




## THE ROLE OF SMALL STATES IN LARGE STATES' FOREIGN POLICY: ANALYSIS OF PAKISTAN-U. S RELATIONS

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### **Abstract**

*The paper analyses the importance of state states in the affairs of bigger states in the context of foreign policy persuasion. In this context the paper examines the relations between Pakistan which is seen as small state in its relations with the United States of America, which is a big state. It reviewed a number of literatures on small states in large states' foreign policy persuasion and found that some small states are very crucial and are key influencers of big states foreign policy directions. The paper found Pakistan a key ally of USA in military and security sense and in the war of terror. Despite some issues of distrust between Pakistan and USA including the killing of some terrorists in Pakistan, the USA seems unlikely to abandon the small state of Pakistan due to its strategic location (geopolitics). Thus, some small states matter so much in foreign policy persuasion.*

### **Introduction and Contextual Justification of Pakistan as a Small State**

This paper sets out to critically analyze the strategic role of Small States in terms of their influence on the foreign and security policies of larger and powerful states. Particularly, it focuses on the characteristic implications of the geopolitical advantage of Pakistan – acting as a small state, and how it influences U.S security and foreign policy objectives in the South Asia within the context of their mutual diplomatic relations. In traditional and conservative international relations circles, Pakistan would naturally not be considered a small state on the basis of consensus in literature. However, this paper considers the political dynamics of Pakistan, together with its place within the international system, and concludes for the purpose of this review that, Pakistan is fit for consideration as small state on the factual basis of its characteristics of openness, weakness and fragility. Further to this justification lies the advantage of the position of the Commonwealth Advisory Group Report (2012) who asserts that, a “Small State is any state characterized by openness, insularity, weakness and often



dependence which largely become classified as important factors influencing the state's engagement in the International System". On the basis of the above, this paper views the relationship as one of a small state in the nature of Pakistan, in a foreign policy relationship with U.S; a super power and arguably, a nation state with leading hegemonic prowess.

Keohane and Jean (1992) asserts "that small states cannot individually or collectively affect the international system significantly, hence they world mostly adjust their foreign politics according to the policies and strategies of the international system". Much as this reflects the objective reality of the operations within the international stage, it is critical to accept that the practical importance and, in some cases, the strategic exploits of these larger states are dictated by the influence of some small states on the basis of their location and geopolitical relevance.

As a matter of fact, citizens of small states hold same rights, hopes and aspirations of those in larger states (Fazal and Griffiths, 2014). Hence, under such circumstance where larger states must depend on small states' geopolitical and other advantages to explore their foreign and security policy objectives, the relationship diminishes into a symbiotic mutual benefit in which case smaller states then turn to exert enormous strategic influence (Armstrong and Reed, 2000), in terms of the drivers of the foreign policy interest of the larger state, and would significantly subtly dictate some pace in the nature and architecture within which the larger state must draft its foreign and security policies.

Generally speaking, some of the role small states plays in large states foreign policies include the fact that they are able to reduce the power asymmetry and decrease the transactional cost of diplomacy. They are also able to impose constraints on larger states due to their ability to leverage on statehood to advocate and uphold rule of international law, promote the operations of the United Nations, as well as give a boost to the importance of cooperation in all spheres of the international system. More specifically, larger and powerful states on the other hand are happy and compelled by share interest to seek support and cooperation of states they are bigger than, for the purposes of taking advantage of vital resources such as oil and minerals. Also, these states may be strategic territories from where the larger and powerful states could launch both weapons and troops, as well as use same as spy locations, while legitimizing their economic, security or military aspirations from such so-called smaller states (Lake, 2009).

### **Central Argument**

It is therefore against this background that the U.S, for several strategic interest to its security and foreign policy objectives, considered Pakistan as a strategic geopolitical ally with whom it maintained a historic diplomatic cooperation for decades. America have undoubtedly considered Pakistan, a state smaller both economically and militarily, as a strategically advantageous grounds from where its foreign policy interest in South Asia can be advanced (Kroonstad, 2011). Also, the interest of the U.S in exploring and expanding its interest in India as strategic partner to rival the growth of China as an emerging super power constitutes another basis for their interest in Pakistan. Most importantly, the choice of Pakistan by the U.S is largely predicated on the former's strategic advantage for the latter



to be able to advance its interest in fighting regional and global terrorism especially in the wake of the 9/11 Osama Bin Laden terrorist attack on the U.S (Tallis, 2010), as well as the happening in the Afghan region. These developments compel the U.S to tilt its interest in Pakistan, thus, granting Pakistan the overall leverage to be in a position to influence U.S foreign and security policy over the past few decades in many ways that exemplifies the role a small state may play in influencing foreign policy dynamics of larger states.

The next section, therefore walk us through the corpus of knowledge that, for the purpose of the central objective of this paper, argues the practical ways and factual basis that grants Pakistan the ability to influence U.S foreign and security policy objectives in significant and effective ways, and even to its economic and security benefit as a state:

### **Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) / War on Terror**

At the highest stage of its security and foreign policy efforts since the 9/11 attacks, the U.S adopted the war on terror as the biggest international military campaign against any form of terrorism and in particular, extremist groups across the Muslim world. According to Kroonstad (2011), fundamental to its objectives was the need to track down such notoriously prominent groups as al-Qaeda and its Taliban allies, as well as their associated franchise organizations that had caused the 9/11 U.S attacks, and have continued to destabilize peace and harmony in strategic areas in South Asia such as Kasmir, and more pervasively in Afghanistan. In this strand of the analysis, central to the foreign policy dynamics of the U.S is their very ability to take an opportunistic capitalization of the strategic location of Pakistan to enable them advance their operations towards combating terrorism. The important factor here is that Pakistan's advantage in the scheme of affairs is its geography (Zhang, 2003). Here, the U.S is compelled to established joint military operations with the Pakistan military as well a joint intelligence system in alliance with the ISI in order to advance strategic tracking on acts of terror and activities of Taliban and al-Qaeda happening around the Pakistan – Afghan border area.

In order to use Pakistan and its geopolitical advantage as leverage for these operational purposes, the U.S, its Foreign Policy Makers and Quasi-Governmental Institutions then come under compulsory diplomatic obligation to extend gestures at Pakistan in order to have their fullest impartial cooperation in order to meet this strategic foreign policy objective (Council on Foreign Relations Report, 2021). In so doing, Pakistan is placed in a position of strength to make demands, extend conditions to the U.S and its foreign policy makers as part of their conditions for such cooperation.

It is in this domain that Pakistan have been able to for instance, influence the U.S against a full-scale diplomatic alliance with its bitterest rival of India. Also, by dint of this solidarity, Pakistan have been able to over time, consolidate rapid gain of American's regard for Pakistan's military, its concern for the economic and social development as well as impoverished status both in infrastructure and citizens wellbeing, and to ultimately maximize the potentials of America's desire to be on good terms with a major, diplomatically active Muslim nation in the nature of Pakistan (Kroonstad, 2009).



All of the above do not only trend towards al-Qaeda and Taliban raid, but have tremendously made Pakistan's internal security as well as threat from its enemies a major policy objective for America, hence, leading to massive economic, non-military and military aid to Pakistan to particularly help combat militants whose radicalism have led to loss of lives of civilians and vulnerable groups. For instance, Schaffer et al (2011) posited that, in return for their support, Pakistan had sanctions previously placed on them lifted, and has received an amount of \$10 billion in U.S. aid since 2001, primarily military. Subsequently in June 2004, President George W. Bush designated Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally, making it eligible, among other things, to purchase advanced American military technology. Also, the Obama Administration in 2009 had congressional approval to advance a \$150 billion in equal trenches over a period of 10 years in non-military alone to Pakistan to enable the new Zardari Government to effectively remobilize towards social rehabilitation of key civil institutions, as well as strengthen up an internal aid program to enable them strengthen even the local economy and not the military (Armstrong and Reed, 2000). Considering all of the above, it is without doubt that Pakistan as a small state relative to the status of U.S. have influenced not only the foreign policy America, but its security policy as well.

### **Nuclear Capability and Proliferation**

Another area of critical foreign and security policy between Pakistan and the U.S in which Pakistan have greatly impacted on the foreign and security policy direction of the U.S is in the area of weapons and nuclear proliferation. Historically, Pakistan have since 1955 established itself in atomic power to deal with electricity and energy crisis through partnership and research support from the U.S which had invested about \$350,000, and also helped establish PINSTEC – a national Institute of Nuclear Research (Lake, 2009). However, in 1974, the diplomatic relations between the two countries would be marred as the new Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Democratic Socialist Government took a radical turn to venture into the convention of their atomic infrastructure into the construction of Nuclear Weapon in its quest to strive for National Security and Survival as indicated by (ISI Press, 1974). This obviously constituted a threat to the security of the U.S, compelling then to lay several sanctions including embargo on Pakistan.

In spite of the obvious difficulty of Pakistan in the face of critical threats from America, Pakistan nonetheless insisted that the maintenance of its Nuclear Power Program was part of its convoluted arsenal for Strategic Deterrence in the wake of turbulence in its relationship with India over Kashmir. Here, the rise in Nuclear Capability of Pakistan, exerted monumental influence in the direction of U.S foreign and security policy much as the latter is a bigger state (Umbreen and Qamar, 2012). In addition to various congressional resolutions by U.S, a major milestone in foreign relation dynamics between the U.S and Pakistan was the formation an intergovernmental dialogue on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Security in 1998 (Congressional Report, 1999).

Under this framework, Pakistan maintained that Nuclear Power and Atomic Deterrence against possible aggression especially from India or Afghanistan, and their allied terrorist groups was a compulsion and not a choice, the U.S was compelled to shift its policy of imposing sanctions and



embargo into advancing a proposal in the nature of “Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty” as part of its core internal security strategy, as well as a foreign security policy towards other countries and Pakistan in particular (Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry Report, 1998).

Again, a second most crucial influence the position of Pakistan effected on US security policy was explicit, when the U.S was then again brought under compulsory persuasion to form a strategic partnership in what resulted into the Congressional adoption of what eventually became the “Pakistan – U.S Security, Strategic, Stability and Non-Proliferation (SSS & NP) Working Group” in Islamabad. In this framework, Pakistan still maintained its position of need to wield nuclear deterrence, but under the Policy of Deliberate Ambiguity where they would instead refrain from embarking on any testing of their Nuclear Weapons so as to assure U.S of Pakistan’s commitment to endeavor not to threaten the safety of America in any way in terms of security. The above consensus became necessary when India, according to Thorhallsson (2012) hinted that Pakistan had moved its “Nuclear Doctrine from Minimum Deterrence to Second Strike Capability and expanded its arsenal to include tactical weapons that can be delivered by short-range missiles like the Hatf-IX” – a development that compelled the U.S to act with all necessary efforts and diplomacy.

### **The Peaceful Space Technology Cooperation and Weapon**

Essentially, the 1979 peaceful space technology cooperation between Pakistan and the U.S presents another dimension of foreign policy relation in which Pakistan impacted a huge influence in the foreign policy objectives and directions for the U.S and its Foreign Policy Makers. The U.S. commenced cooperation with Pakistan in peaceful space technology after establishing the Sonmiani Terminal in 1961, constructing an airfield and launch pad. In 1962, the Space Research Commission launched the first solid-fuel rocket, Rehbar-I which was built with close interaction with funding from the U.S. and under technical support from NASA. The launching of such rocket made Pakistan the first South Asian country as well as the tenth country globally to carrying out the launch of the rocket (Schaffer et al, 2011). By 1972, an approximate number of 200 rockets were fired from the Sonmiani, which would later result in developments that waned the cooperation.

In the 1990s, U.S. together with the Missile Technology Control Regime imposed restrictions on Pakistan's Space Program owing to fear that Pakistan and its government is alleged of covert development of missile programs using space technology. In the early 2000s (Council on Foreign Relation Report, 2002), U.S. tightened its embargo and construction on Pakistan's space development, putting restrictions and sanctions on premier astronautics research department, DESTO (Schaffer et al, 2011). The rapid expansion in space and missile technology presented as a threat to the U.S, hence its initial foreign and security policy measure to had partnered with them in the sense of solidarity. However, due to lack of trust, America changed its foreign and diplomatic policy direction into compelling Pakistan to decommission all its missile and weapon exploits – a position rejected by Pakistan, hence attracting the various sanctions as indicated.

Again, the increase in terrorist activities and militant organizations operating around the geopolitical space of Pakistan, coupled with its Nuclear Capability, attracted widespread condemnation from



western media and diplomats (Kroonstad, 2009). In one of such instances, America described Pakistan as a failed state in the words that; “nuclear proliferation and the threat of the “Islamic Bomb”, long periods of military rule with short stints of democracy, deeply religious and intolerant society spouting rhetoric that is anti-West in general and anti-America in particular and vis-à-vis religious and ethnic minorities, genesis of the Taliban and a society seen as deeply sympathetic to the rallying banner of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, a ‘failed or failing’ State/failed to stabilize, the Kargil incursion” (Washington Press, 2013). However, from this twist, US foreign and security policy dynamics change immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attack on America. The Whitehouse begun to reconcile their diplomatic accord with Pakistan, and the Bush Administration, not only lifting the various sanctions, but had also declared Pakistan as a major non – NATO ally. America had also immediately advanced in excess of \$78.3 billion in weapon and military aid to Pakistan (Congressional Report), as a test towards America’s declaration of the War on Terror, and to also leverage on Pakistan’s influence in the search for Osama Bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban. Pakistan then had the opportunity to also influence the foreign policy of U.S in their interest in Afghanistan.

### **US – Pakistan Economic Alliance**

Apart from the fact that Pakistan’s proximity to the southern reaches of the Soviet Union led Washington in the 1950s and early 1960s to enlist it in American-led Cold War alliances designed to contain potential Communist aggression, coupled with proximity to Afghanistan which made Pakistan a vital player in the 1980s when the U.S. sought to frustrate Soviet efforts to consolidate its military occupation of that Islamic neighbor (Thorhallsson, 2012), the U.S also remains the leading export destination for Pakistan, hence constituting a major trade and economic alliance (Lake, 2012) with critical foreign policy implications, and a revelation of the strategic influence Pakistan is able to exert on U.S foreign and Security policy by dint of such alliance especially also in the area of logistics and transport. More importantly, following the geopolitical advantage of Pakistan, the U.S uses it as major transport route to enable it transport logistics and food items to its troops operating in Afghanistan and the Pakistan – Afghan border (Umbreen and Qamar, 2012). Due to this geopolitical advantage, U.S has compromised itself into maintaining not just adequate support to Pakistan’s army in the form of military aid, but has abundantly granted economic aid to support social growth in Pakistan. In the past decade, the U.S have extended over \$426 billion in economic aid to Pakistan (Lake, 2009), and also doubles as the largest trade partner in Foreign Direct Investment to Pakistan.

### **Conclusion**

Conclusively, despite skirmishes in their relationship on basis of lack of trust for Pakistan upon the identification and killing of Osama Bin Laden in Islamabad, coupled with U.S accusation that Pakistan is a safe haven for terrorist and host of Taliban enemies to U.S, the U.S is still compelled to hold tight to Pakistan as a major partner in its foreign policy efforts in South Asia largely due to its strategic geopolitical place. The U.S simply cannot do without Pakistan. this emphasizes that, the size and capacity of Pakistan relative to U.S, both in military and economic sense doesn’t matter, and truly reveals that, Pakistan influences the foreign and security policies of the U.S significantly within the context of their relationship – this goes to buttress the fact that smaller states are indeed capable of



influencing the foreign and security policies of larger states in contemporary developments within the International System.



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