

PAKISTAN'S PALESTINE POLICY THROUGH THE LENS OF ISLAMIC BROTHERHOOD: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The relationship shared by all humans mutually is brotherhood as per Islamic Teachings outlined in the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet PBUH. It is strengthened with faith and renamed as Islamic Brotherhood that requires universality according to which all the Muslims are one Ummah (Community) each member of which is expected to share the joys and sorrows of others. Islamic concept of brotherhood is deeply connected with Palestinian issue in many ways. The Palestinian inquiry figures conspicuously in Pakistan's foreign policy proclamations, and its leaders consistently express their support for "the just and noble cause of our Palestinian brethren to secure their national right to self-determination and an independent state of their own." From Historical perspective, Pakistan and Israel have not been engaged in any clash with each other. Pakistan has not recognized Israel since its inception because Pakistan has consistently supported Palestine, and it may have fear of Israel and India relations that would ultimately lead to the misbalance of power in Subcontinent. By analysing different viewpoints, this paper will investigate primarily the historical stance of the state of Pakistan on the Palestine issue, since its establishment. After analysing different approaches and considering domestic debates in Pakistan about Palestine issue, this will also contribute whether Pakistan should shift its stance about Israel or otherwise.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic teachings emphasize equality among human beings as all are the children of Adam and Eve (peace be upon them) making them brothers and sisters in faith. A verse of surah al-Hujurat reads:

"يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ"

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“O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware” (Al-Hujurat, 49:13).

The verse teaches equality among humans and indicates towards universal brotherhood too which is based on faith and clearly expressed in another verse of the same surah,

"إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ"

“The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful of Allah so you may be shown mercy” (Al- Hujurat, 49:10).

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Umar:

“Propagating this concept outlined in the Qur’ān, the Prophet PBUH emphasized Muslim brotherhood multiple times and such ahadith have been recorded in Hadith literature. One of such narrations reads as follows: Narrated 'Abdullah bin Umar: Allah's Apostle said, "A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim, so he should not oppress him, nor should he hand him over to an oppressor. Whoever fulfills the needs of his brother, Allah will fulfill his needs; whoever brings his (Muslim) brother out of a discomfort, Allah will bring him out of the discomforts of the Day of Resurrection, and whoever screens a Muslim, Allah will screen him on the Day of Resurrection.” (Bukhārī, No. 622)

The teachings of Islamic Brotherhood require a Muslim and the Muslims of whole world to

- Show solidarity with Palestinians
- Uphold justice and human rights
- Demonstrate compassion and mercy
- Fulfill their responsibility towards fellow Muslims
- Unite with the global Muslim community (Ummah)
- Support the liberation of the oppressed

Remember, supporting the Palestinian cause is not only a political or humanitarian issue but also a religious obligation for many Muslims.

Since its inception Pakistan’s stance on Palestine issue has remained constant throughout the course of history. Pakistan has always maintained its commitment and solidarity to the people of Palestine, performed its best to preserve their fundamental rights. It has condemned Israel for its brutal actions and atrocities on the people of Palestine. Pakistan has actively raised the voice for the creation of an independent state of Palestine and till now is consistently emphasizing on the importance of resolutions of the UNO and the two-state formula. In 21st century, Pakistan has maintained its struggle to a peaceful solution, urged for the need of dialogue between the concerned parties.

Arab world also has not recognized Israel as well as Pakistan because they believed that the state of Israel was an imposed decision, and the legitimacy of Israel as a sovereign state has been controversial since its

creation particularly in the Muslim world. The reason behind Pakistan's support to Palestine is the close ideological association and humanitarian grounds.

PAKISTAN'S FOUNDING FIGURES ON ISRAEL-PALESTINE ISSUE BEFORE THE CREATION OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan started to involve in Palestine issue, not after its independence (1947), but its association with this issue predate to the time of Palestine partition and can be traced to 1917 (Pirzada, 1969). Inside the space of weeks after Lord Balfour reported English help for a Jewish public home in Palestine and the catch of Jerusalem by Broad Allenby, the Muslim League, which was driving the battle for Pakistan, communicated its anxiety for the "safety and sanctity of Holy Places". Although the Indian patriots, including Mahatma Gandhi, had taken on a favorable to Middle Easterner stand on the issue, there was one tremendous contrast: The League's vociferous reactions of the battle for a Jewish country were unequivocally established in Islam. Palestine was essential for the Jazira al-'Bedouin and thus couldn't be set under non-Muslim rule. This resistance to non-Muslim rule over Islamic regions stayed the most vocal place of the Muslim Association pioneers. Indeed, even in any case chiefs like Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the pioneer and designer of Pakistan, utilized Islam to excuse their resistance to the Jewish country. Speaking in the name of the Muslims not only in India but everywhere, Jinnah fervently opposed the "infamous Balfour Declaration" (Pirzada, 1969). The Muslim League called for the annulment of the Declaration as well as the British Mandate over Palestine and warned that in "consonance with the rest of the Islamic world" the Indian Muslims would treat the British as an enemy of Islam if the latter "fails to alter its present pro-Jewish policy in Palestine" (Pirzada, 1969). Anti-Semitic stereotypes and expressions were frequently aired during the deliberations of the Muslim League. Furthermore, the Palestinian question gradually became part of the domestic Indian agenda (Stein, 1961).

NEWLY ESTABLISHED PAKISTAN AND ITS COMMITMENT TO PALESTINE CAUSE

Hostile to Israel sentiments at well-known and legislative levels stayed there even after Pakistan was made. The founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was also very clear on the subject. Pakistan went against Israel in the UNO and Mr. Jinnah had a faith that "partition plan will be rejected" by the UN otherwise "there is bound to be the gravest disaster and unprecedented conflict, not only between the Arabs and the authority that would undertake to enforce the partition plan, but the entire Muslim world will revolt against such a decision which cannot be supported historically, politically or morally." He made his intentions clear that "in such a case, Pakistan will have no other course left but to give its fullest support to the Arabs" (The Pakistan Times, 1947). But when 'Plan of Partition' with an 'Economic Union' was accepted in the UN, Jinnah had left no other alternative but to condemn that "inherently unjust and outrageous decision" of the UN (Jinnah, 1989). On May 14, 1948 the state of Israel was proclaimed. It was quickly recognised by the USA, the UK, and other states. Pakistan's ruling AIML party issued a robust resolution denouncing the US and other states for having recognised Israel (Pakistan Times, (1948).

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A statement of the government declared that recognition of Israel was “constitutionally wrong and morally unjust”, that it amounts to “placing a premium on armed aggression and the use of brutal force”, and that the UN partition resolution “lacked legal and moral justification” and was opposed to justice, equity, and the right of self-determination (Keesings, 1949). Liaquat Ali Khan, the prime minister of Pakistan, stated that the creation of a Jewish state and its division went against every principle of justice and equity. For a lengthier amount of time, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sir Zafarullah Khan unwittingly supported the cause of Palestine. Both the general public's and the ruling elites' opinions were shaped by these methods and backgrounds. Pakistan adopted the same stance as "The Arabs" in order to demonstrate its Islamic credentials. The policy of not recognising Israel's independence has been upheld, and the people of Pakistan have continued to sincerely support the cause of "The Arabs." As time went on, the general opposition grew. Pakistan was the only Muslim state that, during the UN discussion on Palestine's division, raised the voice of support for the Palestinian peoples more than any other, according to an evaluation (Bishku, 1992). It's also noteworthy that, even prior to Israel's establishment, Israeli leadership attempted to soften and change Pakistan's resistance to it. Chaim Weizmann identified similarities between Israel and Pakistan, “Our small state in Palestine that shall soon have to follow you.

Many problems will be common to both of us, and it is my earnest hope that it may be possible for us to deal with them together, and in cooperation, for the good of both of our people” (Weizmann, 1979). Nevertheless, despite Pakistan's difficult policy—which included fighting for its own survival and facing internal and external challenges—and its desperate need for Western support, the country did not back down from its bold and unwavering support of the Arab cause. Pakistan kept up its past promises and policy of standing by the righteous cause of Palestine. No amount of effort on the part of Israel could change Pakistan's opposition to the establishment of an Israeli state.

MILITARY REGIMES STANCE ON PALESTINE CAUSE: (AYYUB KHAN 1958-69), (ZIA UL HAQQ 1977-88) AND (MUSHARRAF 1998-2007)

However, ruling form of state of Pakistan changed from democracy to dictatorship but the stance of country remained same on Israel-Palestine conflict. Uniformity in policy was seen all of them supported Palestine and condemned Israel of illegally occupying territories.

Chief Marshall, Ayub Khan throughout his tenure had showed solidarity and support Palestinians to their right of self-determination. The fascinating role that Ayub Khan has played was his support in creation of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), that was mainstream organization of Palestine who was fighting for the rights of oppressed Palestinians.

One of the tense points in the Palestine-Pakistani relations was Pakistan's participation in the suppression of the Palestine guerrillas during the 1970 civil war in Jordan. Furthermore, Zia regime also maintained the same policy and backed the international community to preserve rights of Palestinis. Tenure of President General Musharraf saw very positive developments in the policy, as well as major developments took place. Mr. President reassures at different occasions that Pakistan will not compromise on Palestine Cause and will compete till two-state formula has not been accepted.

BILATERAL VISITS DURING MUSHARRAF ERA

The honourable president of Palestine Mr. Mahmoud Abbas visited to Pakistan in 2005. He met with different government officials during his stay in Islamabad. He met with President Musharraf and Prime Minister of Pakistan and Chairman Senate. He had a discussion over political matters of Middle East and exchanged views with them on engagement of Palestine authorities with Israel. Discussion took place about the recent developments that were made in the occupied territories and engagements of the international community for the purpose of stability in the region (Pakistan-Palestine relations, 2023). While leaving Pakistan, Mr. President pay tribute to the efforts of people of Pakistan and government of Pakistan for their support to Palestine brothers (Pakistan-Palestine relations, 2023).

During a visit to Pakistan in June 2006, Palestinian Foreign Minister Mahmoud al-Zahr expressed gratitude to the country for upholding Palestinian rights. The Pakistani government also gave him millions of dollars in assistance (Pakistan-Palestine relations, 2023).

PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY GOVERNMENT ROLE IN PALESTINE ISSUE

Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visited Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat in September 1994 in Gaza City. The government of Pakistan People's Party also condemned the brutalities of Israel and maintained its previous government policy. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi criticized the flotilla raid. He further added that this raid cannot be justified. Killing innocents have no moral or legal reasons. Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Yousaf Raza Gillani and President Asif Ali Zardari they both condemned these actions of Israel. During November 2012 there was operation pillar of defense in the Gaza strip. Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf spoke to Egyptian President Mr. Mohamed Morsi and said that Pakistan strongly condemns Israel air attacks in Gaza. On November 29, 2012, Pakistan voted in favour of UN General Assembly Resolution 67/19 to non-member observer state status in the United Nations (United Nations General Assembly, 2023).

PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE (N) GOVERNMENT ROLE IN PALESTINE CASE

The major development that took place during PML government was the establishment of Palestine embassy in Islamabad. The Palestinian authority established an embassy in Islamabad on 31Jan2017 (United Nations General Assembly, 2023). During the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said: "I am saddened and disappointed to note the silence of international community against this injustice, the silence and ineffectiveness of the Muslim Ummah has made Palestinians more vulnerable and made Israel more aggressive. The world must stop Israel from this naked and brutal aggression". He called Israel's crimes against Palestinians in Gaza "genocide" and urged the international community to put an end to Israel's blatant and violent aggression. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif stated during his Independence Day speech that the crimes committed by Israel on the people of Gaza were as tragic. He remarked that the killing of innocent people and the bombardment of human settlements should cause the international community and the human conscience to pause. Pakistan, he said, firmly rejects it. It was a tragedy for all of humanity, and the civilised world needs to be aware of the issue. Once again when

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Pakistan Muslim league came in power in April 2022, Shehbaz Sharif was elected as Prime Minister of Pakistan. During his tenure, he maintained the existing policy on the Palestine issue.

However, some debates between the public were on peak about initiation of bilateral trade between Israel and his country. Mr. Sharif denied such allegations and stated that “all such reports are nothing but just a pack of lies”. He further added that our government position is very clear on this matter and having very clear policy that until Palestinians are not being provided with their fundamental rights and the right of self-determination, we could not even think about this.

PAKISTAN TEHREEK-E-INSAF (PTI) GOVERNMENT STANCE ON PALESTINE ISSUE

“Prime Minister Imran Khan categorically said that Palestine peoples are being treated unjustly, adding to that, he further said; innocent people were being tortured brutally during Ramadan.

He also said, I condemn the inhuman behaviour of Israel and salute to all those who have shown solidarity with oppressed Palestinians. He also expressed deep concern over the calmness of international community on killing of dozens of innocents’ lives. He further added that the world positions seem to be changing on this issue” (Imran, P. 2023).

During Mr. Khan tenure, public opinion was generated at a huge mass scale that there had been backdoor dialogue between Israel officials and Pakistani authorities. In response Khan’s government not only denied such allegations but also stated that these allegations are based on fallaciousness.

Mr. Khan also publicly said that we cannot accept Israel because accepting Israel is just like compromising on Indian allegedly occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He further added that I firmly stand on the directions of our founder Jinnah which is that until Palestine did not achieve their rights and separate homeland, we cannot accept Israel.

PAKISTAN STANDS OUT IN SUPPORTING PALESTINE ISSUE RECENTLY

Once again clash between Israel and Palestine has been started of very high intensity. On 7th October 2023, Hamas which is militant organization launched an operation against Israel which results in casualties of many Israelis. In response, Israel government started counterattack on Hamas group and on the innocent peoples of Palestine. Brutal attacks of Israel created hatred among masses around the world. Peoples started protest around the globe in support of Palestine and against the atrocities of Israel. Same is the case in Pakistan, local population of Pakistan started to protest against Israel. Some of details of these protests are:

A huge crowd was seen protesting under the leadership of Jamaat-e-Islami in the capital Islamabad, Lahore and in different districts of the country.

Jamiat ulama Islam also organized solidarity protests to show solidarity with Palestine. These protests were arranged in the capitals of provinces likewise in Peshawar, Quetta, Karachi and Muree on the name of Toofan Ul Aqsa conferences.

Tehreek-e -Labiak Pakistan also organized mass rallies and huge gathering in the capital Islamabad, Lahore and in different parts of the country.

The message was to show that people of Pakistan are really touched with these attacks and stands with Palestine until they did not achieve their right of self-governing. Officials of Palestine and leaders of Hamas like Ismail Haniyah also participated in these protests by delivering speeches online. Pakistan Official authorities are also very concerned with recent developments in the Middle East. Prime Minister and President Dr. Arif Alvi not only condemned these attacks but urged the international community to prevent further destruction and to play role in bringing ceasefire.

The President has reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering support for the two-state solution as the basis for a fair and nonviolent resolution of the Palestine conflict. He declared that in order to put an end to Israel's crimes in Gaza, which have killed thousands of innocent people, including women and children, the entire world must acknowledge the suffering of the Palestinian people and do its part (Alvi, 2023).

Foreign Minister Mr. Jalil Abbasi also condemned these attacks and the oppressions on innocent civilians. He further said that our position on the issue of Palestine has not been changed but it is as same as it was from day one, that creation of two states is the solution (Jilani, 2023).

PAKISTAN'S ROLE IN RECENT CONFERENCE OF OIC

Organization of Islamic Conference was established in 1969. In the wake of recent attacks of Israel on Palestine, conference of OIC and Arab league was called upon by Saudi government at Riyadh to discuss the recent developments of Middle East.

In this conference, Lebanon and Algeria proposed sanctions against Israel but UAE and Bahrain opposed the sanctions. Pakistan condemned inhuman actions of Israel and urged to the international community to play role in bringing unconditional ceasefire. Prime Minister Mr. Kakar said that Israel has violated international law. While Iran President said that Muslim world should labelled Israeli forces as a terrorist. After the end of conference, the session failed in drafting a joint vision for future plan. This shows the change in Arab countries policy towards Israel, many countries during conference opposed proposals that were against the interest of Israel, but they have showed soft corner for them.

DOMESTIC DEBATES

Leaders and authorities in Pakistan have consistently refuted rumours that they had spoken with Israel. Their efforts have been to insist that Pakistan is not becoming closer to Israel, partly because of local pressures and partly because of the delicate nature of the matter. While praising the Oslo Accords and the PLO's and Israel's mutual recognition in September 1993, acting Prime Minister Moin Qureshi reaffirmed Pakistan's refusal to recognise Israel (Pakistan Television, 1993). A few months later, Pakistan promptly refuted an assertion made by the Israeli envoy in New Delhi that both nations' diplomats were in communication over Pakistan's recognition of Israel. Because the Foreign Minister himself had announced the start of an urgent investigation to ascertain which Pakistani officials had made the connections revealed by the Israelis, the Pakistani media was dubious of the official line (The Muslim,

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1993). In January 1994, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs told the legislature that Pakistan does not recognize Israel, and that there was “no question whatsoever of establishing diplomatic relations with that country” (Radio Pakistan, 1994).

A few months prior to the Gaza crisis, in May 1994, Pakistan denied a report from Kol Israel claiming that Prime Minister Bhutto had met with President Ezer Weizman in Johannesburg. The encounter was a step towards normalisation, according to the story, and took place during South African President Nelson Mandela's inauguration. Islamabad disregarded it, calling it a ploy for misinformation (The Muslim, 1994). Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali gave the National Assembly assurances in September that his nation had no immediate plans to recognise Israel because doing so would not serve the interests of Islamic nations as a whole until significant progress was made on the issue of Jerusalem and the implementation of the PLO-Israel accord (Pakistan Television, 1994). The Foreign Ministry of Pakistan strongly refuted reports that Prime Minister Ms. Bhutto had seen Israeli Prime Minister Rabin during the UN's 50th anniversary festivities, only a few weeks prior to his assassination (The News, 1995). US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel revealed in December 1995 that Washington had made repeated requests to Pakistan to recognise Israel and become one of the few Muslim nations to do so, but to no avail (Makovsky, 1993). A few days later, Pakistan's National Assembly was given the reassurance by George Clement, Parliamentary Secretary to the Foreign Minister, that Pakistan was not in the process of recognising Israel and was not participating in any covert negotiations towards that end (Radio Pakistan, 1995). Foreign Minister Asif Ahmed Ali revealed in June 1996 that Pakistan has declined Israel's request for private discussions on significant bilateral problems (The Nation, 1996). A spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry stated several months later that Pakistan's stance towards Israel had not changed (Radio Pakistan, 1996). President Ezer Weizman met his Pakistani counterpart Rafiq Tarar in Ankara in October 1998, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of modern Turkey's independence, according to reports from Israeli media. Tarar went up to shake Weizman's hand. He said Weizman, 'I have heard a great lot about you as a man of peace. The president of Pakistan expressed optimism that they would meet again in the future as they discussed the peace process (Yedioth Ahronoth, 1998). Pakistan strongly refuted the report, as it has done on previous occasions, but its media didn't seem to be persuaded (January, 1998). Behind such denials, however, a serious debate about Israel is taking place in Pakistan.

DISCOURSE ON RECOGNIZING ISRAEL

One argument is that Islamabad, in dealing with Israel, has adopted a twofold strategy. There is evident animosity for it in public. Pakistan often keeps its contacts and communication with the Jewish state under wraps. However, it was during the General Musharraf administration that scholarly and intellectual debate about maintaining any sort of relationship or communication with Israel began in official circles (Kumaraswami, 2006).

Furthermore, it is thought that covert ties between the two nations continued to exist to some degree at the official level. To prevent misunderstandings, messages on crucial subjects have been exchanged. The

USA also hosted forums for direct communication with the ambassadors of two nations. Dr. Yegar, a retired diplomat of Israel, analysed that the “main reasons for Pakistan’s policy toward Israel are:

- (1) Religious solidarity with the Arab-Muslim countries
- (2) Fear of an adverse response by radical Islamist groups throughout the Muslim world
- (3) Concern that establishing diplomatic relations with Israel may cause instability within Pakistan”

(Hirschberg, 2003).

According to some commentators, even if Pakistan opens up to Israel, the anticipated outcomes might not be as favourable as we would like. India might still be able to have a big say in what Israel offers or makes available to Pakistan. As of now, there's been no convincing indication of what Pakistan may gain from moving closer to Israel. The Arab factor is another compulsion. Although the Arabs were not particularly offended or incensed over India's choice to establish diplomatic ties with Israel in January 1992, Pakistan might not be in the same situation because of the Arabs' higher expectations of Pakistan and the country's increased vulnerability (Zaidi, 2005).

The US, the only superpower, has shown total affiliation with the Israelis, which has damaged the Palestinians' standing and position since the conclusion of the Cold War. A compromise and an understanding for peaceful coexistence with the Jewish state were reached as a result of the realities of the new world order, which included the end of the Cold War, America's open inclination and commitment to Israel, the war on terrorism, and the general weakness of the Arab world.

CONCLUSION

Islam teaches directly universal Islamic Brotherhood that requires from all the Muslims to express solidarity and support for any Muslim or Muslim community in trouble. Pakistan that was liberated under an obvious objective that the rights of the Muslims must be protected, it is a core part of its foreign policy that they shall show support to every nation fighting against oppression. The importance of choosing the right moment is paramount in the field of diplomacy. China's relationship with Pakistan evolved from a dispute with India. They are now best friends. Now, Pakistan's ally, the United States of America, has strengthened ties with its once bitter rival, India. Israel may grant Pakistan the same advantages if suitable action is taken in the future. In this case, Pakistan may benefit from its relations with Israel. It is ineffective for Islamabad to just observe from a distance as India and Israel expand their strategic partnership. Instead, Pakistan should work to build positive relations with Israel in order to optimise its own strategic advantages.

As discussed earlier, that no major change in Pakistan’s stance on Palestine issue took place. Continuation has been observed by constant condemnation of Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestine territories. Pakistan stood firmly for the right to self-determination of Palestinians.

However, one should be aware that if Pakistan has not shifted its recognition policy of Israel till now, but some change took place during Musharraf time as Islamabad was getting closer to Israel.

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