

Changing World Order and Pakistan's Foreign Policy

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→ Introduction:

Henry Kissinger said, "Those who control food control the people, those who control energy control the continents and those who control currency control the world". America once controlled all three: the food, the energy and the economy. But, in the last one decade, its control over the world has gradually decreased. In the post-cold war era, US emerged as a sole superpower, owing to its strong military and even stronger economy. However, with the rise of China, US hegemony over the world is in danger. Not only China, the whole global south is emerging and evolving. India has beaten all odds and has become the fifth largest economy. Despite the strict sanctions of the west, Russia continues to thrive in Asia. The global community has started searching for an alternate currency. Once Dollar gets replaced by any other coin, US would lose the little leverage that he has. Countries are no longer making hostile decisions on the basis of geostrategic elements. Instead, geo-economics is the prevailing standard for international relations. It's time that Pakistan adapts a foreign policy according to the changing world order. Instead of becoming a part of any particular bloc, we should make independent decision. Sino-US trade war and India-US defense alliance

are the challenges that we are facing externally. However, our internal situation is also very bleak. Islamabad needs to address both internal and external issues efficiently. The world is changing, adapting new standards, norms and values. Balance of power is shifting. The tilt of power is towards the emerging economies. It's time that Pakistan adapts to the change and opts a long-sighted, independent and dynamic foreign policy.

Pakistan's foreign policy has not been consistent over the last 75 years. With the change in world politics, Islamabad also shifted its policies. But the issue is that the policies were short-sighted. There were either insufficient or counterproductive. The decision to align with Soviets earlier and then jumping shift to join the US bloc in the 90's reflects the lack of vision and neglect of national interest in policy making. Pakistan is isolated in the world today, on the account of its weak economy and unstable political situation. However, the world order is changing. If our eastern and northern neighbors can use it to their benefit, so can we. This is the time to align with the world and make a dynamic, flexible and independent foreign policy. In a future multipolar world, a multi-faceted foreign policy will be required.

The last one decade has seen

many changes in the world. One striking change is the rise of developing countries and declining US influence. There was once a time that the world bowed before America but that is now history. This was seen in BRICS 15th conference at Johannesburg, South Africa where the US-sanctioned Iran was welcomed into the emerging economic bloc with open arms. This act sent ripples of concern across Washington. US fully realizes that it is losing its grip on the world. To counter that, he is using the influence of Bretton Woods institution over developing countries. But the issue is the strength and the ability of developing economies to overcome the debt crisis that IMF and World Bank has created. As long as US has the leverage of debt, a new world order is an incomplete dream & a castle in the sky.

The world's attention is something to China, and no, it's not the money that China has 'given' them for development; it's the challenge that China has given to US. From a strategic ally to a number one rival, China's status has change in the White House. China owes this status and might to her economic development model. With 19 Trillion dollars, China is the second largest economy. Another rising economy is that of India. With Chandrayan 3's success, India has showed the world that it's not the old backward country that it has always been painted as by the west. Goldman Sachs has predicted

that India will become third largest economy in 2050. These changes are carving out a new order for the world. A world which will no longer be controlled by the west and their allies.

After the second world war ended in 1945, the largest multilateral organization was created as the United Nations. But with the passage of time, UN got dominated by the western order, especially US. However, since 1945, many other multilateral organizations have been created. For example SCO, ECO, OIC, BRICS, ASEAN, SAARC etc and many other such organizations came into being. They highlighted the issues of their own region at the global platform. Not only regional, non-regional alliances like G7 and BRICS have created a great impact in the world. Although there is concern that China as a member of these organization is using them to counter America and to become the next hegemon, but the other emerging countries will not tolerate this. Thus, it is not wrong to say that multilateral groups have significantly contributed in challenging US hegemony over the world.

A mark, A yen, A buck or a pound; money makes the world go round. The Chabaret musical words echo in the world today, as they rightfully predicted the world's working order. Dollar has

long dominated in the world as the single most strong currency. Even today, 80% of the world's trade is done in dollars. According to World Bank, 59% of the world's foreign reserves are in dollars. America has used dollar as a weapon in the past. The recent example was in the Russia-Ukraine war where US froze \$300B worth of Russian assets overseas. The world is looking for an alternate currency. Since India and Russia won't accept yuan, gold and rare earth metals are being considered as a source for a new currency. China and India combined have more than 40 percent of the world's gold reserves. If the emerging economies are successful in bringing a new currency, the world may become entirely multipolar.

While multipolarity is being discussed, Middle East cannot be kept out of equation. China brokered the Saudi-Iran reapprochement which sent shockwaves in the world especially in Pentagon. US, through its military, has controlled Middle East for the past three decades. US used Israel and the infamous Abraham accord to draw a wedge between Saudi and Iran. Its divide and rule policy has finally come to an end. The China took the credit for it. This will bring the much needed peace in Middle East. The place which has only seen chaos and crisis since 9/11. Not only China did US dirty, it has also created

a stronghold in the west Asia. This will further decrease US power and hold over the world. One other beneficiary of this friendship is Pakistan. For long, our foreign policy suffered to balance the two opposing countries. But now, Islamabad can opt an independent, multifaceted and direct foreign policy.

One thing similar in USA, Iran, China and Russia is that their democracy index is less than 2.5. [World's democracy index, Statistica.com, 2022].

However, their economies are strong and their infrastructure is great. The Western order has long been dominated by democratic principles. To the west, any country that is not lead by democratic leaders, is a failed country. In the year 2020, a joint statement was issued by Putin and Xi that emphasized on the resilience of the economies of non-democratic countries during Covid-19. It may not be the most important predictor of growth and prosperity, but it sure tells that "one shoe fits all" policy of US is not suitable for many countries.

Another unsuitable policy that the world now condemn is decision-making based on geostrategic factors. The prism of geostrategies was long used by countries in making international relations, but it has been replaced by geo economics.

India and China have exchanged gruesome fires on the Ladakh border, yet they continue to trade with each other. Even US and China, though economic rivals they may be, have a trade capital of billions of dollar. Despite being an ally of Ukraine, most of European countries could not boycott Russian products completely. This is an indication that the world is now changing, taking atleast some rational decisions.

Talking about rational decisions, its time that Pakistan starts making them too. We have alienated ourselves from the world due to our heedless policies. This land of pure is facing unprecedented challenges today. From economy to politics and security, we seem to be at loss everywhere. Just last year, the country was at the brink of default. Our reserves had fallen below three billion dollars. Only if the IMF had not patched up the finances, Pakistan would have been in an unimaginable disaster. And nobody wants to be a friend of adversity. Even Pakistan's all weather friends like USA and China showed hesitance to give aid until the IMF gave them a green signal. In 2021, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave an official statement that they are shifting the policy from geostrategy to geo-economics. But the buzzword alone

cannot import geopolitics, it's something that has to build intrinsically through a strong economic foundation.

Another pressing issue and challenge that we are facing is increasing US influence in our neighbors. This is bad not only in the wake of changing world order, but also in the perspective of US lost interest in Pakistan. Since US exit from Afghanistan, Pakistan has lost its strategic relevance for America. Instead, Washington has deepened its ties with our hostile neighbour, India. The defence partnership between India and US is of great concern for Pakistan. Indian increasing influence in the Indian ocean is fully backed by the US. India is trying hard to get F-16 technology from US, something that has give Pakistan an force an edge over Indian Air force. Islamabad has to look for options to counter the Indo-US alliance which is becoming a threat for national integrity.

Though China has been an all weather friend of Pakistan, it has its own motives. The sino-US trade volume is in billions of dollars. Though, US and China are rivals, US virtual presence in north is a matter

of growing concern. Pakistan's state relations with US have become such a grave challenge for designing the foreign policy.

The Afghanistan situation is no where in control. According to United Nations Security Council report, there are more than twenty terrorist organisations working in Afghanistan. US army officials' testimony in front of the congress says that the US Army left 7 Bn worth of weapons in Afghanistan. A lot of militant organisations have taken over those weapons, which according to UNSC, are as lethal and advanced as the 'NATO' weapons. This is a horrible situation. With the Taliban's temporary ceasefire in November 2022 and the rise of militancy across the border, Pakistan is once again facing the challenge of terrorism. The world has not yet acknowledged Afghanistan. But, it is also not doing anything to curb the menace of cross border terrorism. Pakistan has always advocated for an "Afghan led Afghan solution" but it has to be done in a way that doesn't harm Pakistan.

In the wake of all these issues and the changing world order, Pakistan needs to address its foreign policy. In the book, How Asia Works, Joe Studwell says that good policies that remain unchanged

eventually turn into bad ones. This is the case with Pakistan. We have not adapted to the change yet. But, it's possible for us to adapt to the change in the changing scenario of, world order. Pakistan's exports and imports are limited to certain countries only. US is the largest export market of Pakistan. If Pakistan utilises its resources effectively and rejuvenates its industry, it can turn its economy around by doing trade with so many other countries.

Pakistan's strongest ally currently is China. With CPEC as the flagship project of BRI, China has invested \$60 Bn in Pakistan. In July 2023, CPEC completed ten years of its inception. Despite China's massive investment in energy, infrastructure and agriculture, much improvement has not been seen in economy and people's overall standard of living.

In a nutshell, Pakistan has a lot of options and opportunities in the changing world order. But as Benjamin Essex said, "It's not what you have but what you do with what you have", Pakistan has to improve the economy, infrastructure and security. First to take advantage of the changing world order. Nothing in the world is permanent, especially power. It revolves and flows, and it flows to the strongest. But when there are many strong and equal shareholders,

Power gets dissipated. In the world today, power does not belong to one entity. Its tilt may be towards the old kings, but new kings and queens are snatching this power for themselves. The benefit is that one does not have to side with one king. Pakistan does not have to become the member of one bloc or other. Rather, it should balance its relations with all nations. We live in a hostile neighborhood. Security issues with Afghanistan, state relations with Moscow, hostility from India and one sided partnership with China, all this points a bleak picture of foreign policy. But, there is hope. As Anatol Lieven says in his book "Pakistan, a Hard Country", "Despite all this, it exists". Anatol believes that the strength and resilience of Pakistanis are their best chance for survival. We should show the strength and resilience in our policies as well and it will surely make Pakistan the state that Quaid dreamed of. As Farhat said:

(Stay beside the tree, and hope for spring)