. In addition, there were some external

CASE STUDY No. 1

DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:

CASE STUDY OF THE GULF CRISIS-1990

compulsions that Islamabad could not ignore.

One of the conclusions of this study is that the role of the Parliament and the Cabinet Committee for Defence was limited due to the Army chief not abiding by the decisions that were taken during the meetings. The fact that the Army chief chose to use extra-constitutional channels to air his concerns about a policy denotes problems of communication within the policymaking circle and weakness of existing institutions. The sharp divide between the military and the civilian leadership at the top policymaking level was noticeable. The crucial issue at hand was not that the policy had stayed on its course, but that the Army chief, who was a functionary of the state, was setting the tone of debate in the political circles and the wider civil society. The Army chief, in fact, seemed to have taken recourse to building partnerships with the opposition and manipulating public opinion without educating it first. This he did in order to force the government to support him in changing the course of the foreign policy without any internal debate. Interestingly, while he pursued this stance, he never opposed the decision of sending Pakistani troops to Saudi Arabia.

This situation can be compared to the more developed political systems where the committee systems or other institutional mechanisms are available for the various stakeholders to negotiate their positions. This is a lacuna that needs to be removed. Building a healthy system of accountability at the policymaking level should be a priority

References

- 1. Http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/cron/
- 2. http://www.statsvitenskap.uio.no/ansatte/serie/rapport/fulltekst/0193/golfkrisen-5_3.html. See also, The Pakistan Times, February 17, 1991.
- 3. The Pakistan Times, March 3, 1991
- 4. Herald, January 21, 1991
- 5. The Pakistan Times, March 03, 1991.
- 6. http://www.statsvitenskap.uio.no/ansatte/serie/rapport/fulltekst/0193/golfkrisen-5 3.html
- 7. The Economist, 2-8 March, 1991
- 8. Samina Yasmeen. Pakistan's Cautious Foreign Policy. In Survival, IISS, Summer 1994, pp. 121-126.
- 9. John Bray, New Directions in Pakistan's Foreign Policy. In The World Today, London, April 1992. p. 6.
- 10. Hasan-Askari Rizvi, Pakistan and the Geostrategic Environment. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993). P. 84.
- 11. See the paper on "The Gulf Crisis 1990," p. 20. See also, Times, 14/01/92

Prepared by
Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development And
Transparency - PILDAT

As a Part of
Pakistan Legislative Strengthening
Consortium - PLSC

With support from
United States Agency for International
Development - USAID



5-A, Zafar Ali Road, Gulberg V, Lahore-54000, Pakistan. Tel: (+92-42) 111 123 345 Fax: (+92-42) 575 1551 E-mail: info@pildat.org URL: www.pildat.org