

# ***Sixty Years of Pakistan-Cuba Diplomatic Relations (1955-2015)***

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## **Abstract**

*The fundamental principle of Pakistan's foreign policy is to support the cause of developing countries. Pakistan has always raised voice against injustice, illegal occupation, colonialism and all forms of foreign aggression, domination, and interference as well as the hegemony of great powers. It has consistently supported the cause of oppressed and exploited nations; seeking social justice and fair treatment in the world affairs. In this regard, Pakistan desires to develop a partnership with other countries from Caribbean and Latin America for economic and commercial interests. Such partnership will also promote Islamabad objectives of fostering stability, prosperity and human security. So, the Latin American region will be a better option for Pakistan which has benefited greatly in recent years from democratic opening, stable economic policies, and increasing growth. Thus, in the changing global environment, it has become a fundamental principle of Pakistan's foreign policy to pursue its objectives through the policy of promoting integration between the peripheral states and to focus its efforts towards enhancing socio-political stability and economic prosperity.*

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## **Introduction**

Foreign policy is a political strategy of a sovereign country for its interaction with other sovereign entities. It invariably seeks to protect and promote national interest.<sup>1</sup> In the contemporary state system, foreign policy is an integral part of the world politics and is perceived as an effective instrument for friendly and adversary countries in the world.<sup>2</sup> Foreign relations with other countries are primarily of diplomatic nature in order to achieve political and strategic objectives.<sup>3</sup> Each country's foreign policy is linked to a particular ideology and has specific goals. In this regard, the basic purpose of Pakistan's foreign policy is to create an atmosphere of cordiality, fraternity, and mutual understanding with all nations of the world.

Pakistan's connection with Caribbean countries and Latin American nations has been limited as India has been the main factor in Pakistan's foreign policy. This factor hampered the country's diplomatic horizon. The perennial disputes with India pushed policy makers to favour contact with developed countries to obtain economic and military assistance to deal with the perceived threat of India.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, there was diplomatic competition between India and Pakistan which became the common feature in the conduct of foreign policy. This situation warped the whole international outlook and prevented policy makers from extending friendship to Caribbean, West Indies and Latin American countries. In addition, Pakistan had neither economic nor strategic interests in these countries resultantly, established only consulate level relations with some countries.

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1 Joseph S. Nye, *New Dimensions in World Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 34-56.

2 Andrew Berding, *Foreign Affairs and You: How American Foreign Policy is Made and What It Means to You* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1962), 11.

3 Berding, *Foreign Affairs and You*, 11-12.

4 G. W. Choudhury, *Pakistan's Relations with India 1947-1966* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), 8.

After the end of the Cold War, Pakistan's priorities changed. Decision makers reshaped foreign policy to attract major countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Cuba and Mexico to gain trade benefits and diplomatic support in the 'War on Terror.' Islamabad has shown desire to engage in Caribbean and Latin American region in a closer partnership. The countries of the region responded favourably to Pakistan and perceived that Islamabad's foreign policy reflected the broader vision. Despite common interests between the people of Caribbean and Latin American countries with Pakistan, a majority of the people remain largely ignorant of each other. In fact, Islamabad had a parochial approach to international politics and Caribbean and Latin American understanding about the South Asian region. This mutual limitation complicated the relationships and both sides underwent a sharp crisis of confidence. Thus, India is a house-hold name in Caribbean, West Indies and Latin America as compared to Pakistan and academic scholars discussed Islamabad as part of United States global strategic representation rather than an independent entity.<sup>5</sup>

In the post-Cold War era, Pakistan radically changed its foreign policy to meet the emerging challenges of a new global system. Its foreign policy was in a crucial transition because of intensifying diplomatic competition and geo-political changes in the world. The country was in danger of diplomatic isolation but policy makers changed traditional policy with the objectives to gain economic advantages. Pakistan was determined to build a diplomatic edifice that could be more enduring in the expanding diplomatic space and opportunities offered by the new horizon of the world. The successive governments in Pakistan initiated universal diplomatic support from all quarters including major countries of Caribbean and Latin America using innovative and novel

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5 B. Muralidhar Reddy, "Pakistan through American Eyes", *The Hindu*, May 25, 2011.

means to promote national interests.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, policy makers recommended building bridges with Argentina, Brazil, Cuba (ABC countries), and Mexico promoting core values of national interests. Time forced Pakistan's policy makers to develop new ideas and make a new approach before events would overtake and 'surprise' the pundits of foreign policy. On the other hand, Pakistan was perceived by many Caribbean and Latin American policymakers and strategists as an enviable model for rapid economic, industrial and trade relationship.<sup>7</sup> So, the vacuum was filled by policy makers taking 'high profile' decisions to include major Caribbean and Latin American countries emphasizing on enhancement of trade and commerce relations.

The reasons for Caribbean and Latin America's interest in Pakistan are equally compelling with the end of the Cold War and distances shrinking due to globalization. Caribbean, West Indies and Latin America become pragmatically relevant for Pakistan's economic and commercial needs. Further, new trends in global politics and Indian factor may have prompted this indication to cultivate relations with these countries. It was not possible for Pakistan to depend entirely on Europe, Japan and the United States for economic stability and sustainable development. Caribbean and Latin American countries, grouped into regional alliances, began to restore the role of society in economic and political life; restraining the power of transnational corporations and local oligarchs. Such measures stimulated Pakistan's elites to strengthen economic growth of the country which is necessary to meet the challenges of emerging Asian markets. For its part, Caribbean and Latin America were looking for new commercial partners that would help in diversifying its markets and get rid of North American hegemony. For this purpose, Pervez Musharraf's regime and

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6 Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Reagan Administration and Coercive Diplomacy: Restraining More Than Remaking Governments," *Political Science Quarterly*, 106, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 57-82.

7 John Welch, "Latin American and Caribbean States urged strong ties with Pakistan", *The Nation*, July 7, 2010.

its successor President Asif Ali Zardari, launched a proactive policy of rapprochement with Caribbean and Latin American countries as a priority. Pakistan needs relations with all the continents due to geo-economic reasons and is interested in materializing natural resources, hydrocarbon and minerals.

### **History of Pak-Cuba Relations**

Strategically, Cuba is situated in Caribbean Sea which is the part of Atlantic Ocean and is located in the tropics of the western hemisphere. In fact, Caribbean Sea is one of the largest in the world and has area of about 2,754 km. In the North of Cuba lies the United States (150km), the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands are to the North-east. Mexico is to the West (210km), the Cayman Islands and Jamaica are to the South and Haiti and the Dominican Republic (main countries of West Indies in the westernmost or just West of Hispaniola) are to the South-east. The country, as an island was an isolated land in the world but Castro's revolutionary actions such as nationalization of US oil refinery companies and the CIA failed spy programme against Fidel Castro at the Bay of Pigs on the southern coast popularized Cuba in the world. Another issue which is very elusive historical event given worldwide recognition was Cuban missile crisis of 1962. In fact, the US planes photographed Soviet long-range strategic missiles (SS-20) and associated nuclear warheads installations in Havana.<sup>8</sup> The country was blocked by US until the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw the missiles, in exchange for a US government pledge to launch no more offensive operations against the country. Thus, Cuban missile crisis had assumed genuinely mythic significance because it was the most dangerous crisis the world had ever seen, and it was the only time when the nuclear superpowers came eyeball to eyeball.<sup>9</sup>

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8 James G. Blight, Joseph S. Nye, Jr and David A. Welch, "The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited", *Foreign Affairs* 66, no. 1 (Fall 1987): 170-88.

9 Blight, *et.al.*, "The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited".

Pakistan and Cuba formally established diplomatic relations on October 28, 1955 but Islamabad did not establish an embassy in Havana until 1963. Cuba opened its embassy in Islamabad in the same year but closed it in 1968 due to internal political and economic crisis. It reopened in 1980 and during 1990s Cuba again engulfed in serious domestic problems and ultimately closed many foreign missions including Pakistan. However, Pakistan and Cuba maintained a good level of exchanges at international forums and meetings. The year 2005 marks the watershed between the two countries. Pakistan's devastating earthquake in October 2005 shocked the world community. Many countries including Cuba came forward to provide humanitarian assistance to Pakistan. Thus, natural disaster became a catalyst between the two countries to re-establish diplomatic relations and showed willingness to strengthen bilateral understanding. On May 24, 2006 President Pervez Musharraf and Deputy Foreign Minister of Cuba Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla held a meeting to expand relations in the field of education, culture, agriculture, food, science and technology and in military cooperation. In April 2008, the Federal Cabinet of Pakistan approved negotiations on an agreement between Havana and Islamabad to form Pakistan-Cuba Joint Economic Commission with the goal to expand economic cooperation especially in agriculture, industrial development and medical sciences. Historically, Pakistan and Cuba relations have been warm and friendly. Pakistan was amongst the first countries to extend recognition to Cuban revolution (1959) and Prime Minister Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardi showed solidarity with Cuban people's struggle and sent best wishes to the Fidel Castro as the great revolutionary leader.<sup>10</sup> Successor governments reiterated that Pakistan's foreign policy has to firmly support the nations who are under siege of imperialism in the

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10 "Pakistan supports the struggle of Cuban people for their rights", See *Morning News*, Karachi, March 18, 1958.

colonized, semi-colonized and neo-colonized regions.<sup>11</sup> Since the beginning, Pakistan opposed hegemonism and domination; encouraged developing good-neighbourly relations, strengthening unity and cooperation amongst Third World Nations; establishing friendly cooperative ties with all nations on the basis of the principles of Peaceful Coexistence and actively enhancing the friendly people-to-people contacts throughout the world.

### **Pakistan's Policy towards Cuba during the Cold War**

To some extent, the United States was unable to prevent Pakistan diplomatic support to the Cuban revolution but in general Pakistan's position was ambiguous because of 'Indo-centric policy'. In order to maintain relations with the US, Islamabad used ambiguous means to express its unity with Cuban people. In 1957, Feroz Khan Noon as foreign minister supported the cause of revolutionary struggle of Cuban people, their national independence and decolonization.<sup>12</sup> Later his successor Manzur Qadir also clarified that the menace of India made it impossible for Pakistan to support Cuban people.<sup>13</sup> Pakistan adopted ambiguous policy being convinced that the US would never provide help to Pakistan in case of Indian aggression even as a member of SEATO and CENTO but ingratiate the country with the United States for potential economic benefits. This has been one of the reasons that Pakistan criticized US in several statements made by foreign minister Manzur Qadir and other high officials.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Sino-Indian war (1962) disturbed US-Pakistan relations and the country's leadership showed dissatisfaction to US administration. Undoubtedly, US support to India changed its

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11 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *Foreign Policy of Pakistan 1962-1964* (Speeches made in the National Assembly of Pakistan) (Karachi: Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, 1965), 23-48; and see also Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *The Myth of Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 159-359.

12 Feroz Khan Noon, "Pakistan and its relations with the West", *Pakistan Times*, Lahore, August 14, 1957.

13 *New York Times*, April 28, 1964.

14 See *Dawn*, April 8, 1959 and June 3, 1960.

commitment to Pakistan and Washington declined to increase economic and strategic assistance.<sup>15</sup>

In these circumstances, Pakistan isolated itself from the Vietnam War and Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) and avoided supporting America as a reaction to US military and economic assistance to New Delhi during Sino-Indian War.<sup>16</sup> The US wanted Pakistan as a member of SEATO to contribute for Washington's efforts against North Vietnam and Havana. However, the pressure on Pakistan by the US administration for support through SEATO failed because the leadership refused to submit.<sup>17</sup> At that time, the wave of profound anti-American feeling was high because of US policy against Cuba.<sup>18</sup> The Cuban Missile crisis shocked Pakistani policy makers<sup>19</sup> because the world was at the edge of a third world war. It was absolutely impossible for Pakistan to give diplomatic support to US on Vietnam and Cuban Missile Crisis because US administration ignored the sensitivity of Pakistan and desired that all partners of the SEATO-CENTO must back US.<sup>20</sup> In response, the US administration minimized Pakistan's leverage over US in economic and political matters and successfully tempered Pakistan foreign policy and weakened its capacity of manoeuvrability against Washington in its relations with new nation states. After the end of the crisis, the US and the former Soviet Union entered into a more stable phase, as

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15 Selig Harrison, "America, India and Pakistan: A Chance for a Fresh Start", in *Harpers Magazine*, 233, no. 1394 (1966): 56-63.

16 Bhutto, *Myth of Independence*, 90-91 and 99.

17 Bhutto, *Myth of Independence*, 129; and also see *The Quest of Peace 1963-1965* (Selections from Speeches and Statements) (Karachi: Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, 1966), 29; and see also *Public Papers of the Presidents Johnson's* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Press, 1965), 279, 678 and 738.

18 *New York Times*, April 28, 1964; and see *Dawn*, June 29, 1965.

19 Bhutto, *Foreign Policy of Pakistan 1962-1964*, 43-57; and see also *Pakistan News Digest*, November 1962, 3-8.

20 *Dawn*, August 8, 1964, March 7, 1967; and see also *New York Times*, July 18, 1965, 6.



the Washington and Moscow shifted crisis from direct confrontation to a series of proxy wars.

### **Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Support to Cuba**

During the Cold War, Pakistan was the victim of alliance politics because by joining SEATO-CENTO neither sufficiently fulfilled its security needs nor did it receive satisfactory economic assistance. It fired anger and created dependence and challenges, losing its reputation and credibility within and outside the region without containing conflicts and hostility. Bhutto felt betrayed because SEATO-CENTO were paper tigers failing to prevent Indo-Soviet aggression against Pakistan and to protect the country from the trauma of defeat and dismemberment. As a result, Bhutto withdrew from SEATO in November 1972 and CENTO was disbanded following the fall of the King of Iran Raza Shah in March 1979. Pakistan then joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1979 to enter the bloc of 118 member states. Bhutto as a foreign minister and prime minister opposed Western colonialism and imperialism and his government promoted people-to-people contacts with the Third World countries including the Cuban revolutionary government.<sup>21</sup> Bhutto's government developed mutually beneficial and friendly co-operative relations with Cuba and other Latin American countries. On one of the occasions, Bhutto mentioned that the people of Pakistan greatly admired the national accomplishments of the Cuban people in fields of agriculture and medicine, and had, like many others learned from Cuba's economic development model.<sup>22</sup>

### **Cuba's Efforts for Earthquake Victims**

After the earthquake in Pakistan, Cuba helped in troubled areas and provided significant medical and technical assistance for the victims. On October 9, 2005, President Fidel Castro offered Musharraf his condolences and sent him his token of solidarity together with an offer to send

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21 Bhutto, *Foreign Policy of Pakistan 1962-1964*, 24-46.

22 Bhutto, *Foreign Policy of Pakistan 1962-1964*.

physicians and medical provisions.<sup>23</sup> The Cuban government sent Henry Reeve<sup>24</sup> International Team's first contingency of 200 doctors; of whom 85 arrived within 48 hours.<sup>25</sup> On October 11, 2005, Castro proposed to increase the medical staff on the request of Islamabad up to 800 specialists; of whom 130 arrived within 72 hours.<sup>26</sup> Cuba sent one of the largest numbers of relief medical team which consisted of approximately 2,500 physicians or doctors and paramedical staff (including Nurses and technicians) and established around 44 field hospitals and two relief camps in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Kashmir.<sup>27</sup> Cuban doctors and staff remained for seven months in the most remote areas in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, attended 1,743,244 patients, which represented 73 percent of all the patients assisted after the earthquake.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the Cuban government also provided 150 tons of medicine and surgical instruments. Thirty amputee patients were flown to Cuba for special treatment. Dr. Juan Carlos Martín, Director of the Cuban field hospital in Muzaffarabad mentioned that the Cuban revolutionary government "not only sent doctors and

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23 *Times of India*, September 19, 2006.

24 Henry Reeve was US volunteer social activist who was killed in Cuba's first war for independence (1868-1878).

He arrived in Cuba in 1869 aboard the vessel *Perrit* as part of an Expeditionary Force. The expedition was ambushed by the Spanish Army while unloading and Reeve was taken prisoner, along with many others. A Spanish firing squad shot the group, and left them unburied and presumed dead. Reeve was wounded but had enough strength to creep away and was found by units of the Cuban Army.

Fidel Castro created the Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disasters and Serious Epidemics in honour of him on September 19, 2005.

25 "344 Cuban Medics Treat Earthquake Victims," Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/344-cuban-medics-treat-earthquakevictims/17001>.

26 "Fidel Castro support to earthquake victims," *The News*, Rawalpindi, October 7, 2005.

27 See "Pakistan: Cubans aid 1.7 million earthquake victims," *Green Left Weekly*, May 24, 2006.

28 Dr. Maqsoodul Hasan Nuri, "Cuba's Internationalist Humanitarian Aid", *The News*, November 28, 2005.

medicines but they also provided complete equipment for the hospitals including electricity, plumbing, and beds to run hospital".<sup>29</sup>

On November 12, 2005, in a personal message, the Cuban President offered to send experienced doctors specialists in natural disasters. The President Pervez Musharraf expressed gratitude to Cuba for the relief and rehabilitation work. After two months many Cuban doctors and nurses were capable of understanding Urdu language spoken by people who arrive daily at the camp. Cuba's contribution would always be remembered by the people of Pakistan.<sup>30</sup>

### **Donation of Hospital Equipments & MASH Units**

The Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education of Pakistan set up a state-of-the-art hospital unit in collaboration with the Cuban government. Ministry of Health in Havana donated equipment to the Directorate General of Special Education in Islamabad. The unit installed at the Al-Farabi Centre for the Rehabilitation and Welfare of disabled people.<sup>31</sup> Gustavo Machin Gomez, Ambassador of Cuba to Pakistan, said the contribution made by Cuba strengthened bonds between the two countries.<sup>32</sup>

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29 John Cherian and Shakil Adil, "Helping Hand from Cuba," *Frontline* (India's National Magazine), 22, Issue 26, December 17-30, 2005.

30 Mike Ceasar, "Cuban Doctors Abroad Helped to Defect by New U.S. Visa Policy", *World Politics Review* (August 1, 2007).

31 Since the mid-1990s MASH units have been decommissioned one by one, converted into facilities that better meet the changing demands of combat. In 2005, the last MASH unit in Pakistan was decommissioned which is Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (the most decorated Army tactical hospital) and the 212th MASH's last deployment was to Pakistan to support the 2005 Kashmir earthquake relief operations. After the complete task Cuba government left equipments in Pakistan as a part of donation. See Olive-Drab.com, [http://olive-drab.com/od\\_history.php](http://olive-drab.com/od_history.php)

32 Gustavo Machin Gomez, Ambassador of Cuba to Pakistan, was speaking at an Interactive Session on "Pakistan-Cuba Relationship in the New Millennium" hosted by Karachi Council on Foreign Relations, Economics Affairs and Law at Karachi. See *Dawn*, March 12, 2006.

### **Medical Scholarships for Pakistani Students**

The Cuban revolutionary government extended mutual cooperation in the fields of bio-technology, medical education and commerce. In this regard, Cuban government offered one thousands (1000) scholarships to students hailing from the Earthquake affected areas and from the low-income families. Accordingly, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) sent 354 students on scholarship to Cuba for the study of medicine and surgery. The HEC sources told that “the medical education and health care system in Cuba is better than the United States which is well recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO)” and have complete religious and cultural freedom.<sup>33</sup> Pakistan was the first Muslim country to send students to receive education in Cuba. The academic year of scholarship started from September 2006 and students travelled to Cuba during July-August 2006. The degree consists of one year learning of the Spanish language, balancing the knowledge acquired in high school and getting acquainted with the medicine course. This would be followed by five years of studies of medicine, to graduate in general comprehensive medicine.

### **Socio-Cultural Cooperation**

In general, there are no commonalities between Pakistan and Cuba other than that both are the member of NAM, are relatively developing nations, and both are agricultural countries. In view of the cordial relations, the two countries have a good chance of enriching their interactions with regard to important sectors, such as education, culture, and sports. Pakistan’s culture and civilization is appreciated in Cuba and the country’s agricultural products and sports goods have become very popular in Havana. Pakistani leaders such as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto

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33 “The truth and tales of Cuban healthcare”. The state-run system has been praised but many specialists fear that they are falling behind international standards.”<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2006/06/200665115527622647.html>

occupy a special place in Cuba.<sup>34</sup> The depth and variety of Pakistani TV plays, classical music and art and craft are well known in Cuba.<sup>35</sup> During the visit of Felipe Pérez Roque, Foreign Minister of Cuba offered sports cooperation to Pakistan. An action plan for strengthening Islamabad-Havana sporting links was established and both agreed to help shape coaching in the fields of boxing, athletics, volleyball, wrestling, judo, football, and swimming.<sup>36</sup>

Both governments allowed business and the educational community to establish 'Friendship Association' for the promotion of folk culture, art and music. In the recent past, a Cuban musical group was presented live on Radio Pakistan Islamabad. There was nationwide coverage of the A3 Jazz Cubatrio. The three young musicians delighted the audience with Cuban rhythms. In this regard, Cuban Ambassador, Jesús Zenén Buergo Concepción dubbed the A3 Jazz Cuba Group's presence in Pakistan as of great importance for promoting future exchanges.<sup>37</sup>

### **Economic Cooperation**

A delegation headed by the Foreign Minister visited Havana during the Musharraf regime and Yousaf Raza Gillani's democratic government to strengthen technical and economic collaboration between the two countries. Both countries rendered services and mutual cooperation in education, agriculture, health, medical, engineering, small-scale industries and, importantly, in the fields of food and agricultural development and promotion.<sup>38</sup> It is common understanding that both cooperate in medicine and corps of

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34 "Two Bhutto's of Pakistan: Zulfikar Ali and Benazir Bhutto," *Escambray*, Cuban English Newspaper, April 8, 2006.

35 Tamara Rendon Portelles, "Cuba and Pakistan: Two Cultures under the Same Sun," *Escambray*, October 12, 2012.

36 *Daily Times*, Lahore, September 13, 2006; "Pakistan-Cuba Cooperation in Culture and Sports," (Islamabad: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007), 5-16; and see also Zenen Buergo Concepción, "Cuba Revolution," *Daily Times*, Lahore January 4, 2013.

37 See *The Nation*, Lahore, November 6, 2012.

38 *Pakistan Observer*, August 5, 2011.

sciences. Both are also working for the formation of joint commission on trade, science and technology. Pakistan and Cuba are equally concerned with a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and desire to change the prevailing order, in which less than eighteen percent of the world's population controls more than sixty percent of the world's wealth. Efforts directed at achieving a more equitable economic order which is not possible unless the developing nations cooperate with each other in areas such as trade and technology.

### **Trade Relations**

Pakistan has shown the willingness to export textiles, cotton, fish, vegetables, cereals, sugar, milling products, dairy products, and sugar confectionery to Cuba in addition to electronic goods, leather products, pottery, furniture, etc. and will import larger quantities of pharmaceutical products, inorganic chemicals and ores from the island nation. Before the formal relationship in 2005 between Islamabad and Havana, the country exports to Cuba were less than the other countries of world. In the same way, Cuban exports to Pakistan were also insignificant. After the October earthquake 2005 the main commodities being exported from Pakistan to Cuba were electronic equipments, cotton yarn fabrics, leather goods, fine chemicals, plastic and linoleum products, machinery, medical instruments, and food spices. Both countries set up a committee to resolve trade problems and to find ways and means to increase bilateral trade. The Cuban Ambassador in Pakistan set up a Joint Business Council with the understanding of Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi Chambers of Commerce, which, however, has not been very active. The First Session of Cuba-Pakistan Joint Commission for Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation was held in Islamabad on November 25, 2006 and during the meeting, both sides expressed willingness to increase trade relations. Both countries signed Bilateral Cooperation Agreement in 2009 and provided a framework for enhanced economic and trade ties. Gillani, the then Prime Minister, called for early formation of a Joint Economic

Commission to facilitate the commencement of formal trade between the two countries.

### **Strategic Cooperation**

October 2005 earthquake marked the beginning of formal military interaction between Pakistan and Cuba. Pakistan expressed willingness to modernize Cuban military and offered military personnel training in its military academies. Pakistan has a strong infrastructure both in defence production and in military academies. It could provide help and cooperation to develop military capabilities building military institutions. Pakistan offered services for Cuban military officers to be trained in Kakul Military Academy, Command and Staff College (Quetta) and National Defence University (NDU-Islamabad). Pakistan is engaged in consultancy and the sale of small conventional military equipment to the country. Pakistan's military cooperation to Cuba arose from attempts to extend Pakistan's influence with the Third World countries to lessen the dependency on the West. Ambassador Gustavo Machin Gomez met General Tariq Majeed, former Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) agreed to increasing bilateral cooperation in different military fields.<sup>39</sup> This was the first time that Pakistan showed willingness for military cooperation against the wishes of the US administration. The change reflected Islamabad's desire to counter US moves in South Asia especially with respect to India and its possible influence in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Pakistan desire information about Russian military hardware, technology and logistics to contain New Delhi's superiority in conventional weapons.

Cuba was one of the first countries to extend open support over Pakistan's earthquake affected areas. Pakistan and Cuba want that the countries of South form a united front against increasingly protected markets of the North in order to countries of South have access to technologies and

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39 "Defence Cooperation between Pakistan-Cuba", *Daily Times*, Lahore: March 13, 2008.

international financial flows. Pakistan and Cuba share common views on multilateralism, democratizing the United Nations and reforms of the UN Security Council. Both countries also maintain that their friendship will stand any challenge regardless of changing circumstances.

### **Conclusion**

Sixty years (1955-2015) in general and eight years (2005-2012) in particular is not a long period in the history of bilateral relations between nations, but in the case of Pakistan and Cuban friendship, many initiatives have been taken to promote cordial relations between these two remote corners of the world. For the most part, Pakistan's foreign relations have focused only on US support and assistance. However, after the end of the Cold War, Pakistan has altered its attention. Over the years, it has displayed the freedom to cement diplomatic ties with Cuba and ignored pressure from the US administration to abandon its relationships with Havana. This freedom is also derived from Pakistan's pronounced shift in foreign policy and its sobering realization that "Washington aid was, and would remain, but a drop in the ocean".<sup>40</sup>

Pakistan has taken a positive diplomatic move in strengthening its relations with the Caribbean and Latin American countries. The change constitutes an opportunity for forming more practical, stable, and "mature" bonds. The unfortunate natural disaster that occurred provided an opportunity for Pakistan and Cuba to come closer. It was the first time that hundreds of Cuban people came to Pakistan. The Cuban contribution created immense good-will among the people of Pakistan and also gave a soft message to the world that the Europe is not the only community in the globe who can help other nations and have the ability to create deeper understanding with other cultures and civilizations.

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40 "US Strips Aid as Pakistan Jail Doctor," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 26, 2012; and see also Ben Doherty, "\$33m Slap for Pakistan over Bin Laden Doctor," *The Age*, May 26, 2012.



To strengthen solidarity and cooperation with developing countries is an underpinning principle of Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan has always valued the development of friendly relations with all the nations and consistently upholds the banner of peace, development and cooperation persists with the development of friendly relations with other countries on the basis of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. Thus, one of the fundamental objectives of Pakistan's foreign policy is to establish friendly relations with other countries because this spirit will not only benefit the two nations but also promote bright prospects and peace in the world. In the case of Cuba, the people of Pakistan can learn that its remarkable successes in the field of education, health, agriculture, sports, disaster and relief operations are worthy of emulation.