

Economic and Cultural Relations Between Pakistan and the Soviet Union During Ayub Khan's Period

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Ayub Khan imposed martial law in October, 1958 and took power into his own hands as the head of state. He depended on the Western Block, especially the USA, in his early period. He provided a Peshawar airbase for the USA to use for U2 spy aircraft over the Soviet Union's military centers.¹ Pakistan and the USA signed an agreement of mutual cooperation in April, 1959. It was more important than the SEATO and CENTO pacts, because the USA regarded, as vital to its national interest and to world peace, the preservation of independence and integrity of Pakistan.²

At that time, the Soviet leaders were extremely perturbed by this development and threatened Pakistan with dire consequences if Pakistan allowed its territory to be used against the Soviet Union.³

The most serious situation appeared on May 3rd, 1960, when an American aircraft was shot down by the Soviet Union. The Americans initially claimed that it was an "unarmed U2 weather plane piloted by a civilian" which took off from Adana Air force base in Turkey. But the real facts came to light when American pilot Francis Gary Powers was captured alive and told the real facts to Soviet Union⁴. On 7th May, 1960 President Khrushchev of the Soviet Union stated that it was from Pakistani territory near Peshawar that the U2 plane had taken off. He said: "Do not play with fire, gentlemen, we have red marked Peshawar on the map of Pakistan."⁵

Ayub Khan, who was on a visit to England at that time, was informed about the Soviet warning, in which Peshawar was marked by a red circle. Ayub Khan replied: "Soviet threats are nothing new to us". If the Soviets would attack Pakistan now, we would not be alone. It would mean a world war." Ayub Khan returned from England on 17th May, then he gave a statement in a press conference that Soviet planes had been flying over Pakistan for some time. He also remarked that these harsh things of life have to be faced.⁶ Ayub Khan did not feel threatened from the Soviet Union's harsh statement because at that time he had the full support of the USA.

Thus the Soviet Union adopted a hostile attitude toward Pakistan. Two months after the U2 incident over the Soviet Union, President Khrushchev personally visited Kabul and openly supported Afghanistan's claim for Pukhtonistan and also promised to provide transit facilities.⁷ The Afghanistan Government followed the Soviets blindly. On 11th August, 1960 Pakistani Foreign Minister Manzoor Qadir noticed that Afghan troops had entered with a few tanks on the western border (Bajaur) and had also organized nearly 7000 reservists.⁸ On 23rd-24th of September, 1960 Afghan lashkar (Army) once again crossed into Pakistan territory, but returned when the Pakistani Army received orders from Ayub Khan to destroy Afghani machine gun and mortar positions.⁹ A question arises here: why did the Afghanistan Government obey the Soviet Union in its offer against Pakistan (despite being a Muslim country) as far as its raising of the Pukhtonistan issue is concerned? A possible answer to this question is that at that time Afghanistan was mostly depending on the Soviets for food and economic support. At least the Soviet Union's hostility toward Pakistan met rapid resistance, when Afghan forces returned in their barracks as a result of the Pakistani forces' strong action.¹⁰

After some time, the Soviet Government offered Pakistan credit and technical assistance for oil exploration. Pakistan accepted this offer. This agreement was signed on 4th of March, 1961. Under this agreement, the Soviet government agreed to provide Pakistan with 120 million rubles or \$30 million payable over a period of twelve years. It was also decided that the Soviet government would provide technical assistance and equipment for oil exploration in Pakistan. As a result, a Russian team consisting of six members reached Pakistan in May, 1961 for exploration of oil and natural gas¹¹.

In May 1962, the Soviet government agreed to provide fighter planes for the Indian air force and also other military and economic aid. Thus the Pakistani Government started to protest against the Soviets and the United States for providing large scale military assistance to India. Pakistan feared that military assistance to India would be used against Pakistan's territory.¹² The real fact was that India, after partition, depended on Soviet and US military assistance. She adopted the policy of non-alignment after partition, but Pakistan adopted the policy of alignment with the west only. Actually, both countries (US and Soviet Union) provided much military and economic aid to India as a counterweight to China. Another reason was that when India was defeated by China in the 1962 war, both major powers of the world provided large scale aid to India. Ayub Khan changed his Foreign Policy, feeling threatened that aid could be used against Pakistan.¹³

At the same time as the Pakistani ambassador went to England to attend the UN General Assembly session, the Soviet Union's President came to the Pakistani ambassador and expressed his desire to visit his country. At his request he visited the Soviets in June, 1963 and met President Khrushchev and foreign minister Gromyko. On his return, he announced in London that now the Soviet Union wanted to establish close relations with Pakistan in the field of economic and other spheres.¹⁴

According to S.M. Burke: "The Soviet Union's wish to cultivate better relations with Pakistan suited Pakistan's new line of independence in foreign policy, but owing to a greater backlog of suspicion, Soviet-Pakistan relations improved more than Sino-Pakistan relations".¹⁵ So Pakistan received the Soviet offer of friendly relations, and Ayub Khan also started a bilateral policy; after the Sino-Indo war Ayub considered that US military aid to India was a great threat against Pakistan's integrity. At that time Ayub Khan was seeking good relations with her neighboring countries China, India and the Soviet Union.

During this phase the Soviet Union agreed to sign a barter agreement with Pakistan on 30th August 1963. According to that agreement "Pakistan would provide raw jute worth 50 *Lakhs* (5 million) to the Soviets and the Soviets would supply the railway sleepers, valued at one *Caror* (10 million) to Pakistan"¹⁶. Mr. Naik, Joint Secretary of the Soviet Union, said that agreement to bigger deals was in the near future. He also remarked at a news conference that the Soviet Government would provide railway sleepers under the barter agreement at 60 to 70 percent less than the international price. Mr. Kosygin's opinion was that Pakistani jute traders were the best in the world. The Soviet Union delegation assured Pakistani Minister Ijaz Ahmad that the Soviets also desired to work with Pakistan for manufacturing jute goods, cotton textiles and shoes in exchange for Soviet machinery.¹⁷ That was the second time both countries concluded a barter agreement, the first was signed eleven years before, in 1952.

After two months of this, Pakistan and the Soviet Union again signed an air agreement in Karachi when G. Loginov (Chief of the airlines) came to Pakistan and showed his desire that agreements would help for better understanding and more cooperation between Pakistan and the Soviet Union.¹⁸ That agreement proved fruitful when the Soviet Union showed her willingness to solve the Kashmir problem first, but the Soviets did not carry through on this promise when they vetoed about Kashmir in UN Security Council on 13th May 1964, coming down on the Indian side and also granting 140 million dollars for Indian military and defense requirements.¹⁹

Although Ayub Khan reminded both superpowers (USA and Soviet Union) that granting aid to India was a great threat to Pakistan, neither country would yield an inch and it was proved true in the war of 1965. However, Pakistan and the Soviet Union signed, on 11th June 1964, an exchange program for one year in the field of cultural and scientific cooperation. According to that agreement, Pakistan would send graduate students for higher education to the Soviet Union. The Soviet government also agreed to increase quotas for Pakistani students in higher education. A few days later the Soviet government provided an \$11 million loan in the form of a barter agreement.²⁰

In September 1964, a Pakistani delegation under the leadership of Fazal Qadir Chaudhary, a prominent National Assembly leader, visited Moscow. In a welcoming speech, Ivan Spiridonov, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, described this visit as a confirmation of the desire to achieve better understanding and expand all round cooperation between the two countries.²¹ During this phase from 1962-1964, Ayub Khan mostly depended on the Soviets and China and maintained good relations with both major powers of Asia. However, the USA did not like Ayub's taking steps in the direction of the Soviet Union and China, and also warned him against relationships with them, but Ayub Khan did not accept this. Thus at first the USA sanctioned Pakistan and stopped aid to the Dhaka air base which was being built with US cooperation. At that time Ayub Khan was busy receiving aid from all the major powers for the national program of green revolution for the prosperity of the Pakistani people.²² When the USA stopped Pakistani aid, Ayub saw on the side of the Soviets and China the possibility to complete projects which had already begun, and at least he succeeded in getting aid for this from the Soviet Union and China .

In January 1965, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto visited the Soviet Union. His main aim was to establish friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto talked with the Soviet leaders on the future of Pak- Soviet relations. Bhutto put stress on the solution of the Kashmir issue with the help of the Soviet Union. Bhutto also showed his desire to the Soviet leaders for economic and military assistance. The Soviet Government delivered the following statement:

“We are sure the visit, of the Pakistani foreign minister in the direction of Soviets, would expand and strengthen the relations between the two countries.”²³

President Ayub Khan visited the Soviet Union, the first time, on 3rd April, 1965. He assured Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin of the earnest desire of his government and the people of Pakistan to establish close and friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Ayub thanked Mr. Kosygin for his warm welcome. Ayub Khan said, "Soviet Union is our next door neighbor with which Pakistan had close friendly connections in the past".²⁴ However, after some time, these connections were cut off. He assured that he now came to re-establish good relations once again. Mr. Kosygin showed his hope that Ayub's visit would be useful for strengthening the friendly relations and mutual cooperation between the two countries. Premier Kosygin praised Ayub's fruitful activities and policies in Pakistan. Ayub showed that his meeting with Kosygin was largely successful.²⁵

During Ayub's visit, Pakistan and the Soviets signed many agreements in the field of trade, economic cooperation and cultural exchange. Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed the agreement on behalf of Pakistan under which the five year old Pak-Soviet agreement on oil exploration was extended for another five years. The Soviet government also agreed to provide a further loan of 50 million dollars to Pakistan for oil exploration and purchase of industrial machinery. Mr. Nikolai Patolichev, Soviet Minister for Foreign Trade, signed the agreements on trade and economic protocol while Mr. Ramonosky signed the accord on cultural exchange on behalf of the Soviet Union. Mr. Patolichev said that Soviet experts to Pakistan would mainly have need of machinery and equipment for the development of Pakistan's industry and agriculture. The Soviet government also agreed to provide 15 *Crores* for the economic development of Pakistan, that aid provided to Pakistan for agriculture and other machinery at 2.5% interest and deferred payment for 10 years.²⁶

Ayub's visit brought many changes, created a friendly atmosphere between the two countries and the misunderstandings of the last seventeen years were finished. Ayub said to President Kosygin: "We are more than satisfied with our mutual meetings"²⁷. He hoped such meetings would be continued. He also suggested that President Kosygin visit Pakistan. On his return, he told a press conference that Pakistan's success in establishing friendly ties with the Soviet Union and China had greatly strengthened the cause of peace and stability throughout Asia. Ayub's view was that his visit opened a new, hopeful chapter in Pak-Soviet relations. He said "we should now make every endeavor to maintain friendly relations with our great neighbors"²⁸.

That visit was immediately reflected in Moscow's posture of neutrality towards the Indo-Pakistan "mini war" over the Rann of Kutch in April-May 1965. On 8th May 1965 the Soviet news agency TASS called upon both India and Pakistan "...not to weaken each other, and expressed the hope that India and Pakistan would solve their differences through direct negotiations".²⁹

As the result of Ayub's visit to the Soviet Union, both countries concluded another agreement for cultural exchanges. It was signed on 5th June, 1965. This agreement was to exchange scholars, scientists, artists, sportsmen and also the exchange of music records, radio and TV programs. So during Ayub's period Pakistan signed many pacts with the Soviets. During the signing ceremony of this cultural agreement, S.K. Romonovsky, the Soviet Cultural Minister said: "that many Pacts between two countries would help towards better understanding among the people". Then Pakistan also got a Rs. 1.5 *Crore* loan from the Soviets for the purchase of machinery and airport construction.³⁰

When full war started between India and Pakistan on 6th September 1965 the Soviet Union adopted the policy of neutrality. The Soviet Union showed hope that both countries would avoid the war. During the Indo-Pak war Kosygin first sent a message to Shastri and then to Ayub on 4th September 1965 to withdraw their troops from the borders. On 14th September 1965, the Soviet Union also condemned the inflammatory statement, presumably from China, which was designed to derive advantages from the exacerbation of Indian-Pakistani relations, appealing officially to the two states for a cease fire. After the end of the war, the Soviet Union offered to mediate a solution. Consequently, Pakistan accepted Kosygin's invitation on 11th November 1965, to meet with Shastri at Tashkent on 4th January 1966.³¹

On 4th January 1966, leaders of both countries (India and Pakistan) gathered around the table of Tashkent. Mr. Kosygin wanted peace and stability in South Asia and this was the main reason for Kosygin's policy of neutrality during the Indo-Pak war of 1965. Mr. Kosygin's efforts proved fruitful when both countries agreed to the Tashkent Accord on 10th January, 1966.³²

After Tashkent, Pak-Soviet relations continued and another barter agreement was signed between the two countries on 10th January 1966. According to that agreement, Pakistan provided 85,000 tons of rice to the Soviet Union and imported tractors, agriculture machinery and construction equipment.³³

After this, President Ayub Khan disclosed in a press interview that the Soviets had granted dangerous weapons and arms aid to India alone. So the Soviet government agreed to also sell arms to Pakistan in June, 1966. After that the Pakistan delegation, under Air Marshal Noor Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Air Force, visited the Soviet Union. On his return, he said: “We succeeded in developing very rapidly seeds of mutual confidence and understanding between us”.³⁴ But after one month Mrs. Indira Gandhi paid a visit to Moscow in July, 1966, and she announced that the Soviet Union had not concluded any agreement with Pakistan on the supply of arms.³⁵ Therefore, Pakistan could not get any type of arms supplies from the Soviets.

The increasing warmth in the political relations between the Soviet Union and Pakistan helped in the growth of cultural ties between the two countries. Yu Kuzin, Deputy Head of Soviet Foreign Relations said: “the year 1967 was particularly rich in cultural contracts, between the two countries.” For example, Pakistani dance troupes visited their country and presented many performances. Hence Pakistan succeeded in the field of festivals of Pakistani culture in Dushanbe, the Capital of Soviet Tajikistan.³⁶

Ayub Khan visited the Soviet Union again on 25th September, 1967 with Foreign Minister Syed Sharif Uddin Pirzada, and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, M.M. Ahmad. Ayub Khan talked with President Kosygin about peace in the south region and also non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.³⁷ The Soviet government agreed to increase aid for Pakistan up to 100 million rubles for the economic development of Pakistan and showed keenness to collaborate in all fields of economic development. Ayub Khan said in Moscow that the Kashmir dispute is a source of serious tension in Asia. We want to live in peace and want stability in Pakistan, which is only possible after the solution of the Kashmir issue.³⁸

Ayub Khan dedicated his autobiography “Friends not Master” to President Kosygin and said:

“We are grateful for the economic and technical assistance which the Soviet Union is giving to us, and which has helped us in the establishment of a large area of understanding between the two peoples. You would be happy to note that we have made good use of economic assistance that your country has extended to us.”³⁹

In the beginning of 1968 Ayub Khan informed the USA authorities that the Badaber base agreement that was going to expire in 1969 would not be extended further. Ayub’s reaction pleased President Kosygin and he visited Pakistan for the first time on 17th April 1968. He was welcomed by President Ayub and the Pakistani masses with cordial manner. During his visit President Alexi Kosygin said: “that relations between Pakistan and the Soviet Union are very good indeed and we should want more and more to strengthen and better them”.⁴⁰

The Soviet President’s visit in April 1968 was the first of its kind and was of outstanding significance. It brought about not only great economic and cultural cooperation between two countries but also closer political relations between them. Kosygin agreed to the granting of aid for a steel mill, a nuclear power plant and also economic aid on a broad range of development projects. During the time of Kosygin’s reception, Hafeez Jalanderi, an aged poet and the composer of Pakistan’s National Anthem sang out a poem, comparing Kosygin’s visit to the coming of the dawn, which would bring self determination and justice to the Kashmiri people. Kosygin enjoyed the amusing poetry, but remained silent on this issue.⁴¹ President Kosygin said:

“There were many forces in the world which did not want to see friendship growing between the Soviets and Pakistan”.⁴² He said the last night of his visit to Pakistan: “Pakistan would achieve great success in all spheres under the leadership of president Muhammad Ayub Khan.”⁴³

In June 1968 General Yahya Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, visited Moscow to finalize the type of military hardware to be purchased.

So Pakistan succeeded in receiving helicopters, transport vehicles and spare parts from the Soviet Union.⁴⁴ The Washington correspondent of *The Hindu* enviously noted that Pakistan had become the first country in the world to get such supplies from all three major powers.⁴⁵ Although Ayub Khan was successful in terms of his achievements on many horizons but it was late in 1968 and 1969 when a long protest was started against Ayub Khan's government by different political parties prevailing at that time along with Pakistani masses and students who were also demanding the resignation of Ayub from the Presidency. Soviet President Kosygin visited Pakistan in early 1969 and remarked about Ayub Khan's Government in these words:

“How can the Pakistanis not appreciate such a good man, who has done so much to improve Pakistan-Soviet Relations” He accepted that Ayub's pro Tashkent policy had become a veritable mill stone around his neck.”⁴⁶

Conclusion

During Ayub Khan's period all the world was preoccupied with the Cold War. At that time both the major powers (Soviet Union and USA) were trying their best to control important Asian countries under their own monopoly. In his early period Ayub Khan started a pro-American policy and took some appropriate action against the Soviet Union when he provided a Peshawar airbase to the USA for US aircraft to collect information regarding military centers in Asia. Ayub Khan's activity was not liked by the Soviet Union and neighboring China. It was proved true when the U2 incident occurred and damaged Pakistan's reputation in the world. After this, when the Sino-Indian war started, Britain and the USA granted more and more aid to India against China. Although Ayub Khan's government got much aid from the USA and did not want to lose its friend, the granting of US aid to India was a great threat to Pakistan, and was proved true when India used that arms supply against Pakistan in the war of 1965. Thus Ayub Khan based the policy of friendly relations with neighboring major powers, the Soviet Union and China. So under his government, Pakistan signed many pacts with the Soviet Union and China for the betterment and prosperity of Pakistani masses. During this period (from 1958 to 1969) Ayub Khan completed many projects with the aid of the Soviet Union. Ayub's Khan friendly relations with many nations of the world remained successful. During his whole era Ayub Khan was busy, serving all major powers granting aid in industrial and agricultural projects for the Pakistani masses' prosperity and he succeeded in his aim. That was the reason, under Ayub Khan's leadership, why Pakistan had good success in every field and he provided basic structure to the Pakistani nation for the first time in the landmark history of Pakistan after partition.

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