Simla Pact: The Great Success for Pakistan

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Establishing pleasant relations with India has always remained a challenge for Pakistani Government. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (1928-1979) tried to establish independent and bilateral relations with India. In the past, as a foreign Minister he played an important role to expose the Indian policies based on the animosity in front of the U.N. as well as international forum. Bhutto considered India as a country having hegemonic design which was a challenge for the security of Pakistan's national existence. He declared the aggression as a permanent element of Indian Foreign Policy and India was declared as an angular child of the world. Bhutto also criticized Tashkant pact in severe terms. There was a common perception about the pact that the President Ayub lost on the table of discussion which was achieved by Pakistani army in the battlefield. Bhutto was deadly against the Tashkand Pact and he was not at all ready to sign that agreement with India on those conditions. Bhutto, due to his contradictory policy against India, acquired the best possible prominence among the Pakistani people and that fame proved helpful to bring him in power. But due to these policies, Bhutto was considered as the worst possible enemy of Bharat. The war of 1971 and separation of East Pakistan caused great tension between the two countries. Because of performance
of Bhutto in the past, it was not only difficult rather impossible for the government of People’s Party to establish good relations with India, however, because of national circumstances it was essential to establish good relations with India. It was the need of the hour that the misunderstandings between India and Pakistan be rectified. The Indian propaganda at International level must be checked. Moreover, there were so many sensitive and complicated problems for the government i.e the problems of the release of the Pakistani prisoners of war, the release of occupied areas of Pakistan, relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh, and those problems were related to India so Bhutto tried to resolve those problems by establishing improved relations with India. The Simla Pact was an attempt to solve those problems. The Simla Pact was a milestone in the history of the Pak-India relations. To rectify the differences caused due to 1971 Pak Bharat war and creation of Bangladesh, this Pact was executed on 2nd July, 1972. With this agreement both the countries got a base to solve their mutual problems. This Pact was executed under unfavourable circumstances. After the mishap of 1971, the position of Pakistan became too weak. The International views were against her. The people of Pakistan turned against the rulers, the morale of the people and the army got low and international media took to derogatory propaganda against Pakistan.

At the time of the peak, the whole of East Pakistan and 5200 miles area of West Pakistan were under the Indian control. More than ninety thousand soldiers and personnel of non military forces were imprisoned in India while the number of Indian prisoners was less as compared to that of Pakistanis in India. All the prisoners of Bharat were male who belonged to army while the Pakistani prisoners comprised of females, children and old aged males also. According to the article 118 of 3rd Geneva Convention, the prisoners of war were to be released at once without any delay after the cease fire, but India was not ready to do so. The discussion with India has always remained a tough issue.
for Pakistan’s Foreign Policy all the time. But the defeat in 1971 made the discussion extremely difficult.

The announcement of Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi (1971-1984), is available in the record that on the separation of East Pakistan the balance of power of the subcontinent had been shifted in favour of India and Pakistan had to prepare its foreign policy in the light of this reality. It was a grave challenge for Pakistan. It meant that Pakistan had come at the level of Nepal and Bhutan. In such circumstances, Bhutto adopted an honourable way of compromise. He, in his speech said, “There is no doubt that history of Pak Bharat is the history of suspicion and the people of the subcontinent have paid great price for it. We are ready to take a fresh start only if India will respond sincerely. We have to take a step forward and at every step there will be test of sincerity of both the parties. We are ready to talk on the basis of principles, not only now but also in future too”. Even Mrs. Indira Gandhi realistically stated in strong words that “We need strong, permanent and friendly relations with new government of Pakistan. We do not insist Islamabad to accept the new government of Dhaka. However, Bangladesh is a reality”. Mrs. Gandhi also announced, “Bharat does not want to weaken Pakistan; at the same time it does not intend that Pakistan in collaboration with its companions should weaken India”. Negotiations for compromise began from Pakistan through the Russian Embassy in Pakistan at Islamabad. By the end of January 1972, Bharat was talking as a conqueror. Bharat demanded of Pakistan the acceptance of Bangladesh and confronting cease-fire line of Kashmir and the resolution of all the disputes at the same time.

In negotiations the demand of Pakistan was that all the disputes be resolved gradually accordingly to their importance. Bhutto up to the 15th February, 1972, remained firm at its policy but on 19th February, 1972, the Indian Interpreter gave his statement that India was ready for negotiations with Pakistan without any prior conditions as it wanted to have a permanent
solution of Kashmir issue and the present condition was in favour of India. Prior to the meeting of heads of the States, a memorandum of understanding was to be prepared for the meeting of Ambassador for mapping out the procedure for the solution of the main problems.

Thus on 20th April, the interpreter of the foreign office of Pakistan gave statement that the Ambassadors of both the countries would meet on 26th April 1972. Thereafter, a meeting between the head of Indian delegation, D. P. Dhar and head of the Pakistani Delegation Mr. Aziz Ahmad was held. Within no time a difference arose in the discussion between D. P. Dhar and Aziz Ahmad. Bharat insisted that the Kashmir issue and the acceptance of Bangladesh issue should be linked with the release of prisoners of war but due to timely interference and efforts of Bhutto, the very difference was resolved. Bhutto accepted the request of Dhar that he would talk to Indira Gandhi in detail on Kashmir issue. So it was settled that in the capital of Hamachal Pradesh Simla, the discussion between Indira and Bhutto would be held on a higher level. After the finalization of the discussions, Bhutto asked for the proposal about the discussions from people having different mindsets. According to the statement of politician Rasool Buksh Paleejo, “The meeting between Bhutto and Indira Gandhi was arranged prior to this date, I received a phone call, to meet the President in Karachi. On reaching the fixed place, it was noticed that Justice Fareed-ud-Din, G. Alana, Sheikh Ayaz and other respectables were present with Bhutto and they were asked for their views about the same proposals relating to the Simla Conference. At that moment, Bhutto said “We are not clamouring, we are very much sincere but if anyone will try to press us under his feet then we will defend ourselves and you people will see how responsibly, seriously and tactfully we will settle the issues with Indira”. Bhutto was very delicate. He went to India with a big delegation and by putting his political position at stake. He came back empty handed. It might have been considered as his defeat. Bhutto was not in a position to talk with
Indira on equal footings, as he was representing a defeated and broken nation.\(^{16}\)

Before leaving for Simla, the President of Pakistan Mr. Bhutto once again made it clear in his speech, “We definitely want peace but not at any cost. We have no desire of getting peace by putting our principles and honour at stake; for the permanent peace in the subcontinent, the removal of the present hitches is essential.”\(^{17}\) One political analyst stated with regard to the weak political position and feelings of Bhutto. At the time of departure for India, Bhutto stated in a very emotional manner, “I am going, pray for me. I have nothing to get in unlimited manner. I have to take prisoners back; I have to get my honour and my land and in return I will give them nothing, just I have to take.”\(^{18}\)

President Bhutto with a delegation comprised of 180 members reached Simla on 28th June, 1972. These meetings proved futile.\(^{19}\) Defeated and weak Pakistan had to face virtuous Bhutto (1953-2008) included in the delegation; Bhutto reached Simla absolutely with empty hands. The diplomatic relations had not been fully developed when negotiations stuck in lock.\(^{20}\) At the time of their meeting there were three important issues before Bhutto; firstly, the problem of return of prisoners of war, secondly, the return of Pakistani occupied territory which was in the possession of Bharat and thirdly the years old Kashmir Issue.\(^{21}\) According to the statement of Foreign Secretary who was then a member of the delegation, “We had to participate in the talks by being at the weak position. In every bargaining, Bharat tried its level best to fulfill its own objectives. There was a news that Kashmir Issue had been resolved whereas the position of Pakistan was very weak. The country was divided and India during the course of discussions used our prisoners and land, which were in her possession as an element and tried to dictate us. But even in such worst circumstances, Pakistan Government remained patient; unlike the leaders of defeated nation, they depended upon their own self. They refused to accept the news and thoughts of India that the division of Kashmir be accepted on constitutional
and legal manner. We tried to save ourselves from the pressure of India every time and even at the end of parleys we refused to sign the agreement. \(^{22}\)

“Bhutto wanted to change the farewell meeting at Embassy into working meeting and was ready to give feast in honour of Bharti Prime Minister as well as her delegation. The members of Pakistani delegation were packing their luggage. The journalists were informed that they should keep their note books. Really Bhutto reached at the residence of the Indian Prime Minister to say thanks for her hospitality. Pleasant atmosphere was transformed into tense situation. Bhutto, at the end stated to Indian Prime Minister that he would not go back without trying for final consensus. He said that deep wounds can be healed by conciliation but if they fail to reach any consensus, then the wound will become incurable. \(^{23}\)

Bhutto made it clear to Indira Gandhi that he was not leading the delegation in the capacity of the chairman of the Pakistan People’s Party or as the President of Pakistan. Infact, he was representing the people of Pakistan and was explaining their stance. Before visiting India, Mr. Bhutto had a successful discussion in favour of his stance with the political leaders of Pakistan, Journalists, Scholars, Members of the Central and Provisional Assemblies and all these things were in the notice of Indian Prime Minister and due to that reason she had to accept the stance and position of Mr. Bhutto. Mr. Bhutto gave arguments to Mrs. Indira Gandhi that Pakistani People would never sacrisce their honour, dignity and independence and the people of India would have to face the difficulties. The disputes of both the countries would provide a chance to the international imperialistic powers to interfere in the affairs of the subcontinent and the agreement finalized by imperialistic powers would be against the welfare of the people of both the countries. So, for the welfare and development of the people of both the countries, it was necessary that we should solve our problems by our own self. He further stated that, “We both are elected democratic leaders of
our countries. We can bring peace to the territory. Army conquerance are part of history but prudential thought made itself a permanent peace. And it is the demand of this prudential thought that we should have vision about our future. What we see today, the reward of it will be achieved in the future. Being victorious it is the turn of India and not of Pakistan to step forward.

While giving arguments Mr. Bhutto stated to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, “If we fail then what will the history of world say? We have been fighting with each other for the last twenty-five years; we have been fighting in the battle field, in the United Nations and other institutions are using the communication. For how long the world will see this fun with patience? The world has other international problems as well to resolve. The world has seen Mr. Kissinger visiting China and this was also noted that they can also go to Moscow then without going into detail why we do not go for a compromise and cooperation irrespective of their limitations.”

“If any party does not intend to take a step ahead or backward then what is the objective of the discussion. If we want an effective change in our relations then we should announce a compromise.” Bhutto pressurized Mrs. Indira Gandhi that if she became successful in establishing permanent peace in the subcontinent, she would appear to be a prudent person.

Mrs. Gandhi in response to Mr. Bhutto stated that she was not making any promise but she would once again consider his advice and would respond at the time of dinner. At night, Mrs. Gandhi arrived for dinner and stated that she was ready for the final peace agreement. At the end of the dinner, Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Bhutto went to small room for negotiation. When both the leaders were discussing issues, the Indian as well as Pakistani and the advisors were present in the billiard room. At last, after the detailed discussion of two hours, the Pact was finalized. On behalf of Pakistani Government Mr. Bhutto and on behalf of Indian
Pakistan and Indian governments decided that both the countries would discontinue fighting and would bring an end to conflicts due to which the relations of both the countries remained tense. Both the governments decided to develop the friendly relationship and to establish permanent peace in the subcontinent. Moreover, the relationship between Pakistan and India would be managed according to the charter of principles and as per objectives. Thereof, to develop the relationship of both the countries better, letter, telegraph and land routes system of communication should be improved gradually and the flights of Air Planes, Science and Cultured exchange should be encouraged.

According to this Pact, the control line of Jammu and Kashmir was to remain the same which was at the time of 17th Dec 1971. The implementation would begin from imposition of the Pact and would be completed within thirty days. The Pact would have to get the approval to the constitutional procedure of the respective countries and the implementation of the same would be started from the date of exchange of documentations. Under the Simla Pact, the territory of Pakistan which was in Indian possession would be taken back within 30 days from the imposition of the Pact and the return of the prisoners of war was left for future discussion. Bhutto had a perspective about the Pows that prisoners were human issue and this problem should be given due importance as they were 93000 in number and that would be inhumane attitude of India if it kept on insisting to keep them for long time. Their accommodation would be another problem. Contrary to it, area could be merged but not the prisoners. The hue and cry of the possession of area would not become the centre of attention on International front while with the POWs it would be.

Simla Pact was implemented on December, 1971. Then Bhutto began to pressurize for the release of the prisoners of war.
and he presented that issue in front of the world as a human issue. Bhutto released all the Indian prisoners unconditionally on 27th December, 1972 on one side bases. This act of Pakistan was very much admired at International level. Bhutto started printing advertisement about miserable conditions of the prisoners of war in International newspapers. Muslim countries and other friendly countries also pressurized India that she should talk on the issue of prisoners of war. So in July 1973, a discussion took place at Islamabad and after the success of the negotiations, another round of talks held in India on 18th August, 1973, in which Pakistan, India and Bangladesh participated.

As a result of that discussion, Delhi Pact was signed. So in compliance to Delhi Pact, the return of the prisoners was started. Therefore, in 1974, Pakistan accepted the establishment of Government of Bangladesh. Then Bangladesh decided that the prisoners, who were imprisoned in Bangladesh, were not to be tried and gave consent to their release.

The last prisoner of the war, General Abdullah Khan Niazi along with those prisoners upon which Government of Sheikh Mujeeb-ur-Rahman (1921-1975) wanted the trial, reached Pakistan on 30th April, 1974. Simla Pact was considered factual by Bhutto and Mrs. Gandhi was also considered as hopeful and realistic. The Simla Pact is an example of diplomatic foresight of the best possible nature in the history of the world. Being a representative of a weak and defeated nation, it was a great achievement to defeat a victorious Indian prejudice on their own land and to bring it on the table of discussion. President Bhutto in his speech of 4th July, 1972 said, “This is the victory of the principles. This is the victory of both countries, Pakistan and India”. There was a mixed reaction of the political parties in Pakistan. National Awami Party (NAP 25th July 1957) and Jamiat ul Ulama Islam (JUI-1945) admired that act but the Pakistan Jamhoori Party (JDP June 1969, Jamiat-ul- Islam Pakistan (JUP-1949), Jamiat-e Islami (1941) and Tehreek-e-istaqal (T-I 1969) opposed this Pact.
According to these political and religious parties, the supremacy of India had been accepted. It was tried to put the passion of Jehad to an end. The Prisoners of war were not released and Pakistan gave up stand of the Kashmir issue\(^{36}\). On 2\(^\text{nd}\) July, 1972, Bhutto while delivering a speech stated "what is the accepted reality? The accepted reality relating to Kashmir issue is available on the resolutions of the United Nations whether it has been implemented or not but the world has approved the same. In Simla Pact there is no such thing that we cannot approach United Nations\(^{37}\). In the Simla Pact, Kashmir is having a disputed status\(^{38}\). Simla Pact was a great success of Pakistan Peoples Party. According to India that pact was signed on equal footings\(^{39}\). While, Bhuto declared it the way of success of Pakistan\(^{40}\).

Notes and References

1. My interview with Maraj Khalid (Late), on June 2002, at Lahore.
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8. Amitave Mukherjee, Indian’s Policy towards Pakistan, New Delhi, Associate Books centre, 1972, P. 53.
10. Keesing’s contemporary Archives, 1972, P. 25431; Also see, Pakistan Horizon, Vol. XXXV, No. 01, 1972, P. 132.
17. Z. A. Bhutto, Address to the Nation, Horizon, Vol. XXV, No. 03, 1972, 112.


27. Benazir Bhutto, Kharja Policy Haqiq KeRoshni main, P. 44-45; also see Abdul Sataar’s interview.


32. Ibid.


37. Ahmed Saleem, Bhutto or Kashmir, P. 76-77.

39. Al India Radio, Urdu service, Aaj Ke Baat, (Programme), Nov.2, 1999, 8.00 AM.