
BTTN Journal

p-ISSN 2958-1214

e-ISSN 2958-1222



BOOK REVIEW

Book Name: On “Diplomatic Footprints”

Reviewed by: Dost Muhammad Barrech¹ & Shah Meer²

The book under review, "Diplomatic Footprints," is a memoir by Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry, a Pakistani diplomat, and the former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan. He is currently the Director General of the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad (ISSI). The book narrates several political and diplomatic developments in which the ambassador was either a close observer, coordinator, or tasked to investigate areas. The book explores the dynamics of international relations, diplomatic fluctuations, and Pakistan's diplomacy and politics.

The book begins by addressing the political scenario of Pakistan in the 1960s and the early 1970s, when the author was a schoolchild and was a keen observer of politics due to his family's inclination towards politics. Aizaz reckons that the 1960s used to be the "golden age" of Pakistan owing to the economic policies of President Ayub Khan. The two five-year plans announced by Khan were praised by the international community as a model of development and even copied by South Korea. The author further

¹ Dost Muhammad Barrech is a former Research Associate of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad ISSI. He is currently lecturer in International Relations IR Department University of Balochistan UOB, Quetta. He is PhD IR candidate at the International Islamic University Islamabad IIUI. He can be reached at bareach87@gmail.com

² Shah Meer is a graduate of International Relations from University of Balochistan. He has been writing on issues pertaining to international affairs at different platforms. He can be reached at sangatshahmeer44@gmail.com

maintains that it was a time when Islamabad was very close to the West.

The golden age of Pakistan did not sustain because of political instability. Initially, President Ayub's relations with the west were perceived by Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) through the lens of antagonism. Second, the 1965 Indo-Pak war was yet another setback to Ayub's regime that resulted in an economic meltdown. Aizaz believes it provided an opportunity for populist leaders like ZAB to campaign against the center. Third, the fragile regime of President Ayub Khan was further worsened when Sheikh Mujeeb of the Awami League from East Pakistan demanded provincial autonomy from the center. All such factors combined to build enormous pressure on President Ayub Khan, who later abdicated in favor of his Army Chief of Staff, General Yahya Khan.

President Yahya presided over Pakistan's first general elections, which were deemed transparent by experts. Mujeeb ur Rehman won the elections with a two-thirds vote, but he was not appointed prime minister because ZAB and Yahya Khan were unwilling to hand over state affairs to Bengalis. It not only paved the way for the issue of East Pakistan's succession, but it also provided the impetus for the 1971 Indo-Pak war. Aizaz Ahmed believes that it was a crucial juncture due to which Pakistan's economic prosperity was destined to decline.

Commenting on the politics of Pakistan in the 1970s, especially during the ZAB's tenure, the author holds a balanced position. He argues that Mr. Bhutto laid the foundations for a nuclear Pakistan, hosted the 2nd Islamic Summit, displayed Pakistani influence on the Muslim world, and successfully negotiated the Simla Agreement with India in 1972 Summit. However, some of Bhutto's Policies such as the implementation of Islamic Socialism, which caused capital flight from the country, deadly operations in Balochistan that triggered polarization, and imposing an autocratic rule against the will of the constitution, all had long-term consequences for Pakistan.

On the other hand, Aizaz sheds light on the Kargil crisis and the imposition of emergency by Pervez Musharraf. The author believes that the operation conducted by the Pakistan Army was a signal that

India was violating the Shimla Agreement by occupying land beyond the Line of Control, namely Chorbat in 1972 and Siachen in 1984. Notwithstanding, it was ill-timed and unilateral, not even consulting the stakeholders, i.e., the Foreign Ministry and civilian leadership of the country. Consequently, it disrupted the Lahore Declaration and declared Pakistan an irresponsible nuclear power state.

In his book, *In the Line of Fire*, Musharraf proclaimed that he had consulted the Prime Minister of Pakistan and launched the operation with the consent of the civilian leadership. On the contrary, civilian leadership denied being consulted. It created a deadlock and eventually resulted in the coup of 1999.

On the diplomatic front, the author articulates that it becomes very challenging for diplomats to justify coups and abrupt changes occurring in the socio-political domain of a country. The 1999 coup was not an exception to that. Pakistan's overall diplomatic missions justified the regime, claiming that it was an enlightened moderation and a step forward toward a progressive Pakistan.

Like Pakistani politics, global politics also witnessed rapid changes in the early stages of Musharraf's tenure in the wake of the 9/11 incident. Globalization seemed to be responsible for free trade and easing human life, and terrorists took advantage of globalization. The author believes that the 9/11 incident altered the complexion of international politics.

To teach a lesson to the perpetrators, the US initiated the US-led Global War on Terror (GWOT) and invaded Afghanistan since the Taliban refused to hand over the perpetrators involved in the 9/11 attacks to the US, who were supposed to be hiding in Afghanistan. To seek legitimacy, President Musharraf was threatened by the 65th United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, using the infamous words "you are either with us or against us."

Islamabad's alliance with Washington, however, not only resumed economic and security assistance, but also turned the

bullets of the Taliban towards Pakistan. Pakistan suffered a massive wave of terrorist attacks. The deadliest attacks were a bus bombing in Karachi that killed eleven Frenchmen, a car bomb near the US consulate in Karachi, and a grenade attack on a church in Islamabad. In a nutshell, during the entire tenure of Musharraf, Pakistan remained a non-NATO ally that assisted the US-led GWOT.

However, in the post-Musharraf era, relations with the US got worse. There were primarily three reasons. First, the tacit operation of the United States in Abbottabad that resulted in the killing of Osama Bin Laden was conceived through the prism of antagonism in Pakistan. It also brought forth the question of Osama's shelter in Pakistan. Since then, Islamabad has refused any possible stay for Osama in Pakistan.

Second, Raymond Allen Davis is an American national accused of being a CIA contractor and charged with killing two Pakistanis on a busy Lahore Street. Raymond justified his actions as an act of self-defense. In the aftermath of the incident, the US soon stated that Davis was protected by diplomatic immunity since he was working with the US consulate in Lahore. However, Pakistan released him, and the relationship collapsed. Third, the Salala attack was an offensive act that was launched against Pakistani forces by the US-led NATO forces near the Pakistan-Afghan border in 2001, killing 28 Pakistani soldiers.

Paying attention to the Kashmir dispute, Aizaz views the "Four-Point Formula" negotiated between India and Pakistan as a comparatively better plan than the Chenab Formula and the Owen Dixon Plan. The formula was a tacit and back-channel diplomatic mission during Musharraf's tenure. Only the Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary, along with top military and intelligence leadership, knew about the initiative. Aizaz, who was the Director General in the South Asia Division, knew nothing about the formula and was not even informed. He was just like a second person with an opinion.

Taking aid from the press, the author says that the four points were: (a) identification of regions of Jammu and Kashmir that carry

distinct ethnic, linguistic, and historical identities; (b) demilitarization of troops from the population centers and reduction of troops from the LoC; (c) self-governance to enable Kashmiris to govern their affairs; and (d) joint management on areas and issues of common concern.

Unfortunately, negotiations failed because of the political instability in Pakistan. The political instability prevailed due to the suspension of the then Chief Justice of Pakistan, Chaudhry Iftikhar, by President Musharraf. In retaliation, the Lawyer's Movement was started, and the country saw nationwide agitation. Meanwhile, President Musharraf conducted the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) with pro-democratic forces. The ordinance was aimed at giving general amnesty to politicians, bureaucrats, and elites involved in corruption. The ordinance, consequently, cleared the path for the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, who was in exile in Dubai and London and reached Pakistan accordingly. As soon as the former prime minister arrived, she was assassinated. Her assassination triggered the then-existing political instability.

During the tenure of the Pakistan People's Party (2008–2013), ministerial-level talks again resumed between India and Pakistan. Then Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi emphasized with Aizaz that there was a favorable political environment for taking the peace process forward. All political parties, the parliament, and the elected government desired an improvement in relations with India. Thus, the Pakistani delegation left for India and positively discussed many bilateral issues with New Delhi.

During the visit of the Pakistani delegation to India, the attacks of 11/26 took place in Mumbai. The Indian government and media allege that the attacks were planned and launched by Pakistan. The aftermath of the attacks was so severe that many planned meetings were canceled, and the rapprochement process was abandoned.

The essence of diplomacy has shifted from classical diplomacy to public diplomacy as the dynamics of global politics have changed. It was the time when Pakistan engaged with the US-led GWOT, and

several cross-border attacks were launched in Pakistan from Afghan soil. Due to cross-border attacks, internal terrorism, and extremism in Pakistan, the image of the country was badly tarnished.

Meanwhile, the author was designated as Pakistan's ambassador to the Netherlands for three years, from 2009 to 2012. Aizaz replaces classical diplomacy with public diplomacy in the Netherlands to control the damage to the international standing of Pakistan inflicted by terrorists. The conducting of festivals and sports competitions with the aid of the Pakistani community was an innovative mission that enhanced the soft image of Pakistan.

Against this backdrop, the author opines that the diplomacy of Pakistan remained on trial as far as Saudi Arabia and Iran were concerned. During Nawaz Sharif's regime in 2013, Pakistan faced the dilemma of supporting Riyadh against the Houthis, which by all means would irritate Iran, embarking on a path of anti-Saudi sentiments in Pakistan.

Pakistan cleared its position. In case of any violation of territorial integrity or any threat to Harmain Sharifain (the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina), Pakistan would stand with Saudi Arabia. However, Pakistan could not provide any military or political support to the kingdom against the Houthis, but rather Islamabad would remain "neutral." Riyadh was generally irritated by Pakistan's position.

Apparently, the book covers a wide array of topics in domestic politics, international relations, and diplomacy. This memoir is full of experiences, innovative insights, and knowledge that broaden the horizon and provide a new vision for statecraft for keen learners of politics. Undoubtedly, the book is a fascinating read for diplomats, policymakers, newly appointed civil servants, and students of politics and international relations.