

EUROPEAN UNION AND IT' S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

European Union and Pakistan relationship is not the production of recent events. The bond between the two was officially started on 1976. This article reveals that, like other foreign relations, European Union and Pakistan has also witnessed ups and downs, however both sides has always been clear about their requirements and their expectations throughout the relationship.

Looking back at the history of the EU-Pakistan bond, during the 1998-2008, we have witnessed the turbulence in bilateral relation. Some analyst believe that it was due to the successful nuclear tests by Pakistan that upset European Union because of the anticipation of global peace. Also political experts believe that the turbulence was due to the dictatorship administration. Indeed EU has always been a great supporter for democracy and thus helped Pakistan in democratic transition.

Many summits and agreements has been signed between the European Union and Pakistan, however, noticeably EU has always demanded successful institutionalization of democracy, provision of basic human rights, implementation of good governance, socio-economic development, energy and sectoral cooperation and has always showed their concerns about global peace and security. On the other hand, Pakistan has always been interested in trade and development opportunities for the development of the domestic markets.

Pakistan is also heartily thankful for the friendly gesture provided through monetary aid, delivered as rehabilitation and relief funds especially for 2005 earthquake victims and 2010 flood victims.

KEYWORDS: European Union and It' S Foreign Policy, Basic Human Rights, Implementation of Good Governance, Socio-economic Development, Energy and Sectoral Cooperation

INTRODUCTION

European Union has always been interested in promoting democratic government especially in developing countries and Pakistan is no exception considering this intend. For this obvious reason, EU has started to stretch their foreign policy that maintains healthy relations with Asian countries and want to extend their friendly hand beyond being merely a trading partner. The temperament of EU foreign policies is evident when we look at the beginning of 21st century. EU has realized the need to develop stronger bonds and flexible policies with Asian countries. Pakistan, in this regard is considered as the margin of Asia.

A keen sight on the relationship of EU with Islamic republic of Pakistan yields that the bond between the two parties has grown in recent years especially in the domain of politics, trade and development. Many political analysts believe that EU is still considered as weak political power despite their strong position in world economy. In order to foster

their position, EU has planned to change the view by providing aid in development of democratic government in Pakistan. Their prime strategy is to assist Pakistan's institution building to nurture democracy. The notable areas of mutual cooperation are trade and development, humanitarian assistance, sectoral co-operation especially in the areas of energy, environment, health, transport, migration and climate change. Since both partners share the mutual benefits from such healthy relationship, thus the goal is to strengthen the trust factor and to maintain the glory of this bond persistently, in the long run.

History

Looking back on the history of the relationship between Pakistan and European Community, it is evident that the very first agreement designed to harvest positive association was related to trade and economic cooperation, signed in 1976, although it is considered that European Union relationship with Pakistan was started long before than that. History reveals that European Economic Community established the diplomatic relations with Islamabad, Pakistan in 1962 (Chronology of Bilateral Relations). After several official visits and strategic discussions, Pakistan signed the first trade agreement in 1976. Pakistan and EU have overall signed three Generation agreements on trade.

Lately, in 1985, an office of the European Commission was opened in Islamabad as EU's first official and institutional representative in the country. Then in 1986, after the period of 10 years since first trade agreement, the second generation 5 year agreement was signed which mainly covered economic, commercial and development cooperation (Hilali, 2005).

In 1988, the European Commission Representation was then modified to the level of a Delegation with full diplomatic status. It was decided that the aim of delegation would be to monitor European Commission-Pakistan trade and development support issues with other dominant aspects of the shared interests (Hilali, 2005). The Head of Delegation is now formally recognized as Ambassador to the Head of State of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The third agreement took longer to sign for a variety of reasons and was signed in 2004. The reason for this delay was particularly the clash of political interests of the two players. From 1995, European Union began introducing clauses in its commercial policies related to human rights. The third generation agreement was further delayed after the successful nuclear tests by Pakistan in May 1998 and lately due to the coup of October 1999. During military governance, under the regime of Musharraf's, the relations between the two countries were almost over, except for relief aid. However, when Pakistan backed the US- led coalition in Afghanistan after the tragic event of 9/11, European Union felt to re-start talks with Pakistani government. Although during the Musharraf regime, the ups and downs in the relationship between Pakistan and EU is quite noticeable, yet it cannot be denied that after several years of plain silence, such circumstances were formed that gave powerful boost to rebuild EU- Pakistan relationship. Since 1999 coup, EU had sent many delegations from time to time to enforce democracy and to persuade General Musharraf to hold elections. From the beginning, EU has always promoted democracy and due to this reason, General Musharraf was pressurized several times to allow a civilian government to form. In 2002, the reforms were made in Pakistan but undertook election was not satisfactory in the eyes of EU and the European Observation Mission described it as non-democratic. This response further limited the relation of the two countries.

Finally, in 2004, after much delay and adjournment, the Third Generation Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development with Pakistan was signed with the establishment of EU- Pakistan Joint Commission. This agreement is

now regarded as the basis for the current legal and political realm, to strengthen the relationship.

Currently, the relations are quite healthy after the successful co-operational plan. In the last five years, the co-operational plan has extended its concerns by specifying strategic and political policies, security, democracy, governance, human rights and socio-economic development; trade and investment; energy; and sectoral cooperation. Several meetings at the official level was conducted at EU- Pakistan Joint Commission. The first meeting was held in Islamabad in May 2007, the second took place in Brussels in March 2009 and the final and third in Islamabad in March 2010 respectively.

In recent years, EU has generally become much interested in the continent of Asia and played an active role in developing Asian economy. Now, it seems EU has been much more fascinated, beyond China and Indian economy, and is generally engrossed in other developing Asian countries. It is quite evident that EU now wants to be an active player in politics and not just merely a trading partner. EU wants to assert itself in the Asia to remove the tag of a passive money-spender and to prove itself as a democratic-enthusiast. That was the prime reason behind the criticism by EU on Musharraf's coup. In November 2007, when General Musharraf imposed emergency in the state, European Union not only condemned the action but also pressurized Musharraf to end the emergency. EU also pleaded to hold an early election so that democratic system could be established. The EU parliament also passed a resolution condemning and criticizing harshly, on the decision of General Musharraf of imposing emergency, however, EU did not impose any kind of sanctions to cut off the monetary aid to the state. At that time, being the prime trading partner and aid provider, EU provided about 330 million euros as monetary aid and 100 million euros for the purpose of relief and rehabilitation, for earthquake victims of year 2005. This gave them a strong political edge to exert influence and to impact the strategic decisions about future of Pakistani politics and foreign policies.

“Democracy and fundamental rights and freedoms are among the core values on which the EU is founded and was able to sustain stability. Stability can only be achieved and sustained through democracy and through respect for fundamental rights and freedom.”(EU Blue Book Pakistan 2008, 2008)

When General Musharraf conducted the general elections in February 2008, the European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) criticized the management for not conducting the electoral reforms up to the standard and pin pointed all the faults and errors. It was said that the general elections of February 2008 was failed to match international standard. The European Union Election Observation Mission comprised of 130 members which is sufficient to show the deep interest of EU in establishing a democratic government (Dawn, 2008).

This was not the first time for European Union to support democracy in any country. Prior to that EU has already experience of establishing democracy in Spain, Portugal, Greece, Poland and all of the newly admitted East and Central European states. Even Spain, Portugal and Greece which are now considered an important member of EU, discarded dictatorship and dictatorial systems for democracy and EU has always been supported them in their democratic transition phase.

The EU is also a member of the Friends of Pakistan forum, which was launched in September 2008 to help in the consolidation of democracy in the country.

With the Pakistani elections that held on 18 February 2008, Pakistan People Party secured the largest popularity votes and thus EU was now in much more comfortable position to deal with a democratically selected civilian government. After the establishment of PPP's government, the prime purpose of EU since then, has been to support the democratic

transition and associate democratic institutions. Considering their intention of facilitating democracy, consensual dialogue was arranged through two summits that held in 2009 and 2010.

First Summit (2009)

The 2009 summit is regarded as the first EU-Pakistan summit, which was held on 17th of June in Brussels. On behalf of Pakistan, Pakistani President of that time, Asif Ali Zardari attended the summit. The European Delegation included representatives from different countries and fields. Vaclav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic, José Manuel DurãoBarroso, President of the European Commission, and Javier Solana, High Representative for the EU's Common and Security Policy were the main profiles who attended the 2009 EU-Pakistan summit. Altogether, the discussion was on security related issues, primarily because Pakistan, at that time, was the victim of growing terrorism and insecurity. The collaboration between Pakistan and EU on security related issues was mainly to counter terrorism impact especially in the field of law enforcement and criminal justice. EU also demanded to strengthen the police force to ease the enforcement of laws and regulations. Other issues discussed in 2009 summit were the security condition especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the related tribal areas. EU main emphasize was to retain the regional stability and firm the security conditions so that the relations with the fellow countries would flourish. They also offered aid in the mission of achieving sustainable energy supplies, as Pakistan was at that time facing acute power shortage.

On the other hand, Pakistan's perspective was to discuss their further access to European markets. The government of Pakistan was interested in developing domestic markets and for this purpose they requested for the additional and easy access to European markets for Pakistani goods and preferential tariff regime concessions.

In December 2009, treaty of Lisbon came into force. As a result of positive effect of this treaty, the office of the European Commission was then turned in to a fully-fledged delegation in Islamabad. The European Delegation was operated under Lars-Gunnar Wigemark who was recognized as ambassador of EU in Pakistan and thus was credited as head of delegation. Under Lars-Gunnar Wigemark, 80 members were the part of the European Delegation staff. The duties assigned for the delegation were the coordination with other consulates and ambassadors of other member states to represent the interests, policies and requirements delivered by EU. The formation of fully-fledged delegation in Islamabad was taken as an intention by the both parties to begin a long term relationship by many political analysts. Many civil experts believed that granting the status of ambassador to the head of the delegation adds to the institutionalization of the presence of the EU in Pakistan.

Second Summit (2010)

The second summit that took place between EU and Pakistan was held in Brussels in June 2010. In this summit, once again the entire focus of EU was on the prevalent peace and development in the state that could sustain the shared values, mutual principles and dualistic commitments. (Dawn, 2010)

On behalf of European Commission, Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and José Manuel DurãoBarroso, President of the European Commission, and Karel de Gucht, Commissioner for Trade, attended Brussels summit, while as representatives of Pakistan, Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Foreign Minister, and Makhdoom Mohammad Amin Fahim, Commerce Minister were present.

According to the official joint statement, the aim of this summit was to discuss and finalize the strategic basis for a dialogue that supports the partnership in context of peace and development, fulfilling mutual interests and concerns. In

the given context, both sided representatives reaffirmed their determination to face the global and regional security issues cooperatively. Additionally, EU confirmed their assistance in trade and economics, provision of human aid and assured Pakistan of further steps that will strengthen Pakistan's democratic civilian government and institutions. On the other hand, Pakistan promised to take actions that will ensure respect for human rights in the state. European Union provision of human assistance was aimed at relocating and for the relief of the victims of 2010 flood. (Dawn, 2010). Both parties also mutually agreed on a five year plan that will fortify their collaboration on politics, security, economics and development.

Although, EU reassured their assistance in trade and economics, however they made it clear that additional access to EU markets by Pakistani goods would take around one to three years and thus would not have any immediate trade concessions.

Pakistan's economy at that time was under severe stress due to the alarming situation of terrorism. Pakistan was facing the consequences of fight against extremism and terrorism, but the EU, despite their promise to lenient trade opportunities, did not offer Pakistani products a tariff free entry under the GSP plus scheme. The EU specified that it would grant GSP plus status to Pakistan in 2014. (Dawn, 2010)

When in 2010, terrible floods hit Pakistan, the state went into a very distressing situation. At that time, the EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton urged the alliance to help Pakistan and provide all the assistance in fighting terrorism with an ease in two-pronged trade and not just merely provide humanitarian aid. Germany and UK strongly supported this suggestion of Ashton but the southern European countries having the prominent textile industries, opposed this recommendation. (Dawn., 2010)

There were also certain trepidations about the likely negative impact on jobs in the European textile and clothing industry, which is the prime reason of the majority of EU members favoring traditional aid rather than enhanced trade opportunities and benefits. In the end, the EU and its member states decided to provide 200 million euros for 2010 flood victims and also agreed to allow 75 Pakistani goods and products with duty free access to the EU markets for a time period of three years, but Pakistan's premium quality key products like knitwear, bed linen, apparel and home textiles which are considered major value added products, were excluded from this proposal.

The EU and Pakistan signed a memorandum of acceptance on civilian capacity building for law-enforcement in the country in November 2010. (Dawn., 2010) The agreement primarily aimed at technical assistance from the EU in order to build the capacity of the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and the provincial police forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab district.

The Five Year Engagement Plan (2012)

On 2nd March 2012, another milestone in relationship of EU-Pakistan was attained- the five year engagement plan. The five year engagement plan was envisioned during the summits and was issued in the joint statements, given after the EU-Pakistan summits of 2009 and 2010 respectively. Both sides seemed equally appreciative regarding this 5 year engagement plan. The *EU-Pakistan 5-year Engagement Plan* was adopted in 2012, after the Lisbon Treaty came into force. It comprises of strategies and policies related to politics, security, democracy, governance, human resources, socio-economic development, energy, sectoral cooperation, trade and investment.

The most noticeable feature of the EU's policy towards Pakistan is the link established between its economic and commercial policy and democracy and human rights. (EU-Pakistan 5-year Engagement Plan , 2012)

The *5-Year Engagement Plan (2007-13)* was developed according to the documents conscripted by Pakistan; Vision 2030, Medium-term Development Framework (MTDF) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP-I, 2004). These documents follow the recommendations of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals' strategies, which is entirely focused on halving poverty between 1990 and 2015. The latest policy agenda, *EU-Pakistan Multi-Annual Indicative Program (2014-20)*, has varied slightly. The main documents used in the policy agenda are Vision 2025 and PRSP-II (2010). PSPR is a comprehensive country-based strategy, purposed for poverty reduction and a requirement by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank from countries considered for debt relief or before receiving aid from donors. The document should consist of an assessment of poverty and a description of 'the macroeconomic, structural, and social policies and programs that the country will pursue over several years to promote economic growth and reduce poverty, as well as external financing needs and the associated sources of financing'. (IMF, 2015) The outlines of the policy agenda for Pakistan are based on three sectors:

- Rural Development (€340 million). This sector has three specific objectives: reinforcement of the policies and strategies designed by local government structures; improvement of rural lives by supplementing the nutritional status of women and children in rural areas.

Pakistan's majority of population is still basically rural, and in rural areas poverty is more prevalent. Its urban population, though increasing, stands at 36.8% and rural population comprising the big chunk. Thus agriculture remains important for the economy of the country. It accounts for 25% of the GDP and employs around 40% of the labor force. Health expenditure is barely 2.5% of GDP and Pakistan still has to fight against polio, high infant mortality rates (69 per 1,000), a high maternal mortality ratio (260 deaths per 100,000 live births), malnutrition (58%) and severe food insecurity (28%). (COMMISSION, 2014-2020)

- Education (€210 million). The specific objectives included are to improve equal opportunities or access to education, to increase the quality of education and to boost the productive capacity and employability of workers. The UNDP Human Development Index (2014) shows Pakistan ranking among the lowest (146th out of 198), with one of the lowest investments in education (2.4% of GDP). Only 54.9% of the population is literate (2005-12). The figures presented in PRSP-II show that literacy-rate growth is too slow (53% in 2004/05, 54% in 2005/06 and 55% in 2006/07 respectively). (COMMISSION, 2014-2020)

Another problem that has been linked with future is the lack of a skilled workforce. Pakistan's population is considered to be above 182 million (2013) about half of which is aged below 25. Given its growth rate (an average annual growth rate of 1.7 and a fertility rate of 3.2 for 2010-15), its population might be above 231 million by 2030. This demographic pressure will continue to contribute to high unemployment and unstable migration patterns. (COMMISSION, 2014-2020)

- Good governance, human rights and the rule of law (€97 million). The specific objectives are to support the smooth running of democratic institutions and proper operations of electoral processes at all levels, supporting the federalization and decentralization of the public administration in provinces and districts and to improve security conditions and the rule of law. Pakistan ranks 108th of 167 countries in the Democracy Index (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014) and 126th of 175 countries according to the Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2014). Security is still believed to be one of the main concerns that affects the country at all levels. (COMMISSION, 2014-2020)

Considering the above strategic plan provided for the state, EU has increased its disbursement in humanitarian aid and development cooperation by €600 million per year as compared to their previous plan. The EU also aims to increase the level of cooperation with its member states as well as other donors. The EU delegation including Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, France and Italy seems quite promising to implement medium to long term cooperation programs with Pakistan representing about 95% of all EU assistance to the state.(COMMISSION, 2014-2020)

The development and humanitarian projects by EU cover a wide range of sectors including;

- Peace building and sustaining stability.
- Fostering democratic institutionalization.
- Supporting human rights.
- Building macroeconomic stability through economic growth which will eventually lead to poverty reduction and increasing equal job opportunities for all.
- Ensuring basic human rights provision and basic public services to everyone including education, health, water, sanitation and social safety and protection.
- Facilitating regional integration to promote peace in the state. (COMMISSION, 2014-2020)

The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) started its operations in Pakistan in the 1990s. In 2013 it made the second biggest contribution to the country (€55 million, or 27% of total foreign aid), while it allocated €45 million in 2014, €5 million of which was aimed at assisting internally-displaced people. Pakistan's poverty showed regional disparities. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with FATA and Baluchistan are considered most poor and vulnerable areas whereas in Sindh undernourishment is one big issue, due to which people of Thar and rural areas suffer. In Sindh, ECHO is developing a program for undernourished children and food insecurity.(IMF, 2015)

The EU as pointed out earlier has often communicated its concerns regarding association of democracy in Pakistan, which will bring the much-needed stability to the country.(Dawn, 2012)

Recent Years (2012-2014)

Summits have since then been followed by Strategic Dialogue meetings. The first was held in Islamabad in April 2013, while the latest took place in Brussels in March 2014. On 12 December 2013 (to become effective on 1 January 2014), the EU granted Pakistan the much sought-after GSP+ status by an overwhelming majority. This initiative has facilitated the entrance of Pakistan's products at a zero tariff and more than 70% at a preferential rate. Therefore the trade surplus with the EU enjoyed by Pakistan since 2010 is expected to increase in the following years. Pakistan's exports are mainly textiles (41.8%), clothing (33.6%) and leather products (13.5%). The EU exports mechanical and electrical machinery (48%), chemicals and pharmaceuticals (13.5%) and telecommunication equipment (12.4%).

In April 2012, the European Union allocated 20 million euros in philanthropic aid for the large number of people moved internally in Khyber Agency owing to security operations. This was considered as a measure to avert a new humanitarian crisis in the country.(Dawn, 2012) In June 2012 Catherine Ashton, the head of EU Foreign and Security Policy, arrived in Islamabad to launch a strategic dialogue and pledge the new five year engagement plan to promote assistance in the areas of trade, investment, human rights, governance, energy, education and socio-economic development.

On 5th June 2012, the first EU-Pakistan Strategic dialogue took place in Islamabad. The launch of Strategic dialogue and the engagement plan are considered as opportunity to strengthen relations by building full range of EU-Pakistan Cooperation from trade and development to security policies. According to EU foreign policy Chief Catherine Ashton, EU wants to capitalize on the momentum in the bond between the two created by special trade measures that has been adopted in 2010. Additionally, due to the 2010 floods and the support provided after that in form of humanitarian assistance makes the bond between the two stronger. (EU and Pakistan launch Strategic Dialogue, 2012)

The European Commission in September 2012, announced that it would release another 15 million euros in aid to Pakistan for flood victims. With the addition of this amount, the EU's monetary aid for the year 2012 rose to 70 million euros. In November 2012, the EU provided 1.2 million euros as funding to the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) to carry out a climate change influence assessment study in Swat basin for the Munda dam project which is located in Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).(Times, 2012)

There is quite clear that the EU provides aid and grants and in return demands good governance, democratic development, security sector reforms, the rule of law, human rights and administrative and economic reforms. The EU is willing to send authorities to build Pakistan's capacity to better captivate international financial assistance. It is interested in providing support for the police and judicial system. The course of Pakistan's national politics has always been uncertain, which has a definite impact on its foreign relations. However, strong civilian institutions, an uninterrupted democratic process and a strong and sustainable economy can bring stability and in this regard international support is very important.

On April 3rd 2013, European Union deployed Election Observation Mission Pakistan 2013, responding to Pakistan's invitation. Election observation has been created as a dynamic component of European Union activities to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law worldwide. Election observation is aimed to contribute to strengthen democratic institutions, build public confidence in electoral processes and help deter fraud, intimidation and violence. Election observation also aims to serve to reinforce other key European Union foreign policy objectives, particularly peace-building. Since 2000 over 120 EU Election Observation Missions (EU EOMs) have been arranged to all continents, following a longstanding observation method to evaluate election processes on the basis of international standards and best practices for sincere democratic elections. In addition to election observation, the European Commission is also engaged in election assistance, which provides technical or material support to electoral processes. (EOM: What we do?, n.d.)

On 12th December 2013, European Union has granted GSP+ status to Pakistan by overwhelming majority. The European Parliament voted on a resolution challenging to the delegated act presented by the European Commission, granting GSP+ to ten countries including Pakistan. The resolution was defeated with 409 votes against and 182 in favor. In other words, a vast majority of Members of the European Parliament supported the granting of GSP+ status to Pakistan.(Press Release, 2013)

GSP+ had become effective from 1 January 2014. Due to GSP+ status, the European Commission's introductory approximation is that exports from Pakistan will increase by EURO 574 million annually as a result of the reduction of tariffs on over 90 per cent of all product categories exported by Pakistan to the EU.(Press Release, 2013)

On this occasion the EU Ambassador Lars-Gunnar Wigemark appreciated the resolution and said: it as a remarkable day for EU-Pak relationship. Furthermore, he said that the granting of GSP+ shows the importance the

European Union attaches to its relations with Pakistan. HE regarded GSP+ for not merely expanding and facilitating Pakistan's trade with the European Union, but GSP+ will also promote economic growth and create much needed jobs across Pakistan. In order to fully avail the opportunity provided by EU, Pakistani business community will require improvements in the business climate in Pakistan, including access to energy. While this was indeed a milestone in history of EU-Pakistan relations, the GSP+ regime calls for Pakistan to fully implement its commitments under 27 international conventions on human rights, good governance, labor and environmental standards. Although it is the Government at both federal and provincial level who is accountable for implementations of such standards, the business community can play a significant role, for instance by ensuring labor rights, including employing more women in the work place and making sure that there is no exploitation of child labor. Improving human rights, including labor standards, is definitely win-win situation for Pakistan and the EU. (Press Release, 2013)

On 25th March 2014, 2nd EU-Pakistan strategic dialogue took place again in Brussels. The 2nd Session of the EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue was held in between High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, and Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on National Security and Foreign Affairs. The dialogue included extensive consideration of regional and global issues and the respectable advancement was made in strengthening relations, including through the Five-Year Engagement Plan adopted in 2012. The High Representative Catherine Ashton emphasized the EU's persistent support for democratic institutions and rule of law in Pakistan. Pakistan thanked the European Union for its addition in the GSP + scheme. Both sides agreed that this could provide an important contribution to growth and employment in Pakistan as well as benefit to promote sustainable development and good governance objectives. (Joint Press Release- 2nd EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, 2014)

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