

PAKISTAN'S GEO-POLITICAL POSITION: A PERCEPTION

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Whereas the geographical position of a country remains fixed, the political possibilities and bearings arising out of this position continue to undergo changes due to various factors, some of which are:

- (i) Internal political changes.
- (ii) Political changes in the neighbouring countries.
- (iii) Realignments and regroupings amongst the neighbouring countries.
- (iv) Realignments and regroupings of the countries of the world vis-a-vis the Big/Super Powers.

In the political combinations and permutations of different nations, the only permanent factor is the geographical unity and integrity of a country. Although there are instances in which the factor of geographical unity of a country was also subjected to political changes, such as the Union of Egypt and Syria into a United Arab -Republic, but such political experiments have not lasted long and ultimately the national feelings and prejudices have re-emerged undoing: such mergers. Even ideological affinities have not been able to melt the geographical barriers between two countries. Communist countries are living examples in the contemporary period. In spite of the fact that both Russia and China are Communist countries, they are at loggerheads with each other.

Let us recapitulate Pakistan's geographical position:

- (i) It is situated in South-West Asia.
- (ii) It commands the entrance to the Persian Gulf.
- (iii) It is a littoral state of the Indian ocean.
- (iv)- There is Russia, a Super Power, and China with potentialities of a Super Power, in the north neighbourhood,
- (v) There is India, with ambitions of becoming a Regional Big Power, in the south-eastern neighbourhood.

- (vi) There is a continuous block of Muslim countries extending from its western borders to the Atlantic coast of North Africa.

Unlike other countries, Pakistan has also to live with an almost permanent political factor internally. This country was carved out of British India on the basis of separate Muslim nation-hood. There is no possibility in the foreseeable future of Islam not occupying a predominant position in the national life of this country. This factor has predetermined to a certain extent the choices available to Pakistan in the realignments and regroupings of international forces in the world.

There are some other factors which have continued to influence the external relations of Pakistan. The first is the opposition, tooth and nail, of the Hindus to the partition of India. "Akhand Bharat" still remains the dream and political goal of the Hindus. This dream appears to be the part of the Hindu psyche. India, there-fore, cannot see Pakistan grow strong. There was great jubilation in India when the eastern wing (now Bangladesh) seceded from Pakistan as this reduced the strength and international leverage of Pakistan. Whereas India is arming itself with modern and sophisticated weapons, it starts making hue and cry if it comes to know that Pakistan is likely to purchase some weapons to cater to its barest minimum defence needs.

The second factor is the Jewish opposition to Islam. This dates back to the life of Muhammad (peace be upon him) when Jews indulged in all sorts of intrigues to murder the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and to extinguish the light of Islam. With the state of Israel established in the midst of the Muslim lands by forcible eviction of more than a million Muslims, the Jewish community would not like the existence of a strong and powerful Muslim country, much less a united block of Muslim countries, in the neighbourhood of Israel. As Jewish community controls the economic forces as well as the information media in the West, the latter is always antagonistic to the resurgence of Islamic identity, as such, of a Muslim nation, much less the emergence of a united group of Muslim countries with a geographical continuity running from Pakistan in the east to Mauritius in the west. This group of Muslim countries, if united, can control the vital trade-routes of the world.

The third factor is the fear of proselytising Islam in the minds of the

Christian nations. This fear is a part of their psyche which has a distorted image of Islam as a militant religion. This is borne out by a flood of articles and comments which are appearing in the Western Press, expressing apprehensions about the resurgence of Islam in the Muslim countries.

The fourth factor is the geographical contiguity of Central Asian Muslim Republics of the U.S.S.R. with this group of Muslim countries. This makes Russia suspicious of the emergence of a Muslim block on its southern flank inducing resurgence of Islamic identity of its Central Asian Muslim Republics and the risk of their secession.

This is the broad outline of the geo-political position through which Pakistan has to struggle in pursuit of its objectives. The most fundamental and basic factor is the internal cohesion, integrity and stability. This can be achieved by launching a two-pronged attack. In the material sphere, there is an urgent need for economic redistribution and dispensation of justice without fear or favour. This will create amongst the peoples of all regions a sense of sharing the economic resources of the country and, consequently, a sense of belonging to it. In the non-material sphere, it is absolutely necessary to develop the character of the individual, to bring out the good in his nature and to root out the bad in him. This can be brought about through a process of education and spiritual emancipation. This development of character means both self realisation and self-negation, that is, realisation of the good and negation of the bad in one's personality. This involves a spirit of self-sacrifice which can be achieved only by accepting the principles of Islam and following the practices of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). Without this character-building, no amount of economic redistribution will alleviate the conditions of the poor and the deprived as those, who are perverse in nature, would subvert any economic redistribution through profiteering, hoarding, black-marketing, smuggling and concealment of wealth.

It is only if Pakistan has a reasonable level of internal stability that a rational foreign policy can be formulated keeping in view the realities of the external political situation. The internal instability in the country affords an opportunity to the external political forces to manipulate internal dissensions to their advantage. This forces the Government to take *ad-hoc* foreign policy decisions to meet such emergent situations. In such conditions, a long-term foreign policy cannot be formulated and the country is led compulsively by the powerful tide of events on to a course which may spell disaster in the

end.

Recently, strong waves of resurgence of Islam have appeared in various Muslim countries. The strongest and most powerful movement for Islamic Renaissance has been witnessed in Iran where a powerful and strongly-embedded monarchy has been toppled over. This resurgence of Islam coincides with the aspirations of Pakistan and advances the possibility of the emergence of a Muslim block. This has introduced a new factor in international politics.

Due to a strong Jewish lobby in America, the latter is committed to not only the protection but the predominant position of Israel in the Middle East. Emergence of a Muslim block is considered by the Jews as a threat to the existence of Israel. America would welcome the Islamic resurgence only to the extent that it pushes out Russian influence from the Middle East. But this sympathetic American attitude would not be unqualified as the Jewish lobby in America would not like the emergence of a Muslim block. As Western media are controlled by the Jews, they are trying to fan dissensions amongst Muslim countries by playing upon and highlighting the Shiah-Sunni differences. The purpose appears to be twofold. To let this wave of Islamic resurgence push out Russian influence from this area and, at the same time, to prevent the emergence of a united Muslim block which may pose a threat to the security of Israel.

Because of the rising tide of anti-Zionist and anti-American sentiments in the Middle East, Russia would also welcome this resurgence of Islam to a limited extent as it would serve to push out American influence from this area. But a united Muslim block also poses a threat to the U.S.S.R. as it induces the risk of secession of the Central Asian Muslim Republics. During the fourteen hundred years of its history, Islam has never been completely vanquished except in Spain. It has always remained present at least on emotional level in Muslim societies. Even in the Central Asian Muslim Republics of the U.S.S.R., Islam is being practised secretly in the form of a *Tariqah* of *Tasawwuf*. Communists appear to be conscious of this fact and have introduced a new concept, a hybrid of Islam and Communism, known as Islamic Socialism. This hybrid is meant to play upon the emotions of the Muslim masses and to serve the interests of Communism.

China's position is unique. It has no such constraints as are present in

the case of Russia and America. It has, therefore, comparatively a freer hand and more manoeuvrability in dealing with this new phenomenon. It would be simply interested in containing Russian influence in the Middle East and would welcome the emergence of a Muslim block if it serves that purpose.

The position of India is quite interesting. The vision of "Akhand Bharat" is a part of the Hindu psyche and in that perspective India would always wish the reunification of Pakistan into India. India has been a caste-ridden society during thousands of years of its history and would always be averse to Communism as such. With the Communist coup in Afghanistan, Communist expansion in South-East Asia, the Chinese menace from the north and growing Russian naval activity in the Indian Ocean, there is a growing realisation amongst the elite circles in India of the impending Communist threat to it from all sides. These elite circles have begun to consider Pakistan and Bangladesh as, buffer states between India and the Communist world. But, at the same time, India would not like the emergence of a Muslim block where-by the possibility of Pakistan reuniting with India disappears and the vision of "Akhand Bharat" is shattered for ever.

These are the constraints within which Pakistan has to formulate its long-term foreign policy. There are both positive and negative aspects. Wisdom lies in extracting maximum advantage from positive aspects, neutralising negative aspects by diplomacy and tact and avoiding or putting off irritants as far as possible.

There are clear signs that a third civilisation, that of Islam, is being born again to herald the dawn of Islam's fifteenth century. There are bound to be pangs and pains. The other two civilisations, Capitalist and Communist, will oppose or resist the new development. The Muslim countries are in a predicament. Both the Communist and Capitalist civilisations are advanced in science, technology, weaponry, warfare and management in all fields. The Muslim countries depend on them for acquiring skills in these fields. With mutual antagonism and opposition, the pangs and pains of the rebirth of Islamic civilisation will be much greater. On the one hand, it is in the interest of the Capitalist and Communist countries not to oppose the Islamic Renaissance. The tide of history cannot be stopped, but the antagonism will leave deep hatred and enmity between them and the Muslim world. After all, the Muslim countries comprise one-sixth of the population and one-fifth of the land mass of the world. On the other hand, it is in the interest of Muslim

countries to find a rapport with the Capitalist and Communist civilisations on the basis of common values in order to make the process of transfer of technology smooth and painless. All the three civilisations belong to different sections of mankind and there are bound to be some common human values underlying these civilisations. These common values can serve as bridges of mutual understanding. After all, it is in the interest of world peace and tranquillity that the three civilisations should find mutual accommodation. In this process, Pakistan occupies an important position and has to play a vital role. If it can meet the challenge of the modern age, reconstruct its society on Islam and move with tact and diplomacy in its external relations, it can serve as a bridge of understanding between the Islamic civilisation on the one hand and the Capitalist and Communist civilisations on the other hand. This will promote the cause of Islamic Renaissance.