

The favorability of Biden's Presidency for Pakistan

The establishment of democratic relations with US within three months of Pakistan gaining independence was an important determinant of Pakistan's status in the global political scenario. The bilateral ties that consisted of, Pakistan benefitting in the form of economic and military aid, foreign direct investment, funds from international organizations and US navigating through the cold-war and South-Asian politics through Pakistan, have played an integral part in defining Pakistan's economic and political climate. The dynamic shared by the two countries has remained considerable volatile in the last few decades. Currently, world news is dominated by US elections, which resulted in Biden becoming the 46th US president after four days of disagreement over rigging. Even though there is a global consensus on the importance of the outcome in shaping most country's ties with the US, the implications for Pakistan are somewhat uncertain. Will the Democrat candidate's presidency benefit Pakistan or was Trump better?

Since 1948 to 2020, both the Democrats and Republicans have been in power for 33 and 39 years respectively but neither party seems to particularly favor Pakistan. The analysis of foreign aid, meetings between leaders, supporting the respective country's stances and alliance in political scenarios show that Pakistan's ties with the US seem to be independent of the party in power. Like every country's foreign policy, US has always adopted a need-based approach towards its relationship with Pakistan. Regardless of the parties in power, US foreign policy has always let the political climate and requirements determine their ties with other states, including Pakistan.

When Pakistan came into being, US President Harry S. Truman, a Democrat, was in power battling with the challenges of the Cold War. Whereas, Pakistan was a newly created state in which the political entities' views were not completely aligned with communism or being pro-America. However, they realized the growing need of democratic ties with either USSR or USA in order to gain protection from India in the form of aid, arms and ammunition. Since India had already been benefitting from USSR's military aid, economic aid and political support, Pakistan's initial efforts of being an ally to both the superpowers went in vain since the Soviet Union did not support Pakistan to the degree it was supporting its neighbor. Hence, Pakistan's only feasible option for democratic ties and the requirement of US to gain control in South Asia to reduce pro-communist states led to the beginning of strong ties between the two states. The 23-day state visit by then PM Liaquat Ali Khan set the foundation of US-Pakistan relations based on mutual interest. Beginning with economic aid, the following years saw an escalation in defense ties with the 1954 mutual defense treaty and establishment of U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group in Pakistan.

Even after the assassination of PM Khan and Dwight D. Eisenhower, a Republican, gaining power, US and Pakistan maintained a steady dynamic with increasing alliances. Other than the visits of superior Pakistani officials and Suhrawardy, Pakistan's PM at the time, US was granted permission to use Peshawar Air Station to carry out its surveillance operations. Moreover, Pakistan was the only South-Asian country to become a part of SEATO and CENTO and later, when Ayub Khan became PM through Mirza's martial law, US seemed convinced that the military's dominance in the governance of Pakistan seemed favorable for them. During the Republican's power Pakistan received immense military and economic aid; \$7,921 million and \$3,130 million respectively. Regardless of the U-2 incident in 1960, Pakistan remained a prominent benefactor due to the looming threat of the Soviet Union's dominance in South Asia.

After that, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, both Democrats, gained the US presidency respectively. They continued an almost identical foreign policy to Eisenhower's, favoring Pakistan through aid. However, US wanted the major influence in South Asia which led to them talking in favor of India post the Sino-Indian

Border Conflict which did not bode well with Pakistan. Meanwhile internal tensions between West Pakistan and East Pakistan escalated due to the disparity of economic development efforts, and the 1965 war initiated by Pakistan caused the first major rift in US-Pakistan relations. Pakistan expected diplomatic support and further aid from US, but it remained neutral. Johnson's aim to reduce tensions in the region and gain support of both the countries, India and Pakistan, led to this stance which caused Pakistan to get closer to China. The arm's sanctions by US further broadened the divide and US was asked to close some of its military bases in Pakistan even though a substantial amount of military and economic aid was given to Pakistan during the rule of both the Democrats.

Consequently, Richard R. Nixon, a Republican came into power and the Indo-Pak war in 1971 led to some important developments. Yahya Khan was initially warned by Nixon not to escalate war in the region but that remained ineffective. However, when India supported the dismembering of East Pakistan and Pakistani troops were failing in West Pakistan, US involved itself heavily by warning India through deploying Task Force 74 at the Bay of Bengal and sending the CVN-65 (now known as USS Enterprise) to the Indian Ocean as a warning to India. Nixon continued to have good relations with Pakistan even during the left-wing Bhutto's reign due to his personal affiliation with him. However, during the next Republican president's (Gerald Ford) tenure, Pakistan's nuclear program proved to be detrimental to its ties with US due to the refusal of Bhutto to stop the nuclear program. US convinced France to cancel the deal with Pakistan for providing required material, increasing resentment and Zia's coup led to further shrinkage in economic aid.

James Carter's tenure is of extreme significance since the Democrat leader's foreign policy towards Pakistan was poles apart during his own terrain. The initial extremely strained stance due to Bhutto's nuclear power initiatives took a 180-degree shift when the Soviet Union crossed Afghan borders. The 1979 Symington Amendment cutting all economic and military aid by the US became ineffective as the Carter Doctrine was issued which led to a multi-million dollar program being run by the intelligence agencies of US and Pakistan to dismantle the Soviet Union within Afghan borders. Pakistan was provided economic aid of around \$634 million*, arms and ammunition during Carter's presidency to enable anti-Soviet fighters in Afghanistan. The aid increased in the Republican Presidency of Ronald Reagan due to his strong anti-communist views and proactive support of anti-Soviet and anti-communist entities in the land-locked Afghanistan. Pakistan was given around \$500 million* aid per annum throughout the decade of 1980s, which had been almost negligible in the previous decade.

However, the Presidency of Bush H. W. Bush (also a Republican) had the complete opposite narrative since the lost interest because of the withdrawal of Soviet powers from Afghanistan in 1989. The importance of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 resurfaced and hence the Pressler amendment was imposed. The separation was economically and politically destructive for Pakistan since US aid diminished considerably and political unrest within the country started to rise. The policy continued under the Democrat William J. Clinton's presidency in which military and economic aid was considerably small and there was heated criticism of the country over the development of nuclear power. The Chaghai-I and Chaghai-II nuclear tests supplemented USA's disapproval with Musharraf's coup adding to the damage.

Republican George W. Bush's presidency (2002-08) saw another turn in US-Pakistan ties since the war against terrorism narrative sprung from the 9/11 incident. Once again, Pakistan became a front-line ally of the US against the war on terror in Afghanistan providing military bases, manpower, logistic assistance and gaining

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relief and aid. The stark difference in the policies of Bush Jr. and his father can be clearly observed but the following Democrat's Presidency (Barack Obama) had a somewhat similar approach to Bush Jr. Economic and military aid was provided, democratic ties were strengthened, and a general positive opinion of Pakistan persisted in the beginning due to the US interest of defeating Al-Qaeda. However, the year of 2011 proved to be tumultuous with the Raymond Davis incident, death of Osama Bin Laden and the Salala incident with which the US-Pakistan ties weakened significantly. The following years consisted of accusations of misusing funds provided for war against terror, Pakistan supporting militants and harboring terrorists.

Although Donald J. Trump's administration might seem favorable for Pakistan, but the new Afghan Policy was an extension of Obama's views of Pakistan facilitating terrorism by harboring terrorists. Moreover, the IMF's austerity program's stringent measures further indicate the unfavorable position of Pakistan in the eyes of US during Trump's tenure. It is also important to note that the unilateral approach of the Trump administration and the lack of interest in foreign relations in general, may have helped Pakistan in the form of no interference, but Pakistan suffered immensely on the front of fighting against India's violation of Human rights and declaration of Kashmir as their own territory. On the other hand, Joe Biden has acknowledged the Kashmir issue and stated that he would address the violation of Human rights once he is in power. Moreover, analysts believe Biden's presidency would be more suitable and efficient in retrieving troops from Afghanistan in an orderly manner without causing further turmoil in the region.

Having said that, Pakistan needs to actively devise a foreign policy that provides a basis of mutual benefits for strong diplomatic ties. The country cannot expect to be aided and supported without a somewhat equal return of the benefits or otherwise being exploited and used for the agendas of respective states. Currently, India, Pakistan's neighbor with a GDP growth of 4.2% and third in-line to become the superpower is actively lobbying support whereas Pakistan with a GDP growth of 0.4% refuses to even work on the BRI extension of CPEC projects that could increase its geo-strategic position. This leads to the question whether either party winning the presidency matters, if Pakistan is unwilling to support itself.