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**Pakistan's Foreign Policy towards the Arab–Israel Conflict: A Historical Overview  
 (1947–Present)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Foreign policy of Pakistan when it comes to the Arab-Israel conflict is rooted in history and it goes back to the formation of Pakistan in 1947. In the first part of the twentieth century, Muslim politics in the Indian subcontinent especially the All-India Muslim League (AIML) greatly resisted the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine after the Balfour Declaration of 1917. Muslim leaders considered Palestine as a holy land and Muslims and their leaders were worried about political and religious overtones of Zionist ambitions. The Muslim League always advocated the view of the Arabs and condemned the British policies that were seen to encourage formation of Israel. High-profile leaders such as Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and other Muslim leaders, highlighted the unity with the Arab world and the Palestine issue was discussed as the question of Muslim unity and religious duty. Interestingly, the position of the Arabs was also supported by many Indian political figures such as Mahatma Gandhi who also reflected the rest of the consensus in the subcontinent during that period. Premature involvements of the Zionist representatives and leaders in the Indian subcontinent had tried to manipulate the masses with little success since there was still a sense of pro-Arabism. Historical developments played a major role in the foreign policy of Pakistan, and the foreign policy has been very active in supporting self-determination of Palestinians and opposing Israeli rule in Palestinian lands.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan Foreign Policy, Arab–Israel Conflict, Palestine Issue, Balfour Declaration, All India Muslim League, Zionism

**Introduction**

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After the Balfour declaration of 1917 when Lord Balfour declared that England will support any idea of homeland for Jews across the world. All India Muslim League which was busy in its own struggle for a separate homeland for Muslims of Subcontinent showed it deep concerns over the issues of protection and security of holy land of Muslims and especially people of Palestine. (Pakistan T. F., 1969)

Even Indian Leaders like Ghandi also supported the Arabs on their stance. There was no difference in the opinions of Hindus and Muslims over Palestine Issue. Because AIML was a Muslim majority party, their support for Palestine was purely based on Islamic principles. Infact even Muhammad Ali Jinnah followed the Islamic positions regarding existence of a Jewish

homeland. Palestine includes the most sacred places of Muslims so non-Muslims cannot hold authority over Muslim land. Muslim leadership rejected the Balfour declaration. (Pirzada, 1937) AIML clearly presented their position that any sort of pro-Israel stance of Britain would be considered as against the Muslims of subcontinent. British will be considered as the foe of Muslim Ummah. In case British government support the idea of establishment of a Jewish state on the holy land of Muslims. (Pirzada, 1937)

Language and speeches against Israel were gone on air regularly in meetings and discussions of AIML. This unconditional support for Palestine, gave interest to the Israeli leadership in subcontinent. Contacts were made between Israel and Indian subcontinent to achieve mutual understanding and good relations.

Even mufti of Palestine contacted to Indian Muslims, because joint action can be more useful for the benefit for the Arab Muslims. British officials working in India gave their strong remarks in against Israel just because they afraid of worse reactions of Indian Muslims. (Stein, 1961)

Muslim policies were such a hostile on Palestine problem. This issue was included in minute of meetings and supreme agenda of AIML. Even due to aggressive approach of Muslim League, congress party was also directed to modify their stance on the favor of Arabs and against Israel. Indian involvement in the conflicts of Arab-Israel was harmful for the ambitions of Jewish community. This denial of Indian subcontinent even could affect the commitments of Britain to the Balfour declaration of 1917. Mufti of Palestine presented the issue in India like a sudden problem on Islam. That was the main reason behind the early contacts of Zionists to the leadership of India. But these contacts were largely unsuccessful because of congress's favour to Arabs. (Shimoni, 1977)

For example, the Jewish leader Weizmann and Muslim leader Shaukat Ali met in early 1930's, the very first known meeting between Jewish leaders and subcontinent. It was merely a tactic to change the mind of Indian people and their sympathies toward Palestine.

### **The division Scheme for Palestine**

When UN hold a discussion on the question of the hope of Palestine, it was a major break in the foreign policy formation of Pakistan as a newly emerged state, Pakistan could speak and formulate its foreign policy according to its own agenda. UN meeting came soon after the separation of India and Pakistan in 1947. As a newly admitted to the members of UN, Pakistan had the opportunity to speak about the future of Palestine and freely express its own views regarding problem.

But even after long meetings and discussions, UN General Assembly was failed to achieve any success on Palestine Problem. No unanimous decision came on this issue. Seven countries voted for the establishment of Israel in the committee while three countries voted for the Palestine where sufficient rights would be given to the Jews. UN forms another committee to find out the various options on this issue. (Khalidi, From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948, 1971)

Pakistan was elected as a member and head of the committee have the back of Muslim countries. Sir Zafarullah was the chairperson of that committee. He had the point of view that UN has no legal and judicial authority to distribute the land of Palestine. He actively participated and head those countries who were against the partition of Palestine and when his efforts where failed, he expressed that the size and area of future Jewish state should be very small.

On occasion of voting in United Nations, Zafarullah said that the area should be divided on population bases, that where the Muslims are in majority, land should be given to Muslims and where Jews are living that land should go to Jews. Inflect 60% land possessed by Arabs and reaming 40% to Jews.

Ex foreign minister of Pakistan was the strongest challenger of Arab-Israel Separation. Even an Israeli diplomat accepted that he was unquestionably the most intelligent and inspiring official there from any state of the world. Even always comparisons were made between Pakistan and Israel. Because both states were coming into being on the basis of religion so morally Pakistan have no solid grounds to oppose the partition plan of Palestine. Both states are ideological states. But Zafarullah Khan strongly denied the any similarities between Pakistan and Israel on the following bases:

1. The Muslim inhabitants of Subcontinent were 8 crores, 100% more than total population of Zionist in the world. The imbalance between both states was outstanding.
2. Partition of subcontinent included the willingness of both Hindu and Muslims but in case of Israel, Palestine was not ready to divide its land. But in case if they agreed Pakistan could easily recognize Israel.
3. Indian Muslims were important part of Indian subcontinent but on the other hand Jews were a minority in Palestine.
4. Muslims only demanded the areas where they were greater in population but in case of Zionists they were less in numbers. Jaffa was the only district where they were in majority. (Burke, 1973)

Even it's clearly mentioned in the charter of UN that an ethnic or cultural group, that came into being through mass migration or cause can be many others, cannot have rights to disturb the existing structure of the country or against the will of the people of the country. No minority can disturb the geographical, cultural, economic and political harmony of other nation. (Fraser, 1984) Ex foreign minister ignored some facts that were even more important. There was huge distance between East and West Pakistan. The land distribution in case of India was acceptable only because it was from a non-Muslim population. It's wrong in case of Palestine because a non-Muslim state was created in the land of Muslims. Huge inhabitants still chose to live in India rather than Pakistan.

Someone argued that:

The only solution to the problems of Muslims in Subcontinent was division; this sentence made it abhorrence to Muslims across the borders (Burke, 1973)

There are a lot of denials in the attitudes of Muslim leader in Pakistan; they are arguing about the rights of Muslim minorities every corner of the world. But they are denying the similar rights to the Israeli people. Pakistan opted to vote out in every platform against Israel whether it was about the membership of Israel or even Partition of Palestine (Kumaraswamy, 1995).

When Israel was formed, it officially asked Pakistan's approval but the request was not properly answered by Pakistani authorities. Pakistan was strongest opponent of Israel and denies establishing any relations with Jewish state. Pakistan's policy is pro-Palestine and anti-Israel.

#### **Foreign Policy of Pakistan toward Arab and Israel conflict**

Pakistan is unconditionally attached for the cause of Palestine and on several occasions showed its deep loyalties to the people of Palestine. In various circumstances Pakistan went forward for the people of Palestine. For example, the day when UN agreed to established a Jewish state in November 29, 1947, Palestine day and Palestine Movement in 1987.

Palestine holds the important place in the foreign policy of Pakistan and Pakistani politicians showed their loyal and gracious support to the people of Palestine and their exclusive right on their land. Palestine has right to rule over its own territory.

Pakistan has very complicated stance over Arab-Israel Issues. Sometime there comes a difference of opinion in Public and Political statements of Pakistan. Infect many Pakistan leaders showed

their positive approach toward Israel. Pakistan and Israel took similar stance on various issues regarding Middle Eastern problems.

#### Better Relations with Arabs

Pakistan's foreign policy is pro west in the beginning of its time line, especially with America. But soon the hopes were over that belongs to SEATO and CENTO, the west oriented defense pacts. Then in the regime of Bhutto the major policy shift came in the policy lines of Pakistan, Pakistan's policy and good will gesture shifted toward enlighten and modern Arabs. Pakistan shifted to pro west to pro-Arab gradually. SEATO and CENTO were defense pacts that claims west will gave help in case of any hostility against Pakistan but it never happened. Pakistan was alone in the battle against India that shifted Pakistan's interest from west to Arab.

Following are the main reasons behind that policy shift towards Arabs:

1. To acquire help against India
2. Wish to establish trade and industrial relationships, for example, bring in inexpensive lubricate, make sure that money is coming from the Middle Eastern countries where mostly Pakistani were working.
3. To establish markets for Pakistan goods
4. Western alliance in case of Russian aggression
5. Muslim harmony across the world
6. To overcome the Iran's influence in the country

In the 70's the armed collaboration enhanced among Middle Eastern countries and Pakistan. Many Pakistani army officials worked in militaries of Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. Also look after the arms and ammunition imported or purchased from America.

Even a Pakistan's observer said that during Arab-Israel conflicts, pilots from Pakistan served in the Arab armies against Israel. In 1980 many Pakistani soldiers were caught by Israeli army during a conflict with Palestine army. (Hussain M., 1988)

Pakistan is the closest ally of Palestine army. Palestine liberation was the only representative of Arabs living in Palestine. Palestine's diplomatic missions received full immunity in Pakistan. During the conflicts, Palestine liberation received not only aid but also sentimental support from the people of Pakistan.

In relations between Pakistan and Israel, Pakistan was much vigilant that any step of Pakistan may threaten the relationship of Pakistan and Middle East or any religious aggression in the country.

Sentiment against Israel in Pakistan is on its peak. Even Pakistan's relation with USA and Costa Rica was getting affected on the issue of official relations with Israel Hussain M., 1988).

In the era of 1960 Pakistan purchased Israeli guns through third party. Even when Pakistan and Indian war was started the US official said to its Israeli counter-part that Israel should provide good offices in case of India and Pakistan

Pakistan was created on the name of Islam, so Islam holds a prominent place in Pakistan's discourse with other nations of the world. Included Quaid-e-Azam, many prominent politicians emphasize on the unity of Muslim world and strong alliance of Muslim Ummah to tackle the issues facing Muslim states particularly. Arab world is Pakistan's focus point and so many times Pakistan used the tenants of Islam for promoting its foreign policies ambitions in Arab world. Pakistan was not geographically integrated because it was divided into two distinct regions but after fall of Dacca in 1971, Pakistan was becoming unified. Thus, Pakistan's sole attentions moved to Arab world. Pakistan can implement its agenda without any fear. Pakistan supported Arabs against Israel and that support was unconditional.

Pakistan's two focal points, India and Israel, but in case of Middle East Pakistan all the time wanted to overcome the influence of India on Arabs. Pakistan's try to create an Islamic wing was because of India and not for the Israel. India and Pakistan wanted to achieve their desires through different weapons, Pakistan through slogan of Islam and India through secularism. But their primary concern is Arab world. Arab's stance is different on this perspective. They want to established good ties with India not with Pakistan. They don't want that India might be getting angry to the Arabs because of Pakistan. Many countries blamed Pakistan for using Islam as a weapon.

Once king Farouq of Saudi Arabia argued that:

You might not know it that Islam was born on 14 august 1947? (Ram, 1994)

Egyptian rulers had the personal ties with Indian rulers. Pakistan opposed this friendship on every platform. Pakistan's halfhearted reaction to the war of 1956 and 1967 of Egypt against Israel was due to friendship of Egypt with India, Egypt lost this war in the hand of Israel. Arab national interest based on socialism but not on Islam. Middle Eastern countries were against Pakistan to enter alliance with US especially against SEATO and CENTO. These military alliances created more gaps between Middle Eastern states and Pakistan.

Pakistan's behavior is bit different on public level and on Official levels. Pakistan played important role in isolation of Israel from the third world countries. Israel was excluded from number of conferences due to Arab and Pakistan concerns over Israel (Gopal, 1979).

In the words of Indian defense minister V.K Menon, in Bandung conference, Sri Lanka, India and Burma wanted to invite Israel but Pakistan and Indonesia were against that Idea. Even Indonesia might be agreed but Pakistan clearly opposed the idea with the help of Middle Eastern countries (Brecher, 1968).

After Suez conflicts, 22 countries met in London included Pakistan but India refused to attend the meeting. In this meeting, Pakistan's foreign minister Firoz Khan said that Israel had come into being in existence to stay (Singh, 1970).

Egypt was against Pakistan's alliance with US or UK, infect Pakistani messes also wanted to establish good ties with Egypt rather than with west but Pakistan's rulers don't want to revise their pro-western policies. When President Nasser's issue was raised, public was with Nasser but on official level government was with west so an Islamic state as against another Islamic state (Bajwa, 1996).

In all these developments, Pakistan's policies always focused toward West. Pakistani officials went ahead even and they openly supported the Israel and actions against Egypt. Once in Canada, India embassy throws a party in respect of Nehru, Prime Minister at that time. Pakistani officials were also invited in the event. Israeli diplomat sends that; his Pakistani counterpart congratulated them on the glorious victory of Israel over Egypt. According to Israeli diplomat, Pakistani is not completely against Israel or with Arabs (Burke, 1973).

After the defeat of Egypt in the hands of Israel, Arab nationalism was failed miserably and Islam emerged as a sole way to discourse among Islamic countries. Establishment of OIC further strengthens the position of Pakistan in this regard. In this regard Pakistan took part in the war of 1973, Pakistan and Jordan mutually fought against Israel. Even Prime Minister Bhutto promised to Syria that Pakistan would be link between Syria and Israel in case of any hostility. (Hussain M. , Pakistan's Politics: The Zia Years, 1991).

In 1974 when the OIC member met second time in Lahore, OIC accepted that the Palestine Liberation Organization is only representative of Palestine's people (Baba, 1994). Even Israel also delighted because Pakistan actively took part in many Islamic countries in their peace process. Pakistan army had crushed much rebellious movement in Islamic countries that were also

dangerous for Israel. Pakistan supported Egypt unconditionally when they recognized and established ties with Israel. After Camp David accord many Islamic countries were turned against Egypt (Rafael, 1953). When US tried to form a military alliance in Middle East, Israel supported the Idea of Pakistan as well as Israel in this formation. Even they said that weapons supply in Pakistan would not be dangerous for Israel (Ben, 1980).

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