



The Role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in Interfaith Harmony:

A Study of Pakistan since 2010

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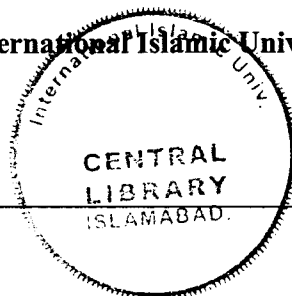
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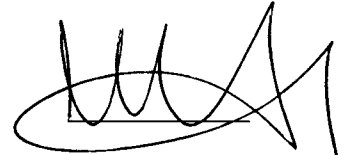


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CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

It is hereby recommended that the dissertation submitted by Mr. Syed Raheem Shah titled **“The Role of PD in Interfaith Harmony: A Study of Pakistan, since 2010”** has been accepted in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of M.Phil in the discipline of Comparative Religions.



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Student's Declaration

This is to certify that M.Phil. Dissertation submitted by me titled "**The Role of PD in Interfaith Harmony: Study of Pakistan, since 2010**" is based on my own research work and has not been submitted to any other institution for any other degree.

Date: _____


Syed Raheem Shah

(M.Phil. Scholar)

Preface

I am very grateful, humble and thankful to Allah. He is lord of the universes the magnificent and the merciful. I am grateful to him for His continually countless blessings upon me and my family. I always seek His guidance. I am dependent on Him herein and the hereafter. Without Allah nothing could have been possible for me. To Allah I am grateful, submissive and surrendered herein and hereafter. To him belong his mighty throne, heavens and universes and whatever is in them.

I pay my gratitude afterwards to his Excellency Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him and his family, companions, ancestors, followers and well-wishers. His message to humanity was is and will always be a true guidance. Prophet Muhammad was a gem of a person. His Honourable positions on matters in interfaith relations is an immortal source of guidance. May Allah's Peace and blessings Be Upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who is a mercy for Universes.

I am most obliged to my family members, especially my late parents for their prayers love and moral support. My Baba and Bibi were a source of strength, courage, honour and confidence. For them, I seek Allah's mercy in the same manners as they showed to me and even more when I was a kid. I dedicate this thesis to my parents. May Allah bless them with the highest ranks in Heavens. Ameen, Suma Ameen.

I am a graduate of International Relations from National University of Modern Languages (NUML). Afterwards, I joined International Relations Department of National Assembly Secretariat in 2011. Between 2013 and 2015, I attempted CSS but failed in clearing its written part. Hence I decided I joined International Islamic University Islamabad. I was also

working as Staff Officer to Deputy Speaker 15th National Assembly. I am really grateful to Hon'ble Murtaza Javed Abbassi who as Deputy Speaker allowed me to study during my posting with him.

I was encouraged by Hon'ble Dr. Ikram Ul Haq, Khateeb President House Pakistan for higher studies. I am grateful to Mr. Dr. Abdul Moniem, Assistant Professor/ Chairman Center for Arabic Language Teaching to Non-Arabs whose lecture proved instrumental in my initial understanding of Arabic basics. Thereafter, I had the privilege of introduction to major religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Jainism. I am indebted to Dr. Muhammad Akram, Head of Department of Comparative Religions, who taught approaches to the study of religion. His lectures on Approaches to the study of religions were comprehensive.

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Syed Raheem Shah S/o Syed Yousaf Jan

دور الدبلوماسية البرلمانية تجاه التناسق بين الأديان في ضوء

دراسة باكستان من 2010م

التعارف

العلاقة بين الأمم والدول عمل ارتقائي يشمل على الدبلوماسية الرسمية وغيره. الدبلوماسية البرلمانية طبعاً غير رسمية ويتقن ويبحث عن سلوك البرلمان في التناسق بين الأديان بحثاً واضحاً جلياً ثم ينقسم الدبلوماسية البرلمانية إلى الدبلوماسية بين البرلمانيين وبين أكثر من الاثنين، فمن أشهر المنظمات لهذا القسم مثلاً اتحاد مجالس الدول الأعضاء بمنظمة التعاون الاسلام، والاتحاد البرلماني الدولي، وبرلمان المملكة المتحدة. أكبر هذه المنظمات من حيث عدد الأركان هي الاتحاد البرلماني الدولي، فعدد الأركان فيها 173. هكذا اتحاد مجالس الدول الأعضاء بمنظمة التعاون الاسلامي تحتوي على 56 ركناً وكلهم مسلمون، وبرلمان المملكة المتحدة عدد أركانها 51، وكل هذه الدول هي التي قد استقلت من الاستعمار البريطاني في القرن الماضي.

البرلمان الباكستاني ركن من أركان هذه المنظمات كلها، ولهذا له دور مهم في الدبلوماسية في العالم كله بالعموم وفي آسيا ومناطق المسلمين بالخصوص، كما له عمل دبلوماسي كبير في النزاعات المذكورة، وعندما يتكلم في مثل هذه المسائل السياسية فيراعي فيه جانب المذهبي والديني أيضاً كقضية القدس والكشمير والبورما، وهكذا كل نزاع له أثر في التناسق بين الأديان. ولأداء هذه الوظيفة المهمة قام البرلمان بنظام مستقيم ولا سيما بعد سنة 2010 م أقيمت مجموعة الصداقة البرلمانية (parliamentary friendship group) مع أكثر من مائة وخمسين من البرلمانات في البلاد المختلفة، بالإضافة إلى أن أكبر المجلس الذي انعقد في تاريخ البرلمان الباكستاني كان يتعلق بالقضايا السياسية الخارجية سنة 2011 م وقد استمر هذا المجلس إلى شهر، واتخذت فيه الخطط تجاه التناسق بين الأديان. ومن المعلوم أن باكستان دولة إسلامية جمهورية التي تراعى فيها عواطف شعبها الدينية، وهذا الأمر تتجلى في الأمور الدبلوماسية أيضاً، فنود أن نتعرف دور البرلمان الباكستان في ضوء هذه الدوافع بعنوان: "دور البرلمانية الدبلوماسية في التناسق بين الأديان في ضوء دراسة باكستان من 2010م"، وغرض هذا البحث إضاءة عقول الشعب _ وخاصة الجيل الجديد _ بتعريف الخطط الدبلوماسية الوطني _ البرلمانية _ نحو التناسق بين الأديان والمذاهب، وذلك لأن جيلنا الجديد قد تغافل عن هذا المجال فيحتاج إلى التعرف به. كما نود أن نعرف أن للحوار السياسي والتوافق في هذا الجانب بين الدول والأمم أثر كبير في التناسق والتخالف بين الأديان والمذاهب

Abbreviations

1. PD Parliamentary Diplomacy
2. IPU Inter Parliamentary Union
3. PUIC Parliamentary Union of Organization of Islamic Cooperation
4. PAECO Parliamentary Assembly of Economic Cooperation Organization
Countries
5. CPA Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
6. APA Asian Parliamentary Assembly
7. PFG Parliamentary Friendship Group
8. ASSP Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians
9. ECO Economic Cooperation Organization
10. SAARC South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
11. OIC Organization of Islamic Cooperation
12. PCNS Parliamentary Committee on National Security
13. CSPOC Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth
14. OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
15. IIOJK Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir
16. NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
17. ISAF International Security Assistance Force
18. MDGs Millennium Development Goals
19. SDGs Sustainable Development Goals
20. CWP Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians
21. ISIS Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

22. CWS Commission on the Status of Women
23. ETIM East Turkestan Islamic Movement
24. UNSC United Nation Security Council
25. UNGA United Nations General Assembly
26. FMCT Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty
27. NSG Nuclear Suppliers Group
28. TTP Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan
29. CCG Concerned Citizens Group
30. ICG International Crisis Group
31. LOC Line of Control
32. PPPP Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians
33. PML Pakistan Muslim League
34. SDPD Strengthening Democracy through Parliamentary Development in Pakistan
35. UNRWA United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
36. ARF ASEAN Regional Forum
37. ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations
38. ASEM Asia Europe Meeting
39. USA United States of America
40. BJP Bharatiya Janata Party
41. PML-N Pakistan Muslim League –Nawaz
42. JUI-F Jamiatul Ulema Islam
43. FAAPPD Forum of African and Arab Parliamentarians on Population
44. APD Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

Abstract

Parliamentary Diplomacy (PD) is a dialogue for concurrence while interfaith harmony is a desired objective of interfaith relations as a conceivable state of affairs. Both cherish ideals of plurality and exclusivity. PD is a meaningful engagement through parliaments. Parliamentarians in this regard can play an important role in promoting and relegating interfaith harmony. Through parliamentary forums and parliamentary friendship groups, they can help achieve interfaith harmony. Perusal through parliamentary diplomacy and people-to-people contacts, can promote cohesion and harmony among nations. People-to-people contacts encompass formal as well as informal diplomatic mechanisms. PD acknowledges religious pluralism. As an avenue for dialogue PD can be tried for promoting interfaith relations. It can help achieving interfaith harmony. However its is not a final word to relegate or promote interfaith harmony

Keywords: Parliamentary Friendship Groups, Parliamentary Diplomacy, Interfaith Relations, Parliamentarianism, Interfaith Harmony, Terrorism, Interfaith Dialogue

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Chapter One

1. Introduction to the Study

People to people contacts encourage parliamentary role in relationships to achieve interfaith harmony. Interfaith relations remain a focus area of its discussion. PD is not a final word in interfaith relations. It is a track 1.5, track II or informal dialogue mechanism. It is role played by parliamentarians to commend state foreign policy objectives and promote relations with other countries and parliaments. In short, PD is not restricted to certain limitations as in formal diplomacy. As a tool of the people-to-people contacts, it offers avenues for sharing of experiences and collaboration among the parliaments. It commends parliamentary role in relationships to achieve interfaith harmony. In various modes of diplomacy there are ad-choc diplomacy, classical diplomacy and then multilateral diplomacy.

In the later one, cultural diplomacy, parliamentary diplomacy, economic diplomacy, public diplomacy and military diplomacy have been identified by (Codrean 2017) . Parliamentary Diplomacy in itself is not a final word in interfaith relations. New forms of diplomacy have not only been emerged but also have rapidly gained currency both in theory and practice. Parliamentary Diplomacy is one among them while other examples are Cultural Diplomacy (Finn, 2003); Public Diplomacy (Melissen, 2005); and Economic Diplomacy (Byne and Woolcock, 2011). Literature is yet limited on the role of parliaments and associated parliamentary institutions like parliamentary forums, associations and conferences.

This is partly because the role of parliament(s) in transnational engagement is traditionally assumed to be a component of the state's foreign policy instead of an independent entity

(Heckeand Wolfs 2015). Nonetheless, PD can be applied to help solve inter religious problems particularly those of political nature such as Kashmir and Palestine. Its apparatuses endow with avenues for dialogue, debate and recommendations in a much polite manner. The activities carried out by parliaments in international relations, both within the limits of institutional competence and as a central factor of internal political scene” (Noulas 2011).The interdependence of the world will impel PD to play a critical role in supplementing and complementing the efforts of the executive in the foreign policy arena” (Kumar 2014). This mode of diplomacy is gradually becoming a routine for most of the parliaments.

Practitioners and academicians have explained PD in connection to parliamentary affairs. Full range of international activities undertaken by parliamentarians in order to increase mutual understanding between countries, to assist each other in improving the control of governments and the representation of a people and to increase the democratic legitimacy of inter-governmental institutions”¹. Parliamentary diplomacy thus considers the role of Parliaments as a prerequisite for promotion of bilateral and multilateral relations.

According to Spanish Senator Gabriel Elorriga Parliamentary Diplomacy can be carried out in the following ways;

1. The activities of multilateral international parliamentary organizations.
2. Bilateral Parliamentary groups and in particular the so-called ‘friendship groups’.
3. International agreements between Parliaments.
4. The activities of Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committees.
5. Plenary sessions dealing with foreign policy questions.

¹<http://www.fransweisglas.nl/images/uploads/publicaties/6.pdf>, Accessed on 26 November, 2012

6. Parliamentary participation in elections monitoring processes².

The intensified role of parliamentarians however shaped the gradually ascending mode of policy making beyond the borders of a single nation state. With its own set of challenges and opportunities, this phenomenon does requires new forms of transnational representativeness (Jancic, 2015). The role of the Parliaments has grown wider and broadened with the changing political, security and economic circumstances. The parliament represents the will of the people. Parliament is an elected body of the people. The gap between the parliaments and people is a matter of serious concern for all democratic societies. This gap between a parliament and people is created when the parliament fails in fulfilling the demands of the people.

There are a number of parliamentary forums/assemblies/unions/associations, which work on different aspects of PD. Based on the charters/rules there have been regional, global, religious, geographical and political parliamentary forums. PUIC, IPU, and CPA are some of multilateral forums. They have 56, 179 and 54 member parliaments respectively³. Bilateral PD refers to inter-parliamentary cooperation, dialogue and interaction between two states. Parliamentary exchanges, visits of Foreign Relations Committees and PFGs are some of the work areas of PD. Delegations are headed by presiding officers. Such visits include meetings of visiting delegation with President/Prime Minister, Speaker/Deputy Speaker, members of parliament and civil society of visiting country.

Retrospectively, parliament allocates a specific fund for such international activities. Parliamentary friendship grouping is a tool of PD for promotion of the parliamentary role in the relationships. The members' parliament may form informal associations to be called

²http://www.unizar.es/union_europea/files/documen/conferencia%2010.2006/SteliosStavridis_english_final.pdf
Accessed on 26 Nov, 2012

“Parliamentary Friendship Groups. As a tool of PD, a PFG is a look upon to the desire, a member of a parliament to reinforce the bonds of alliance, enlarge capacity of assistance and encourage relations with the parliamentarians from countries diplomatically recognized and including International Parliamentary Assemblies, or International organizations. Parliamentarians both from the opposition and the treasury benches and in some cases former members of the parliament can join groups of friendship. There is no limit to the membership of any group. For instance, Pakistan has 93 PFGs in the 15th National Assembly.

The thesis at hand is study of interfaith harmony, International Relations⁴ and Comparative Religions. Theories of Realism, Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and the Clash of Civilization⁵ are major theories in International Relations. The Clash of Civilization Theory has particularly redefined religious and cultural identities in global politics. The author views religion as an important element in prioritizing state policies in global politics (Huntington 1993). Although religion was considered as a domestic entity within IR but with changing global geopolitical and sociocultural landscape, its relevance has increased many folds.

Above in view, thesis at hand is drafted in to three chapters. Introduction, history and role of PD is part of chapter one. Second chapter focuses on inter religious dialogue to achieve interfaith harmony. Pakistan is member to the IPU, CPA, PUIC and various other multilateral parliamentary forums. Pakistani parliamentarians hold executive position in these forums. Besides, there exists a robust mechanism of PFGs. Pakistan is among the founders of the OIC and the PUIC. Being the second most populous Muslim majority country examining the work of

⁴ A branch of political science concerned with relations between nations and primarily with foreign policies <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/international%20relations> Accessed on August 22, 2020

⁵Traditionally there have been two central theories of IR: liberalism and realism. Although they have come under great challenge from other theories, they remain central to the discipline. <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/09/international-relations-theory> Accessed on August 22, 2020.

Parliament of Pakistan is as a study in chapter three. The final chapter rests on recommendations, and findings.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite extensive engagements, parliamentary role in international relations remains unnoticed or minimal. It has become an impediment in understanding its scope and its usefulness. Students of comparative religion and international relations remain unaware of what has been achieved in parliamentary diplomacy. Thesis at hand will help to bridge the gap between the policy and academia for future reference and research.

1.2 Objective of the Study

Objectives of the study are giving as below:

1. To know what is parliamentary diplomacy and its role in promoting or relegating interfaith harmony
2. To study evolution of parliamentary internationalism during 13th 14th and 15th National Assembly of Pakistan in context of objective no 1.
3. To reanalysis the role in interfaith relations by parliamentary forums such as IPU, CPA, PAECO and PUIC.
4. To determine the role of PD in the issue of Palestine and Kashmir
5. To provide a foundation study for further research in parliamentarian diplomacy in Pakistan

1.3 Research Questions

Main endeavors to the proposed research are:

1. What is Parliamentary Diplomacy and interfaith harmony?
2. How interfaith relations in global politics can be perused through parliamentary forums?
3. How parliamentary diplomacy works in Pakistan ?
4. Can PD help addressing the issue of Kashmir and Palestine?
5. Why studying Parliamentary Diplomacy is imperative?

1.4 Research Methodology

1.4.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is widely used in qualitative research for the analysis of data and for the interpretation of its meaning (Elo et al. 2014). It is a systematic and objective research method for describing a certain phenomenon (Schreier 2012). Data is usually reduced to concepts by creating categories or conceptual maps (Elo and Kyngäs 2008). In this method, the research question directs what to analyze and what in turn to create from the inferences (Schreier 2012). The process of abstraction for the extraction of concepts is partially dependent on researcher's own insights, however, for the purpose of validity, it is encouraged to report how the results are created (Graneheim and Lundman 2004). It is required for the reader to clearly follow the analysis and the subsequent conclusions (Elo et al. 2014). There are however some conflicting opinions as well as unresolved issues concerning the meaning and usage of concepts, the underlying procedures and the resulted interpretation (Graneheim and Lundman 2004).

Content Analysis is used to extract the meaning of the message. In short, we may call it an effort to determine textual meaning. For the same purpose, several other research methods are

also used i.e. discourse analysis, conversational analysis and rhetorical analysis (Gheyle and Jacobs 2017). The distinction of Content Analysis however can be optimally notices from the famous definition by Krippendorff (2004) as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use”. It demonstrates an emphasis on the inferential nature of Content Analysis where conclusions are extracted from the data. In order to be done with answering research question(s) from the unstructured data, there are certain procedural rules and guidelines from theories upon which extensive research has already been conducted (White and Marsh 2006). Due consideration of the context is crucial, as sometime similar text give different meaning.

Content Analysis is also considered to be a positivistic and rigorous research method for getting content from the data having a specific meaning and message. Examples of such a data include but are not limited to speeches, interviews, official reports, books, media coverage in newspapers and magazines and so on. Therefore, there are certain standards for streamlining, operating and evaluation of the research. According to Luo (2020), as the data is collected (for analysis) without any direct involvement of the participants, the influence of researcher remains nominal on results. Further, the analysis is easy to replicate by others and could potentially yield in highly reliable results. And finally, Content Analysis can be applied anywhere and anytime with considerably low cost. However, access to the most adequate and appropriate data sources is a prime prerequisite.

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. Descriptive and analytical content analysis will be adopted for

understanding interfaith harmony in the age of parliamentary diplomacy. I have described the political situation of Pakistan and facts that show the influence of Religion on the Parliamentary diplomacy and politics. Thesis at hand is content analysis of parliament of Pakistan from 2010-till date during 13th, 14th and 15th Assemblies of Pakistan. National Assembly cooperation's on multilateral forum with IPU, CPA, PUIC, PAECO and ASSP have been explored. For the same purpose, several other research methods are also used i.e. discourse analysis, conversational analysis and rhetorical analysis.

Examples of such a data include but are not limited to speeches, interviews, official reports, books, media coverage in newspapers and magazines and so on. An analysis has been put forward to the theological basis relationship of Islam with other religions, particularly the Jews and Christians. The post 9/11 perspectives have been noted from their repercussions on the Islam and its perspectives on religious diversity with suggestions and way forward of what needs to be done in the interfaith harmony between Islam, the other faiths, and their followers.

1.4.2 Literature Review

There is a rich literature on study of interfaith relations and PD, however both separately. Study which correlates the elements of both PD and interfaith relations require further considerations. Religion has a definite role in international relations. This has been thought-out by academia, professionals and experts from secular and theological perspectives. August Comte's views religion false but necessary at the same time for society. 'Karl Marx's religions oppression as he termed `it and Emil Durkheim's view of religion as "Society's Mirror", Max Weber's approach of "Religion as Motor of Economics" and similarly, Peter Burger's study of

religion as “Scared Canopy”, Rodney Stark’s Rational Theory and Phenomenological approach to the study of religion are among various perspectives. \

Theories of Realism, Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and the Clash of Civilization⁶ are among the various approaches to international and interfaith relations. “Islam International Law and the World Today” of Pakistan Dr. Mehmmod Ghazi is a composition of his lectures compiled by Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad is a relevant study in this regard. The lecture series was designed to answer questions that had arisen in wake of 9/11 about the international role of Islam and Muslims to offer a food of thought to those who are concerned about future of humanity. The book therefore has to double appeal; it tries to guide Muslim Masses and the leaders deep into their past and urges them to chalk out strategies and behaviors in line with everlasting principles of Islam but with contemporary context in mind.

It also hopes others to realize the role of Islam in nurturing a global civilization and its potential to provide an alternative to the humankind at a time when all known formulate for listening peace seem to fail. It deals with the philosophical as well as practical aspects of the subject. Noted authors and religious figures and experts have contributed to this book from all over the world. Literature is yet limited on the role of parliaments and associated parliamentary institutions like parliamentary forums, associations and conferences.

Hugu Goddard in his book “A History of Christian Muslim Relation” has focused on the different phases of the Christian-Muslim relations from 6th century. His work highlights how dialogue has provoked meaningful engagements during the period. According to the author dialogue is an important avenue for taking up matters of mutual concern. A light has been shed

⁶Traditionally there have been two central theories of IR: liberalism and realism. Although they have come under great challenge from other theories, they remain central to the discipline.
<https://www.eir.info/2017/01/09/international-relations-theory>, Accessed on August 22, 2020.

upon the recent interaction and conversation between the scholars of the two religions including politician, religious figures, youth and civil society. Daniel, B. et al. (2013) calls for an authentic dialogue and civility to bridge the gap among faith traditions in an academic and thoughtful perspective. All doctrines are acceptable per se in terms of their basic tenets expression of human behavior along with consequence of civilizations and their advancement to the present-day life⁷.

Parliamentary Diplomacy has significantly evolved during the second half of twentieth century. The phrase was coined in 1950s, and initially was referred to utility of parliamentary procedures in intergovernmental negotiations in order to facilitate classical/traditional diplomacy (Rusk, 1995; Lateef 1981). With the passage of time Parliamentary diplomacy became independent from traditional diplomacy and is now considered as an autonomous activity of parliaments throughout the world. This mode of diplomacy is gradually becoming a routine for most of the parliaments.

Therefore, the practical work done by Pakistani parliamentarians from the platform of various parliamentary forums on religious matters in general and interfaith harmony in specific are the main sources of secondary data. Such sources include: the agendas, press releases, committee reports, annual reports, declarations, reportages of the conferences, statements of the speakers and the peoples representatives, main themes of the conferences of the parliamentary forums particularly IPU, CPA, PUIC and the APA and the verbatim of the conferences.

Zia ul Haq (2013) has tried to explain the Islamic perspectives on the religious diversity and pluralism in the contemporary world. An analysis has been put forward to the theological basis relationship of Islam with other religions, particularly the Jews and Christians. The post

⁷http://www.paaras.org/Interfaith_Harmony.pdf, Accessed on 27 July 2020

9/11 perspectives have been noted from their repercussions on the Islam and its perspectives on religious diversity with suggestions and way forward of what needs to be done in the interfaith harmony between Islam, the other faiths, and their followers.

Moshe (2009) elucidates the historical themes of Islam, Judaism and Christianity by virtue of the influence of education on their interreligious relationship, the dispute of Jerusalem in the context of the interfaith relations. Noted authors and religious figures and experts have contributed to this book from all over the world. Ira Sharkansky (2000) is with the idea that religion and politics cannot be presumed apart from each other. Relation between religion and politics has been discussed keeping a focus on Israel. Cornille, C. (2013) has comprehended interreligious relations on the basis of dialogue. I

It also tries to evaluate causes, through background and the discourse that took places amongst the scholarship and religious literati of world well known and major religions and faiths. It highlights an abundance of contextual analyses on contemporary interreligious exchange. It also incorporates exceptional critique on the developing exchange of late years, composed by a portion of the main figures working in the field of interfaith talk.

Chapter Two

2. Parliamentary Diplomacy and Interfaith Relations

This chapter studies parliamentary cooperation, people-to-people contacts, intercultural dialogue, interfaith harmony and parliamentary diplomacy. Cooperation and interaction among the parliaments is a source of prompting people-to-people contacts and advancing parliamentary diplomacy. People to people contact are an evolving phenomenon. Religion and international relations are both integral part of this process. It encompasses formal as well as informal diplomacy. PD acknowledges religious pluralism. There are a number of multilateral parliamentary forums/assemblies/unions/associations. Their membership varies on the basis of the subject or the charter adopted. There are regional, global, religious, geographical and political parliamentary forums.

They all however perform one common function, and that is of PD. Parliamentary Union of the OIC member countries (PUIC), Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) are some of the known multilateral parliamentary forums. They have 56, 173 and 54 member parliaments respectively⁸. PUIC is a religious parliamentary forum of the Muslim countries. In fact, PUIC has been established on the basis of the famous Islamic concept of Muslim Ummah. IPU is an international union of the parliaments and the largest one in terms of its membership. CPA is a regional parliamentary organization of the commonwealth countries. These forums often take on agendas like the various aspects of Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Jewish relations in the cases of Palestine, Afghanistan, Nogoru Karabagh and Kashmir. Palestine and Kashmir to the PUIC. IPU or other forums are not only political issues.

They consider them on their agendas as religious issues among Jews, Christians, Muslims and Hindus.

Retrospectively, this forum deliberates to find out solutions for these political issues based on the religious values of conflicting states and nations. PD supplements government diplomacy. PD provides a forum to smoothen and to deal with misunderstandings, complementary to and enriching and stimulating traditional forms of diplomacy.

2.1 Parliamentary Friendships Groups (PFG): A Tool for PD

PD is carried substantively through PFGs around the globe. It's imperative to discuss this form of parliamentary activity before moving forward on its showcasing by Pakistan. It may be defined as "Group of Members of a Parliament" with the sole purpose to establish exchanges with Parliamentarians with other countries. It is the most widely applied tool by Parliamentarians in bilateral diplomacy. However, the effectiveness of this tool depends directly on the interest of Members of Parliament and the institutional support within their respective parliaments. In established democracies, the influence of such informal groups is evident in shaping and strengthening bilateral relations. The PFGs are known to have been established almost 50 years ago. However, it was only in the last 15 years that PFGs achieved greater distinction in Parliaments around the globe.

Alongside, some Parliaments have witnessed similar growth of International Study Groups which can be linked to the phenomenon of Friendship Groups. The PFGs can be found in various parliaments under different names and structures. The Members of Parliament remain largely independent to form and pursue their preferred interests, but the groups mostly target to achieve the following aims: -

- Build strong ties with foreign legislatures.
- Lobby the interests of the country through PFGs.
- Improve bilateral relations between two countries

The formation of Parliamentary Friendship Groups is credited to an initiative of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Through this initiative, the parliaments of IPU member states were to establish PFGs to complement the IPU's six-monthly inter-parliamentary conferences. Soon afterwards, the member states began to create these groups with Germany being the first. The German bundestag established first parliamentary friendship group in its 3rd electoral term (1957-1961). Similarly, in the UK Parliament, PFGs were formed as informal groups. The European (EP) is another example which has developed a network of links through building a structure of delegations.

2.1.1 Parliamentary Friendship Groups in Parliament of Pakistan

The existence of PFGs can be traced back into the past Assemblies of early 90s where the National Assembly Secretariat formed groups. However, the groups remained dormant due to lack of interest in turning PFGs into a meaningful tool with other Parliaments. On 22 June 2011 Pakistan, approved formal "Rules for Parliamentary Friendship Groups" to organize PFGs in a uniform and consistent manner. As per the rules, Speaker National Assembly heads as president all respective PFGs in National Assembly and Chairman Senate in the Senate of Pakistan.

A Convener is nominated from members of the group to convene and co-ordinate the PFG actions. The National Assembly Secretariat functions as the Secretariat of the Groups and the Secretary National Assembly or his authorized officer acts as its Associate Secretary. Executive Committee is to conduct the PFG business by consensus. The quorum for a meeting of the Executive Committee is at least three members. Annual General Meeting of the groups may

ordinarily be held in each parliamentary year during which an annual report and other business can be considered. The Speaker may also hold a General Meeting of all the Conveners, periodically.

How various religions especially Islam views, religious diversity and coexistence? Every religion has its history holy scriptures, leaders and prophets. The hermeneutics of these scriptures varies considerably. Some believe in monotheism, other may consider polytheism as source of karma and eternal success. Similarly every faith carries multiple objectives and maintains relations with counterparts. These relations may be theological, non-theological, political and economic. The interfaith relations are therefore sociologically, religiously and politically motivated. A great deal of research in connection to the role of religion in state and global affairs is underway. The study of interfaith relations is hence a multidisciplinary approach. For Muslims to deal with Non-Muslims is not a new exercise, as they have encountered various other religions in Arabian Peninsula right from its inception and beyond during its expansion (Friedmann 2003).

Religious and cultural diversity from the Islamic perspective is a natural phenomenon just like the geo-physical and bio-ecological diversity which Allah has created to sustain the life-support-systems on Planet Earth for a specified term i.e. till Qiyamah. A far-reaching and long-lasting peace may be achieved through the commonalities found in various religious beliefs. Interfaith dialogue is a prerequisite in this regard. In fact the philosophy of every religion is based on peace and harmony, but unfortunately people are often misguided and divided through the notion of religion (Wani, Abdullah, and Chang 2015).

2.2 Parliamentary Diplomacy and Global Politics

The 21st Century is defining and eventful in terms of the role of religion in global politics. We live in a tense geopolitical environment where our States are facing unprecedented hard and soft security challenges. Terrorism and asymmetrical conflicts which undermine peace, international security, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States are among the most dangerous threats. The last twenty years have seen an increase in human losses as a result both of conflicts and terrorist attacks. From 2011 to 2014, the number of battle-related deaths increased 356 per cent while deaths from terrorism increased 353 percent.

The United Nations and its Member States are fighting terrorism and asymmetric conflicts by, for example, dealing with issues of mercenaries, private military companies and foreign terrorist fighters. An occurrence on the World Trade Centre in New York was followed by the United States-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Expenses on weapons have multiplied many times. The war against terrorism is proving to be one of the most havoc in terms of collateral damages. A major portion of these attacks have been carried out on religious grounds. Interstate relations among nations have been challenged by new trends in interfaith relations. Terrorism and militancy in the name of religion across the globe has caused a very threatening situation. Religiously sanctioned violence, suicide blasts for religious purposes, extremism, blasphemous contents and racial indiscrimination all are potent threats to humanity.

The attack on a Mosque in New Zealand by a racist and the blasts in Churches in Sri Lanka in year 2019, reminds us the importance of interfaith harmony. Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews and Buddhists all are suffering from the problems of militancy, radicalism, and terrorism. The Crusades, Roman inquest and the Holy offices developed by the papacy in the

Middle Ages are the historical illustrations in this regard. Oppression of the people of Palestine and Kashmir are examples of religious intolerance to others' beliefs of the current time. In the digital world with advanced equipment of war, a tweet or a statement in media can bring over a revolution of events. The same situation is feared in the future as well. However, this may be devastating to humans and nature alike because of advancements in warfare technologies.

The global War on Terror not only resulted in human losses, but it also altered the relations between Muslims with other faiths. The impact of the War on Terror has remained lethal. There is a dire need of building consensus at the international level to learn the ways to ensure interfaith harmony. We may not be left with many options either. Horrifying acts of terrorism indicate the scale of the common challenge we all confront"⁹. The blasphemous contents regarding the Prophet of Islam and the burning of the Noble Quran is all acts against plurality and multilateralism. The cartoons regarding the Prophet of Islam Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon Him) disturbed the entire balance of interfaith relations.

The response of the entire Muslim community to this disrespect was noteworthy. More than the anger the Muslim community was sad and their feelings were hurt. This in turn resulted in psychological and emotional disturbance of 1.8 billion Muslims collectively which is indeed a worrying sign. The mainstream media accredit Islam as a violent, obscurantist and an opposing religion to enlightenment. Ma'oz Moshe said it rightly the idea of religious tolerance, liberty and coexistence is an established fundamental tenet of Islam. Unfortunately, the mainstream media often associate violent extremism with the religion of Islam. However, there are many cases where Christians, Hindu, Buddhists and Jews have resorted to violence on the name of religion.

⁹<https://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sgsm9195.doc.htm>

On the other hand, militant groups such as Al -Qaida and ISIS are also portrayed primarily on religious grounds.

The behavior towards the Muslims all over the globe turned to hate, suspiciousness and avoiding them internationally. This has resulted in the one-sidedness in interfaith synchronization. Despite that Islam and Muslims are two different realities, it is imperative to understand that relations among the Muslims Christians and Jews are historical. Judaism, Christianity and the Islamic opinions towards Palestine, the Aqsa Mosque and the Jerusalem remained oppositional. There had held wars on the control of present day Jerusalem. Struggle to control the Holy land has become a prolong process. However, the political relations between Islam and other faiths went uncomfortable in the past two decades. The Noble Quran categorically speaks of no compulsion in religion and that truth stand clear from error;

1/1: "Let there be no compulsion in religion; Truth stands clear from error." (2:256)

1/2: "If it had been the Lord's Will, all who are on earth would have believed. Will you then compel mankind against their will to believe?!" (10:99)

1/3: "Say, the Truth is from your Lord, let him who will believe, and let him who will reject." 18:29

1/4: "And you are not the one to overawe them. Therefore, remind with this Quran those who reverence My warnings." (50:45)

1/5: "You shall remind, for you are the reminder. You are not one to manage (men's) affairs." (88:21-22)

1/6: "Enlightenment has come to you from your Lord. As for those who can see, they do so for their own good, and those who turn blind, do so to their own detriment. I am not your guardian." (6:104)

1/7: "If they reject you, then say my work to me and yours to you. You are free from the responsibility of what I do and I for what you do." (10:41)

1/8: "The sole duty of the messenger is to deliver the message, and Allah knows everything you declare and everything you conceal." (5:99)

1/9: "If they argue with you, then say I have simply submitted myself to God; I and those who follow me. And you shall proclaim to those who received the scripture as well as those who did not, 'would you submit'? If they submit then they have been guided, but if they turn away, your sole mission is to deliver this message. God is Seer of all people." (3:20)

1/10: "You shall obey God and you shall obey the messenger, and beware if you turn away, then know that the sole duty of our messenger is to deliver the message efficiently." (5:92)

2/1: "And dispute you not with the People of the Book except with means better (than mere disputation) unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong. But say, we believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you, our God and your God is One, and it is to Him we submit." (29:46)

2/2: "Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious." (16:125)

2/3: "So announce the good news to My servants, those who listen to the word and follow the best of it. Those are the ones whom Allah has guided and those are the ones endowed with understanding." 39:17-18

2/4: "Say produce your proof if you are truthful." (2:111, 21:24, 16:64, 9:6)¹⁰

Are we cognizant of the fact that, such a behavior for a Semitic religion and its followers would bring peace and stability? Are we aware where are we heading? Or did we forget the bloodshed in Crusades. Why Islam as a religion is so much criticized? Will this help achieve the desired goals for humanity peace, progress and prosperity? By sidelining two billion people religion Islam out of the context would never lead peacefulness in the world. Furthermore, the Muslim countries with in their domestic societies also went in to miserable conditions. The Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Kashmir, Saudi Iran conflicts, the Shia Sunni differences and the Arab Spring off course proved disastrous for them. Pakistan and Afghanistan became the battlefields for TTP, Afghan Taliban American Led Forces, NATO and Pakistan Army, Muslim community on the contrary, across the globe is under pressing circumstances.

The Muslims in Syria, Libya, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Nagorno Karabakh, Rohingya, Kashmir, and Palestine all are coping with troubling times. Decades of war and use of weapons of all sorts have destroyed their political socio economic and infrastructures. Palestinians and Kashmiris are oppressed by foreign occupation. Over 100,000 have died in their

¹⁰ The Noble Quran
<https://quran.com/> Accessed on 18 September, 2021

struggle for self-determination. The issue of Kashmir has put the lives of more than 1.5 billion people at the cost of a nuclear war. This discriminatory behavior to Islamic faith and its followers for a prolonged period of time imbalances the overall environment of a certain region at a given time.

While looking at the Muslim countries one finds a clear discrimination by the world. Out of 50 plus countries, nearly 35 are in some kind of terrorism and extremisms. It may be poverty, ethnic or religious war, deprivation, miseries, bomb blasts, terrorism, economic crisis, energy crisis or any other calamity. The way the Israeli forces for instant dealt the people of Palestine for the last 7 decades Hindus has oppressed the people of Kashmir. Displacing an entire community of believers from a territorial division is certainly not a good precedent. The population of the people of Kashmir and Palestinians is certainly not the same, as it used to be.

The religion Islam will be focused because it is the official religion in Pakistan. Pakistan does not accept Israel as a state purely on religious grounds and their issues with Muslims in Palestine. Similarly, Pakistan does not enjoy parliamentary or diplomatic relations with Armenia because of her issues with Azerbaijan. So the foreign policy of the country remains vigilant to issues pertaining to religion. Pakistan is a major partner and founder of all those organizations which politically or economically work for the Muslim countries. PUIC, PAECO, ECO, and OIC are examples of such organizations where Pakistan worked for the promotion of Muslim Ummah. Author Wael B. Halaq In his book the "Impossible State" argues that countries, like Pakistan and Iran are failed attempts. Pakistan plays a proactive role in nation states as a nuclear power. It has a say in the international relations, security defense and interfaith manners.

Often, parliamentary diplomacy is used to promote political dialogue during conflicts in neighboring countries and within their region. Moreover, major international and regional organizations are working on the issues, which are directly or indirectly related to the faith. Albeit, more important is to look for opportunities, which could help, achieve interfaith harmony both at the bilateral level between the state and nations and at the multilateral level among states and nations. While the executive or routine foreign policy diplomatic tools seems fail to achieve the purpose albeit, parliamentary diplomacy can be of crucial importance in this regard. The (IPU) for instance has more than 170 member parliaments.

Similarly regional parliamentary organizations such as Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Parliamentary Union of the OIC member countries have more than 50 parliaments each, working under its umbrella provide a suitable environment for taking up religious issues before they become a reason of violence. Parliamentary diplomatic tools provide avenues for dialogue, debate and recommendations afterwards in a much polite political manner. Parliaments were originally meant for negotiation, which is an integral element in upright diplomacy (Bailey 1962). A significant growth in the number of transnational parliamentary bodies is observed with the passage of time. So far, so good, that national parliament became more and more active in shaping international relations.

This phenomenon, though remained under-researched in academic circles is appropriately termed as Parliamentary Diplomacy (Stavridis 2002). Parliamentary diplomacy, intercultural dialogue and nation-state relations correlate each other in the realm of People-to-People Contacts Parliamentary Diplomacy is a practice area of international relations while interfaith harmony is an idealized scenario in interfaith relations. The latter is a conceivable state of affairs while the former is a dialogue for concurrence, hitherto not investigated exponentially. It compliments

plurality and inclusivity, principals to relegation or endorsement of interfaith harmony. Both strive for peace, progress and prosperity. In a multi-creed culture, they are anticipated at exodus of a disagreement, hostile or passive. They are persuasive of an unruffled co-existence among practitioners of a choice of faiths and citizenships.

Chapter Three

3. Parliamentary Diplomacy in Pakistan

This chapter tries to study the role of religion in Pakistan's politics and formations. The parliament of Pakistan is a bicameral structure. Arrangements in place for parliamentary diplomacy have been explained. The work done by 13th, 14th and 15th national assembly from 2010 till date has been analyzed. Pakistan being an Islamic Republic is taken case study for parliamentary diplomacy and its role in interfaith harmony. The war on terror caused Pakistan, a loss of approximately 100 thousand people and billions of dollars in addition to lost opportunities. Nevertheless, it adopted affirmative parameters of combating hate and violence.

Examining the work in Parliament of Pakistan can be relevant in filling the knowledge gape pertaining to role of Parliamentary diplomacy in interfaith harmony. Islamic Republic of Pakistan lies in a strategic location in South Asia. It borders China, Afghanistan, Iran, Arabian Sea and India on its north, west south and east respectively. It has around 250 million people majority Muslims. Besides, there have been Hindus, Christians, and followers of other religions. Table below shows population by religion in Pakistan and its mostly populated province Punjab. It is popularly believed that relegated interfaith relations between Muslims and Hindus become a major reason of dividing subcontinent to India and Pakistan. Establishment of Pakistan was preordained for Muslims to practice their lives according to Islam as the famous "Two Nations Theory" reads. This famous theory is of the view that since Hindus and the Muslims were two different nations on the basis of religion, culture and values, hence division of the sub-continent was inevitable.

Objective Resolution provides basis for the constitution of the country. This document forms currently preamble of the constitution of Pakistan. It acknowledges “Allah” the supreme power in state affairs. The document further lays down for provision of facilities and arrangements for people to live accordance to Islamic code of conduct or Sharia as the case may be. The same applies to composition and formatting of its legislative institutions. As per constitution, Parliament is bicameral and is known as Majlis-e-Shoora comprising of upper and lower houses. The Senate comprises of 104 while the National Assembly has 342 seats. Within National Assembly and Senate there are seats reserved for minorities.

Province / Area	General Seats	Women Seats	Non-Muslim	Total Seats
Balochistan	14	03		17
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	35	08		43
Punjab	148	35		183
Sindh	61	14		75
Federal Capital	02	-		02
FATA	12	-		12
	-	-	10	10
Total	272	60	10	342

Source: National Assembly of Pakistan official web page

Article 51(1) of the Constitution of Pakistan reads that there shall be [three hundred and thirty-six] seats for members in the National Assembly, including seats reserved for women and

non-Muslims ¹¹. Article 51 (3A) reads that notwithstanding anything contained in clause (3) or any other law for the time being in force, the members of the National Assembly from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas to be elected in the general elections, 2018 shall continue till dissolution of the National Assembly and thereafter this clause shall stand omitted.

There also exists a national commission for the rights of minorities and rights being guaranteed under Article 20,22,26,27 and 36 under the constitution of the state. Though, there is a Westminster system in country but from within the parliament the apparatus is much based on Islamic guidance and influence. The concept of Islamic brotherhood and solidarity remains pertinent and consistent in the policies of the country. Pakistan stands with the Islamic world in the case of Palestine. Within the Islamic factions in Pakistan, there are people who have worldwide respects, from the within Muslim community.

There are appropriate arrangements in both the houses to practice PD. The Secretariats, Senate and National Assembly have departments of international relations. They ensure, parliamentary exchange visits; organize meetings of PFGs and other related work to PD. Besides, there are active standing committees on foreign relations in both the houses. Delegations from both the houses attend international conferences across the globe. The Parliament of Pakistan remains proactively in touch with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure being updated at all matters. The Parliament of Pakistan has all the apparatus to practice PD. There is a substantive amount of work being done at the Parliament of Pakistan on inter-parliamentary cooperation. In 2011, Pakistan proposed establishment of PAECO to commend the work of ECO.

¹¹ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681_951.pdf Accessed on 18th September, 2021.

The National Assembly hosted the conferences of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians in 2012. The National Assembly hosted in, 2015 the 34th Executive Committee meeting of the PUIC here in Islamabad. The meeting deliberated and adopted “Parliamentary Covenant on Combating Terrorism & Extremism. The draft was presented by the parliamentary section of UAE Federal National Council. Moreover, the National Assembly canceled the 63rd meeting of CPA because of the issue of Kashmir with India. The Indians were sending the members of the Kashmir legislative body which Pakistan does not recognize. Suffice is to say that there is a list of activities which is underway in the Parliament of Pakistan regarding PD.

3.1 Parliamentary Diplomacy in 13th National Assembly (2008-2013)

The 13th National Assembly (2008-2013) of Pakistan in the leadership of Speaker Dr. Fehmida Mirza successfully adopted the inter-parliamentary cooperation. This helped Pakistan in positioning advantageously itself in tackling international agenda. Guidelines relating to Pakistan foreign policy were set by the Parliament. Being an ardent advocate of “PD”, Dr. Fehmida Mirza led 13th National Assembly at national and international forums for promoting the profile of Pakistan through applying tools of PD. Dr. Fehmida Mirza was the first Muslim Speaker in female category. She also held the highest office of the two regional organizations i.e. (ASSP and PAECO).

Besides, Members National Assembly held important position in different multilateral parliamentary networks. Deputy Speaker 13th National Assembly Pakistan became IPU Executive Committee. He represented Asia-pacific region in the IPU political and parliamentary affairs till October 2015. Dr. Nafisa Shah, MNA has been elected Vice- Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee. Dr. Farooq H. Naik member National Assembly and Minister of law has

been a prominent member of the IPU group on the United Nation affairs. At bilateral level the National Assembly has remained engaged in important deliberations with the counter parliaments. The National Assembly hosted the first bi-literal visit led by any Speaker from Lok Sabha India from 21-25 February 2012.

- a. National Assembly Secretariat hosted PAECO initial summit to draft its charter in Islamabad in September, 2012. It was Pakistan's proposed idea to form Parliamentary forum of ECO Member countries which was endorsed by all Member countries. All countries were Muslim majority parliaments.
- b. Subsequently (PAECO) Conference was hosted in Islamabad on February 11-12, 2013 and its charter was signed. As per Charter of PAECO the Speaker of the host country will be President of till next conference. Accordingly Pakistani Speaker was elected as First-ever President of PAECO during the First PAECO in Islamabad.
- c. National Assembly Secretariat has also hosted 6thASSP in 2012. Speaker Fehmida Mirza was elected as been elected as President of ASSP.
- d. Second Pakistan UK women summit was held in Pakistan from 18-20, 2013. The Britain side was led by their Speaker.
- e. The visit of Indian Speaker Smt. Meira Kumar is very important among all incoming visits. She visited Pakistan in 2012. It was first ever visit by an Indian Speaker to Pakistan. The National Assembly remained active for promoting bilateral and multilateral relations at regional and international forums.
- f. Turkish Speaker addressed Joint Session during his visit to Pakistan in May, 2012.
- g. Visit of Indonesian and Chinese delegations provided momentum in PD.

h. Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker of National Assembly led Parliamentary delegation for bilateral visits to different countries i.e. China, France, India, USA, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia and Albania. The visits strengthened bilateral ties and promoted PD.

The following is a list of Bilateral Visits during 13th National Assembly:-

i.	CPA Conferences	=	4
ii.	IPU Conferences	=	8
iii.	PUIC Conferences	=	3
iv.	CSPOC	=	3
v.	ASSP	=	2
vi.	CPA Asia Region Conferences	=	3
vii.	PAECO	=	1
viii.	APA Conferences	=	2
ix.	Seminars & Workshops	=	8
x.	Other multilateral visits	=	34
xi.	Bilateral visits (Outgoing)	=	15
xii.	Bilateral visits (Incoming)	=	4

3.2 Parliamentary Diplomacy in 14th National Assembly (2013-2018)

The pace of parliamentary cooperation which started with 13th National Assembly continued in the 14th National Assembly as well. Dr. Fehmida Mirza was replaced by Mr. Ayaz Sadiq as Speaker 14th National Assembly. By virtue of his expertise in PFGs, PD remained active in 14th National Assembly as well. As speaker he attended the 7th ASSP, 129th, 130th IPU sessions, 59th CPA, 9th PUIC and many bilateral and multilateral parliamentary events in his

career as Speaker National Assembly. On bilateral front, Pakistani delegation visited Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and most recently he concluded most important visit to Russian Federation and Tajikistan and the Deputy Speaker visited USA, China and many other fast Asian countries through AFPPD.

Moreover, visits by the Speakers of the Parliaments of Sweden, Germany, Kingdom of Bahrain and Iraq to Pakistan are considered as big achievements for the National Assembly in a calendar year. The visiting dignitaries called high level leadership in Pakistan dignitaries during their visits. Such visits helped in promoting soft image of Pakistan in the world and also fostered trade and investment in the country. H. E. Osama Abdul Aziz Mohammad Al-Nujaifi, Speaker of Iraq visited Pakistan from 5-8 December, 2013. The Iraqi Speaker led 43 Members delegation, which included 16 members of the Council of Representatives of Iraq. It was an important visit as he was the strongest candidate for running Iraqi election to President that time.

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The visit was important as the first ever MoU on Parliamentary cooperation was signed between the two countries on parliamentary cooperation. The MoU is attached as reference to thesis at hand. Similarly, the visit of President of German Bundestag to Pakistan reaffirmed interest of Germany in democratic and stable development in Pakistan. Prof. Dr. Norbert Lammert during his visit appreciated resilience of Pakistani nation in war against terror and militancy. He vowed to continue engagements between two countries in promoting harmony and defeating terrorism. The Bahraini parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker visited Pakistan from May 5-7, 2014. Bahraini delegation offered Zuhur prayers at the Mosque in the Parliament House.

The level of incoming visits particularly from EU countries which are mostly Christian dominated population seen new heights in 14th National Assembly. This shows how Pakistan in

practice has remained involved in promoting interfaith harmony through diplomacy. The Speaker of Sweden Mr. Westerberg visited Pakistan from May 18-21, 2014. The Swedish Speaker also expressed his desire to form friendship group with Pakistan in Swedish parliament and increase more interaction between women parliamentarians of both countries.

The former Speaker National Assembly remained very pragmatic in his approach in maintaining bilateral parliamentary relations with various countries. He initiated the process of bilateral interaction by visiting Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and most recently he concluded his visit to Russian Federation and Tajikistan. The visit of National Assembly to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) as the head of a 9-Member delegation from November 16–20, 2013 mirrors the close relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. They have identical position on regional and international issues. These relations are evolving. Both government and Parliament of Pakistan have priority positions for Saudi Arabia.

It is the case with Saudis when they look towards Pakistan. The Kingdom has significant influence not only in the Arab Peninsula but its weight as strong Muslim power persuades the external stakeholders incline their policies towards the Kingdom. Pakistan continues to exposure new avenues at multilateral forums too. Many of its members got highest positions in forums involving religious representations from sides. Three Members were elected and occupied the seats at the IPU as follows:

1. Mr. Shafqat Mahmood, MNA Committee on Democracy & Human Rights
2. Mr. Farooq H. Naek, MNA Advisory Group on UN Affairs
3. Ms. Arifa Khalid Pervez, MNA Coord. Committee of Women Parliamentarians

The mechanism of the IPU required that the post be widely advertised for election of the new Secretary General. Various regions of the IPU came forward with their candidature to be the next Boss of the IPU. In this regard, a former Secretary-General of the Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), Ms. Shazia Rafi also fielded herself and was fortunately among the three short-listed candidates who qualified to contest the election. The election was held in the above Conference but the results of the polls went in favor of the employee of the IPU, Mr. Martin Chungong who had been working there for the last 25 years.

Notwithstanding, the effort to field a candidature, contest elections and convey a message to the world that the Parliament of Pakistan has the potential of presenting itself for any cause at international political and parliamentary organizations. Two of the other events that can and should have attracted attention and they have actually have had done so are the observance of Commonwealth Day and receiving observer status for Parliamentary Assembly of ECO at the IPU. Both the objectives as set were achieved and are now a record of the PD that Mr. Speaker has begun for promoting cause of Pakistan.

3.3 Multilateral Parliamentary Diplomacy in Pakistan

This chapter defines parliamentary diplomacy in Pakistan. It encompasses work of the parliamentary forums such is IPU, CPA, PAECO and many other organizations. As explained earlier Pakistan remains founding member of many of these forums. Pakistan has taken the issue of Kashmir and Palestine to these forums on regular basis. Moreover, there exists PCNS in Pakistan's parliament, which often takes on agenda matters relation to foreign policy and security. The work of PCNS has been explained from 13th National Assembly. Similarly, the role of Pakistan's parliament in these multilateral forums has been explained. In order to streamline

the Bilateral Parliamentary Relations, 93 Parliamentary Friendship Groups (PFGs) have been established in the National Assembly of Pakistan. Speaker National Assembly played an important role in energizing these friendship groups by appointing its conveners, focal persons and setting up respective executive committees of these groups.

The Parliamentary Friendship Groups have actively pursued its role in enhancing people-to-people contacts through PD. The 13th National Assembly has been involved in over 20 incoming and outgoing bilateral parliamentary exchanges. Among others, Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC), which is a bi-partisan and across-party-lines forum for women legislators, has also been constituted by the then Honourable Speaker National Assembly. This informal group regularly meets and develops consensus for various gender-specific legislation and measures.

Women's Parliamentary Caucus in Pakistan's Parliament has already established contacts with the women parliamentarians in the region and in this regard had held exclusive meetings with the Afghan women legislators. The WPC has offered helping Afghan women legislators to build their own caucus Multilateral Parliamentary relations of the National Assembly have been carried out through its participation in seminars, workshops, training programs, conferences and assembly meetings of various multilateral parliamentary organizations. Pakistan supports parliamentary efforts at enhancing cooperation to eliminate this menace. Pakistan strongly believes in the promise of multilateralism.

It signifies harmony, tolerance and respect for diversity. It also holds great promise in inter-state relations. State institutions firmly adhere to the teachings of Islam in Pakistan including that of the Parliament. The 13th National Assembly has been a part of over 60 Multilateral Parliamentary events in some of the most important Parliamentary organizations

such as PAECO ASSP, IPU, CPA, PUIC, APA, CSPOC, NATO PA, AFPPD and IPCMDG's.

The following details shed light on them.

3.3.1 Pakistan's Parliamentary Committee on National Security (PCNS)

On 26 November 2011, the US led coalition forces attacked on the Salala Check post in the area of Mohmand Agency on the Pak-Afghan border. The attack resulted in 24 martyrdoms of Pakistan security personnel.¹² This instigated a furious reaction –resentment- from the media, the government and general public, which fueled the anti-American sentiments already prevailing in Pakistan. It was decided to request PCNS to discuss the issue and finalize its findings to the joint sitting of the parliament convened only to deliberate on foreign relations¹³. PCNS headed by Senator Raza Rabbani consisted of seasoned politicians from both houses. The parliamentary committee was asked to draft recommendations which best serve the national interests¹⁴

Mr. Tanveer Ahmed Khan, the former Ambassador of Pakistan said that it is a golden opportunity for parliamentarians to play their part and give fruitful input to broader framework of foreign policy matters¹⁵. After spending a month long time along with intense negotiations among ruling and opposition parties, the parliamentarians finally passed draft of recommendations unanimously. The draft is a smart document to frame foreign policy of Pakistan in future especially with USA. It highlights the seriousness of the parliamentarians on the stance, not to compromise the sovereignty and national security of the Pakistan. But to implement all those recommendations in full motion is a question of worth importance.

¹² Ifthikhar Firdous, The Express Tribune, Saturday, November 26, 2011.

¹³ <http://www.mofa.gov.pk/mfa/pages/print.aspx?id=1030&type=3>

¹⁴ Zahid Gishkori / Huma Imtiaz, The Express Tribune, Thursday, April 12, 2012.

¹⁵ "US Pakistan Relations: stuck in Parliament?", Sochta Pakistan, Saturday, March 31 2011.

Available at: www.youtube.com

The parliamentary recommendations contain the serious policy making proposals which highlights the national security interests. Though large segment of our society possess anti-American sentiments and are emotional about resumption of NATO supplies and drone attacks. But in foreign policy making process one has to apply holistic approach by keeping in mind interests of other countries too. To tie resumption of NATO supply with drone attacks was something not acceptable for the USA. The other western countries which are allies with the US war on terror also would not have accepted hard line policy of halting NATO supplies.

The demonstration of soft policy on supplies and realizing the need to coordinate in drone attacks by keeping in mind respect of Pakistani sovereignty is a good policy on behalf of Pakistani parliamentarians. The parliamentary recommendations clearly demand no US footprints in on any pretext. It also put restrains of any supply of arms and ammunitions to Afghanistan from Pakistan's rout. It has been proposed that any future agreement with the US related to national security matters will be subject to approval of all stakeholders. No tacit approval will be given to foreigners for any kind of operation in Pakistan.

This approach highlights the stand of our parliamentarians to stand firmly against all those elements which harm our national security interests. Initial guidelines finalized on 11th January, 2012 and presented in front of Joint Session on 20th March, 2012, contained 16 clauses and 24 sub-clauses related to terms of engagement with countries of the world especially with USA¹⁶. Opposition parties including Pakistan Muslim League –Nawaz (PML-N) and Jamiat ul Ulema Islam (JUI-F) had opposed the following in the first draft:

¹⁶http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1334243269_639.pdf

1. The 3rd sub-clause of 5th clause, Permission to any foreign country to use of Pakistani bases or airspace.
2. The 6th Clause, The provision of reopening NATO Supply routes subject to revised terms and condition.
3. The 9th Clause, the provision of permission to foreign intelligence operating in Pakistan.

The ruling party made changes accordingly in the draft resolutions final draft of recommendations consists 14 main and 18 sub articles, unanimously approved in the joint session of Pakistan's Parliament on 12th April, 2012¹⁷. The provision to restrict NATO supplies for sending only food and medical items through transit rout of Pakistan was included according to demands of PML-Q. The arms and ammunitions were not supposed to be sent via Pakistan's rout.¹⁸ Countries of the world especially United States of America was seriously taking interest in the parliamentary review. Not only America but there was number of other US allies who were eagerly waiting for output of Parliamentary review. It further made the matter more serious for parliamentarians to decide upon as early as possible.

This is very important issue in the sense that it will redefine ties with an important ally of Pakistan. The US-Pakistan ties shattered after Salala attack on November, 26 2012. According to Prof. Dr. Rifat Hussain, we have to understand the nature of our Parliament before giving any task to it. It never happens in anywhere in the world that foreign policy matters are dealt by Parliament rather than Executive. Constitution of Pakistan gives Executive the power to even ratify any international treaties through cabinet. It doesn't require ratification of Parliament.

¹⁷PCNS Recommends no Foreign Footprints on Pakistani Soil", (AFP), *Daily Dawn*, Islamabad, Saturday, April 13, 2011.

¹⁸Saeed Akber, "PCNS Redrafts Proposal", *The Nation*, Islamabad, Wednesday, April 11, 2012.

Therefore, it is difficult for Parliament to review the foreign policy. Parliament can be recommending body but it cannot be a decision making body. In this way executive has shifted its responsibility in order not to take onus of their wrong doings.

The parliament in this sense shared responsibility first ever time with executive. Observably, no task is free of challenges and there were certain challenges for PCNS to bring about best possible recommendations for resetting ties with USA. Few of such challenges faced by parliamentary committee during its process of providing parliamentary input in foreign policy matters is highlighted below. Only one fourth of the total time of the session was consumed on discussing PCNS report, rest of the time parliamentarians were busy in discussing other issues of like security situation in Karachi and price hike in petroleum products. The parliamentarians were again and again reminded to discuss the major issue for which Joint Session was summoned. PCNS report was completely ignored in the first three sittings and was only discussed for 15 minutes by a PPP legislature.

According to survey, only 338 minutes which is 25% of total 22 hours and 22 minutes total time of Joint Session was consumed to discuss PCNS report.¹⁹The deep rooted parliamentary practice is required for conducting foreign policy oversight. Current Executive branch was only concealing its failure not to take responsibility of dealing with USA. Pakistani Parliamentarians are not mature in dealing with the foreign policy matters. The short term democracy in Pakistan is another factor which lowers wait of recommendations given by the parliamentarians. Another difficulty for parliamentarians was to bring about consensus of all

¹⁹ "PCNS Recommendations, 94% legislatures refrained from debating Pak-US ties", (Report), *The Express Tribune*, Islamabad, Friday, April 13, 2012.

parties on the recommendations. There exists diversity in opinion among all parties present in the Parliament.

So it always becomes difficult to evolve on agreed recommendation with consensus of all members. Throughout the process of joint session the participating parties were thrashing out their differences over the recommendations till eleventh hour. There was a difference of opinion among ruling and opposition parties. It delayed process of parliamentary review. The changes have been made in the already submitted draft of recommendation by PCNS in view to entertain demands of opposition parties. Strategic matters are highly sensitive and are rarely dealt publically. It requires professionalism and tight covert approach. Pakistani government raised sensitive issues of national security in public when parliamentarians were asked to give recommendations.

This made for parliamentarians a difficult task to provide recommendations according to popular sentiments. PCNS has outlined two drafts of recommendations. First draft was presented in front of Joint session to debate on was opposed by the opposition parties of the both houses. Its contents were unrealistic and draft was also difficult for the USA to agree upon the conditions. For example, initial draft has connected resumption of NATO supplies with the halt to drone attacks. It would have brought the relations between Pakistan and USA at no go position. Both resumption of NATO supplies and drone attacks are considered as important elements of US counter-terrorism strategy in Afghanistan. Any hindrance in any one of two things would seriously bring negative on US exit strategy from Afghanistan.²⁰

²⁰Zahid Hussian, "Ties with US: the sticking point", *Daily Dawn*, Islamabad, Friday, April6, 2012.

As compared to first draft second draft seems to be realist and contains conditions on which executive branch can best negotiate with Washington for future engagements? The parliamentarians had maintained their strong stance of not allow any foreign country to use the soil of Pakistan for security purposes. This is a popular view in the country after events of Raymind Davis and Shamsi Airbase. By saying no to any infiltration of foreign private contract agencies and security personnel in Pakistan, our parliamentarians had demonstrated the stance that Pakistan will not compromise on its sovereignty at any cost. The Parliamentarians of Pakistan despite their lack of experience in dealing with foreign policy matters have handsomely passed draft recommendations unanimously.

It brought an onus on parliamentarians in terms of setting new avenues of engagement with USA. The draft contains stiff conditions against United States to accept. The demands are very important for upholding national sovereignty but require endorsement by USA. It is also a question mark that whether US will be in a position to accept all recommendations given by PCNS. There are certain provisions which are very difficult for interests of US to agree upon. For example, Pakistan's demand to completely halt of the drone attacks is something difficult. The US authorities clearly denied for accepting this demand of Pakistan. US perceive drones as ultimate way to counter terrorists in the suspected areas near Pak-Afghan border.

Therefore, US administration will try its level best to find common ground for Pakistan in terms of drone attacks. It should maintain infrastructure of kind with expertise within which could help parliament to raise issues of national interests. In the past members of different parliamentary committees have been engaged in conducting trips to foreign countries without giving any input in national issues. This trend needs to be change in the future if parliamentarians are really interested to influence on foreign policy matters.

3.3.2 PAECO and Pakistan

PAECO was the idea of Pakistan's Speaker in 2011 to form a parliamentary forum of ECO countries. ECO was basically an organization established back in 1960s between Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. Later on, the other CARS countries which got independence from former Soviet Union also included in this forum. The main idea of forming this forum by Pakistan was to commend the objectives and ideals of ECO through parliaments of these countries. To work on idea of Speaker 13th National Assembly of Pakistan first Conference of (PAECO) from 10-13 February, 2013 was organized in Pakistan. ECO Parliaments attended the event²¹. Membership of the Assembly affords many practical benefits as well. The greatest advantage, however, is the opportunity to be enjoyed by Members at one time or another to meet their fellow parliamentarians at Conferences to adopt a common line of action on different regional and international issues.

From these personal contacts will grow up the friendships, understandings and exchanging of ideas which belong to the essence of the ECO fraternity as a vital and living society. PAECO is now a reality however the forum has not been successful enough to tape the potential of trade in this region. Afghanistan was supposed to host its second conference but failed to do so due to security reasons back in 2014. Pakistan tried to host it again but could not do so due to pandemic issues. The forum has to be ratified by at least one-fourth of the members to be functional in its real spirit.

Despite being unable to tape the potential of cooperation between and among its member, the forum holds a lot of worth in connecting Asia to CARS and beyond up till far east Europe. If

²¹²¹ National Assembly Secretariat, International Relations Branch <http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/PAECO-2013/Signed-Charter.pdf> accessed on October 10, 2020

security situation improves in Afghanistan, it would be a wonderful opportunity for landlocked countries of CARs to connect to warm waters through Pakistan. The second PAECO Conference was held again in Islamabad during the 15th National Assembly from 31st May- Jun2 03, 2021 in Islamabad. Hon'ble Asad Qaiser formally becomes the president of PAECO in accordance to article 5(b) of its Charter.

3.3.3 ASSP and Parliament of Pakistan

ASSP came in to being in early 1990s. Pakistan like PAECO was amongst its founding members. The same way like PAECO, ASSP was established to commend the work of SAARC. The then National Assembly organized its second moot in capital Islamabad back in late 90s (1997 October). The work of ASSP however remained mostly to parliamentary chambers. India and Pakistan being the powerful nations never let this forum to play its potential part in converting Asia to its real desires of progress and prosperity. The difference between the two countries led them to test nuclear weapons in 1998 letting the whole Asia on the bridge of a nuclear war.

The 6th ASSP was again hosted by Pakistan in 2012, courtesy visionary leadership and strong advocate of PD, Fehmida Mirza. It was an important event as it was the first-ever holding of the Association's Conference within a year of its previous meeting. The whole credit of maintaining this regularity is due to the pro-active role played by the two Women Speakers of India and Pakistan. Keeping in view importance of the event, the Conference was formally inaugurated President of Pakistan. In his inaugural address, the President drew attention of the delegates to some key challenges, faced by the region. The General Conference of the

Association was held on 5-6 November, 2012. On the first day, Honourable Speaker was formally elected President of the Association.

She assured the member countries that she will try to further strengthen this forum during her tenure. She termed success of the Conference as “joint achievement” and also appreciated personnel interest of Smt. Meira Kumar and other worthy Speakers for their contributions. She said that “Frequent events like this and exchanging of ideas will bring understanding among all members of the South Asian region”. She also appreciated all parliamentarians for their inputs in the theme of the Conference. Honourable Speaker made it clear that achieving MDGs was the biggest challenge for democracies and it required holistic approach.

3.3.4 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Pakistan

The role of the National Assembly OF Pakistan in the IPU activities has been exemplary in terms of its participation and promotion of the Int. Agenda on interfaith and other subjects. Throughout the last 15 years, the IPU Human Rights forum has also been working in support of Pakistani parliamentarians. The IPU Committee dealt with many such cases, including that of President Asif Ali Zardari, and systematically took a stand in expressing concerns and demanding that the authorities address situations of flawed legal process, politically-motivated attacks and ill treatment of opposition parliamentarians in Pakistan. The Committee closed its last case regarding a Pakistani legislator, Mr. M. Javed Hashmi, in April 2008, subsequent to the satisfactory settlement of the case (release from a 23-year prison sentence).

On several other occasions, the IPU has expressed support for Pakistan in difficult situations. This was the case in relation to the storms that hit Karachi in 2007, the earthquake in Baluchistan in 2008 and more recently the flooding in northern Pakistan in 2010 and again in

2011. October 2010 the IPU Member Parliaments adopted unanimously a resolution on for support of Pakistan in the wake of devastating floods that destroyed both flora and fauna of Pakistan. The IPU has also provided technical support to the Parliament of Pakistan. Following a joint IPU-UNDP needs assessment mission in 2003, a project was developed on SDPD. The first phase of the project was implemented between 2005 and 2009.

It aimed to enhance the organizational structure of the secretariats of houses, adopting and implementing a transparent human resource development policy, strengthening the legislative and oversight functions of parliament, improving parliamentary information services, enhancing the political participation of women legislators, and strengthening the mechanisms for regular interaction between the parliament and civil society. A new IPU-UNDP-Parliament agreement was signed in August 2011. It initiated a second phase (SDPD II) of IPU support to a selected number of parliamentary committees and its secretariat staff. The support will be provided in close cooperation with PIPS.

Members' National Assembly have also attended various other important deliberations of the IPU in the last ten years. They include;

- 54th IPU Session of (CSW) on 2nd March, 2010 in New York.
- IPU Regional Seminar on HIV and AIDS in Hanoi, Vietnam from 10 – 12 December, 2009
- IPU UN Affairs Committee: Field visit of Tanzania from 8 – 10 September, 2008

3.3.5 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and Pakistan

There are 175 national, state, provincial and territorial Parliament branches of the CPA representing some 17,000 members of Parliament. Pakistan was signatory amongst the eighth members that led to foundation of this forum. Following Commonwealth's recognition of Bangladesh, Pakistan left the Organization in 1972. It resumed membership of the Commonwealth in October, 1989 at the Kuala Lumpur Summit of the Commonwealth Heads of Government. Pakistan's membership of the Commonwealth again remained under suspension from 1999 to 2004. It was again suspended in November, 2007 due to imposition of Emergency in Pakistan.

Pakistan's membership of the Commonwealth was restored in 2008 following return of full democracy. Pakistan's membership of CPA also remained under suspension during the period mentioned above. Since then, Pakistan parliamentary delegations have regularly participated in the CPCs held in various member countries. Pakistan attends CSPOK as well as other activities arranged by the CPA. Ms. Kashmala Tariq, MNA contested elections of Chairperson of CPA in August 2011 in UK, but could not succeed. Dr. Nafisa Shah, MNA was the Vice Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the CPA. She was re-elected during the 58th CPA Conference held in Colombo.

The National Assembly of Pakistan has worked in close collaboration with the CPA since 2010. Pakistan has participated in four conferences of CPA. Besides, the National Assembly has participated in three Asia Region conferences of CPA. The National Assembly of Pakistan hosted of the 5th CPA Asia Regional Conference from 29th July to 2nd August, 2019 in Islamabad, Pakistan. National Assembly of Pakistan annually observe the commonwealth day on

the second Monday of March. National Assembly of Pakistan has also hosted 4th CPA Asia Regional Conference in 2012.

Currently Pakistan holds the following positions at CPA:

- Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA was selected amongst all the members after formal election for the Chair (CWP) for three years. Asia Regional Representative, Honourable
- Dr. Fehmida Mirza, MNA / Federal Minister for IPC became was elected as a Member of CPA Executive Committee during 63rd CPA in London, 2016
- Lal Chand Ukrani, MPA CPA Sindh Branch, Member of Executive Committee
- Honourable Ms. Munaza Hassan is the CWP International Steering Committee Member from Asia Region
- Pakistan holds the CPA Asia Regional Secretariat and Syed Shmoon Hashmi, Additional Secretary is the Regional Secretary from Asia Region.

Pakistan hosted the CPA 4th Asia Regional Conference held from 11- 16 march, 2012. It was a successes story as the provincial Assembly of Sindh successfully hosted the event. Sri Lanka's Speaker Chamal Jaynatha Rajapaska also attended the meeting. Speaker National Assembly Dr. Fahmida Mirza opened 4th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Asia Regional Conference. Addressing the participants, she said that 4th CPA Asia Regional Meeting had an important agenda; it would address some key problems, which were evenly faced by our countries. She said that let us not forget that our destinies were closely attached with each other as the four countries of the CPA Asia Region were inter-connected in so many ways. As members of the commonwealth fraternity, democracy was our common thread she added. We

must take bold steps to remove the lacunas, which remain the stumbling blocks in making South Asia a “free trade region” she said.

The organization of the regional Conference was a successes story as it provided the opportunity to the Provincial Assembly of Sindh to be a part of the regional parliamentary deliberations.

Other Important deliberations which Pakistan attended in CPA are;

- 54th Annual Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary (CPA) in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) from 1 – 10 August, 2008 led by Madam Speaker.
- CPA International Parliamentary Conference from 5 – 11 July, 2009
- 55th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference to Tanzania (Arusha) from 28th September to 6th October, 2009
- Participation in the Standing Committee Meeting (CSPOC) from January 12 – 15, 2011 at Isle of Man
- 3rd CPA Asia Region Conference from 10 – 16 February, 2011 in Colombo (Sri Lanka) led by Madam Speaker.
- Participation in Mid – Year Executive Committee Meeting from 24 – 27 February, 2011 in Whitehorse (Yukon)
- 57th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and General Assembly and Related Matters, London United Kingdom from 21 – 28 July, 2011 led by Honourable Madam Speaker
- 58th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and General Assembly and its Related Matters in Colombo (Sri Lanka) from 10 – 15 September, 2012 led by Deputy Speaker

3.3.6 PUIC and Pakistan

There are various avenues where the parliamentarians ponder upon issues of common interest not only at bilateral level but at the multilateral level as well. Parliamentary forums particularly provided new avenues to discuss religious conflicts and resolutions through people-to-people contacts. Parliamentary organizations have taken on their agendas, the subject of religion or religious relations between states and nations.

Pakistan founded this forum. The idea for the establishment of PUIC came from Pakistan in year 1990 at Nicosia in the 83rd IPU conference. Former National Assembly Speaker Miraj Khalid (late) was one of the key figures in establishing this forum. The first Chairman PUIC was former Speaker Elahi Bukhsh Soomro. Pakistan despite a good start in the PUIC failed to maintain its prominent position owing to some unbearable domestic circumstances. The 13th National Assembly of Pakistan has actively perused its role within the Parliamentary Union of OIC Member States.

Led by the then Honourable Madam Speaker; the last extra ordinary session of the union held in UAE in 2011 as been very fruitful from Pakistani perspective. The issue of Kashmir in 11-point draft declaration was included in the final session of the conference on the demand of Pakistani Besides, a parliamentary delegation to 7th Session of (PUIC) Conference at Palembang (Indonesia) from 24 – 31, January, 2012 also resulted in discussion on how to promote parliamentary role in interfaith relations.

The Speaker National Assembly met a number of presiding officers in the Conference and exchanged views with them on the situation of Muslim Ummah in the contemporary socio-political scenario. Honourable Madam Speaker has proposed the establishment of a special PUIC

fund that could be utilized by the member countries of the PUIC in case of natural calamities. The 13th National Assembly Member also participated in the PUIC Executive Committee Meeting in Istanbul (Turkey) on 10th May, 2010 and World Islamic Forum for Women Parliamentarians be held from 5-6 April, 2011 in Damascus (Syria).

There are thus multiple objectives of PD in Pakistan. They are religious, political, economic, regional and global. The religious aspect is in two ways. One is purely intra Islamic, and the other is of relations with other nations. PD started functioning in Pakistan soon after the independence of the country. Delegations of the National Assembly made a score of visits abroad to cement its parliamentary relations with their counterpart parliaments. The pace of the work at PD matters in comparison to the initial decades however is significantly changed now.

3.4 Bilateral Parliamentary Diplomacy in Pakistan

This Chapter of the thesis is an explanation to the issues of Kashmir and Palestine from perspective of Pakistan politics. The following is a brief overview of Indian and Israeli atrocities in IIOJK and Palestine from three aspects: Humanitarian, legal and peace and security.. The question of Jerusalem is the most sensitive and complex red line of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. For Palestinians, East Jerusalem — Al-Quds Al Sharif— is to be the capital of the future Palestinian State. For Israelis, the entirety of Jerusalem is the sole and indivisible capital of the Jewish State.

During the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, Israel not only defeated the Arab armies but also seized control of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria. This process culminated in 1980, when Israeli lawmakers passed a bill in the Israeli Parliament declaring that “Jerusalem complete

and united, is the capital of Israel". Since 1967, the land of the State of Palestine, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif (East Jerusalem) has been under illegal Israeli occupation. Israel has continued settlement construction and expansion in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in defiance of its obligations under international law. This illegal activity has rendered the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, increasingly fragmented.

Israeli settlement policies and practices include, but are not limited to, the separation Wall; the creation of seam zones; checkpoints; zoning and planning restrictions; demolition of homes and forced evictions; revocation of residency rights; the designation of vast tracts of land in the West Bank as closed military zones or natural reserves; and the expropriation of land for settler agriculture or industrial zones. This has irreversibly disrupted the contiguity of the West Bank, thus undermining a just and sustainable "two-state" solution.

Pakistan favors an inclusive pledge Israeli disagreement, for lasting peace of all exceptional Arab- in the Middle East. Pakistan always condemns the criminal actions of Israeli forces against the Palestinian people particularly in Gaza, since the Land Day March (30th March 2018), causing deaths and injury to scores of Palestinians. The international community needs to use its influence with Israel to discontinue its settlement policy in the West Bank. Pakistan expresses its concerns over the passage of Jewish Nation State Bill by Knesset (Passed in July 2018) Pakistan would never like to see Qibla-e-Awwal being legitimized as Israeli territory.

The US suspension of funds for UNRWA (January 2018) has resulted in a budgetary shortfall of US\$ 446 million, leaving millions of Palestinian refugees without food supplies, education and health care. Pakistan gave US\$0.25 m for UNRWA in August 2018. The security situation has worsened in the Palestinian occupied territories considerably, following shifting of the US Embassy to Jerusalem (14 May 2018) and passage of Jewish Nation State Bill by the

Israeli Parliament (19 July 2018). On 25 March, 2019, Jordanian King cancelled his scheduled visit to Romania after Romanian Prime Minister announced to transfer Romanian Embassy to Jerusalem. More than 250 Palestinians have been killed and thousands injured since the Land Day March on 30th March 2018.

The Israeli settlement policies in the occupied territories in blatant disregard of UNSC resolutions including Resolution 2334 have fragmented West Bank into small enclaves walled off from East Jerusalem, to make it easy to oppress. In this situation, a political settlement of the Palestinian issue remains a distant ideal. The US decision of slashing funds for UNRWA in January 2018, especially in Gaza Strip, has added to their miseries. With a budgetary shortfall of US\$ 446 million, UNRWA cannot provide food assistance, education and health facilities to millions of Palestinian refugees.

US sponsoring an economic workshop in Manama (Bahrain) titled 'Prosperity for Peace', on 25-26 June 2019, to raise US\$ 68 bn for the Middle East, with major chunk coming from Arab world. This workshop proposed to cater for the economic part of the deal of the century. From 'Land for Peace,' for Palestinians, the US has moved on to 'Prosperity for Peace', with serious compromises on the Palestinian/Arab territories grabbed by Israel in 1948 and 1967 Arab Israeli wars. From two-state solution, the discussion has shifted to One State-Two nations. Support for Palestinian cause has been an important pillar of our foreign policy from the very beginning.

Pakistan's Parliament has continuously remained at the forefront in supporting the cause of Palestine. It has articulated its steadfastness to opinion decisively with those of Palestine. On 7 December 2017, the National Assembly of Pakistan passed resolution against the United State's decision to recognize and shift its embassy to Jerusalem being the central capital of Israel. On 11

December 2017, the Senate of Pakistan on lines of National Assembly of Pakistan not only rejected this US unilateral move terming it a clear violation of the International Law, especially Resolution No. 478 and 2334. On 15 May 2018, both the houses adopted resolutions, criticizing the atrocities by Israel against unarmed Palestinian protesters in Gaza, resulting in killing of 70 people, including children and women

Human Rights Council (HRC) held its 40th Session in Geneva on 22 March 2019 and, inter alia, adopted following resolutions. All these resolutions were presented by Pakistan on behalf of the OIC. A meeting of the OIC Committee of Permanent Representatives was held on 4 December in Jeddah. Jerusalem is “Corpus Separatum” (separate body) under the UNGA Partition Plan for Palestine (Resolution 181, November 1947), having a special legal and political status. Pakistan is deeply concerned at the Trump administration’s expected decision undermining ongoing efforts for resumption of peace talks and will unleash another wave of violence in the region. East Jerusalem is the site of Qibla-e-Awwal and is therefore, of great religious significance for the entire Muslim Ummah.

It has been Pakistan’s position all along expeditious and full implementation of Resolution 2334 by the parties concerned. Any other solution will have grave consequences for the peace process. Pakistan favours a comprehensive resolution of all outstanding Arab-Israeli disputes. Pakistan is ready to contribute towards international efforts for its early resolution.

3.4.1 Pakistan and the Issue of Kashmir

Pakistan’s response to India in Kashmir issue is always through a well-coordinated national effort involving all state institutions, and segments of the society, media and all political parties in Parliament. Pakistan immediately respond to Indian misadventure by downgrading its

diplomatic relations with India, suspending all bilateral trade ties and taking other similar measures in line with the decisions taken in the National Security Committee meetings. Pakistan usually categorically reject India's illegal actions, highlighting the humanitarian, legal and peace & security dimensions of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute globally through an intense diplomatic, political, legal and moral campaign.

Since June 2020, more than 2 million fake domicile certificates have been issued to non-Kashmiris and the procedures are simplified to grant a domicile within 15 days. The ongoing violent occupation, militarization, and digital seize in Kashmir has created a mental health crisis. 41% (1.6 million) adults in the valley are living with significant symptoms of depression. In recent move, BJP has been undergoing the process of replacing Urdu language – a language associated with Muslims by Hindi- as the exclusive official language of the territory. Going through historical statistics 95,647 Indian killings, 22,917 widowed, 11,214 raped, 107,797 orphaned and 110,345 houses and other infrastructure was damaged against besieged Kashmiris since 1989. Since 5th August 2019, 13680 Kashmiris were arrested.

The Amnesty international has also recently in its video message called to the Prime Minister of India for upholding its human rights values. Since, their offices have been closed and accounts are frozen in India as it has brought out two reports one written on Delhi violence showing its police complicity earlier this year and other one on Human rights violations of IIOJK. Various civil society organizations other than NGO's are also working to highlight human right abuses committed in the occupied territory. OHCHR publicized a joint communication made by 9 Special Rapporteurs sent to India expressing grave concerns on the abrupt closure of Jammu Kashmir Human Rights Commission in October 2019 that was

investigating cases of thousands of mass graves, enforced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, torture and sexual violence in IIOJK.

As a rough estimate, almost 1000 articles/ op-eds/ news reports on situation in IIOJK appeared in international media since 5 August 2019. Statements of World leaders in unequivocal support of innocent Kashmiris by China, Turkey and Malaysia reaffirm Pakistan's position on Jammu & Kashmir. International media and Human Right organizations have been near unanimous in their condemnation of India for its illegal actions and Human Rights Atrocities. The Concerned Citizens Group (CCG), an Indian civil society organization including former member of BJP and Foreign & Finance Minister Mr. Yashwant Sinha in its statement on Aug 5, 2020 has declared that none of the stated goals of BJP Government for its illegal unilateral actions of August 5, 2019, namely, ending militancy and bringing development in IIOJK have been achieved.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) in its report on 5th August 2020 stated growing resentment amongst the Kashmiris on illegal Indian actions of August 5, and subsequent promulgations of laws intended to open doors of employment and investment for outsiders at the cost of local populace, and changing the demographic structure of the IIOJK. Pakistan continues to apprise the international community of Indian design to change the Muslim majority configuration of the disputed territory. Pakistan has been continuously sensitizing the world of the danger of non-resolution of this festering dispute of Jammu & Kashmir to the peace & security of South Asia and the world-at-large. To undermine the indigenous character of Kashmiri resistance movement, India is peddling the false propaganda of cross-LoC "infiltrations" and "launch pads. Pakistan continues to sensitize the world community of a possible Indian misadventure in the form of a "false-flag" operation. Indian narrative of foreign

involvement in Kashmir has lost currency owing to our diplomatic efforts and success in counterterrorism.

At the same time, Pakistan's narrative of ongoing Indian repression in IIOJK leading to an indigenous Kashmiri resistance is resonating globally through the work of Pakistan's Missions abroad, Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir Affairs, Media, Civil society organizations and other stakeholders. Pakistan has deepened its strategic engagement with China on Jammu & Kashmir dispute as it remains our most reliable partner and has been instrumental in enabling four UNSC deliberations on Jammu & Kashmir in the last one year.

Pakistan will continue building pressure on India for immediate actions including:

- Complete lifting of the inhuman military siege and lockdown;
- Stopping extrajudicial killings
- Providing access to human rights and humanitarian organizations and media;
- Repeal of draconian laws; and
- Withdrawal of over 900,000 occupation troops
- Repeal all the Laws it has amended to alter the demographic changes in the valley.

3.4.2 Pakistan-Afghanistan Bilateral Parliamentary Cooperation

There is an ongoing Parliamentary cooperation between the National Assembly of Pakistan and the Wolesi Jirga of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The National legislative bodies of both the countries enjoy warm and friendly relations at bilateral and multilateral level. There have been a number of Parliamentary exchanges between the two countries in the last five years. Presiding Officers of Pakistan and Afghanistan lower houses have fruitful interactions at various multilateral Parliamentary forums. The Legislative body of Afghanistan keenly

supported the idea of Honourable Speaker for establishing a Parliamentary forum of the Economic Cooperation Organization. The idea of Speaker National Assembly is now a reality and Afghanistan currently holds the office of the vice president

Pakistan – Afghanistan Parliamentary Friendship Groups exists in the Parliaments of both the countries, in the National Assembly of Pakistan as well as in the National Assembly (Wolasi Jirga) of Afghanistan. Pakistan–Afghanistan Parliamentary Friendship Group existed with 9-Members in the 13th National Assembly of Pakistan. Former Deputy Speaker National Assembly was the convener of the Pak-Afghan PFG. The Pak-Afghan PFG had been one of the Active PFG in the 13th National Assembly. Besides in-house deliberations the PFG had been involved in interactions with the Afghan Legislatures in dialogues being organized by various Non-Governmental Organizations.

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan can reach new heights through Parliamentary cooperation. In this connection Parliamentarians from both the countries can take matters through Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs for building consensus on matters of International Stature. Formal meetings of the PFGS of both the sides can also help in increasing the role of Parliament in promoting friendship. We may invite the Afghan PFG to pay an official visit to Pakistan. Both the Parliament can share each other's experiences in the field of legislation. This can be done by appointing coordinators from the secretariats of both the parliaments. Training ventures for Pakistani MPs in Afghanistan and Turkish MPs in Pakistan may also prove beneficial. The services of PIPS can be utilized in this scenario.

3.4.3 Pakistan-Iran Bilateral Parliamentary Cooperation

There is an ongoing parliamentary cooperation between National Assembly of Pakistan and Islamic Parliament of Iran. The Parliamentarians of the both countries have been interacting with each other on bilateral as well as multilateral forums. A 5-Member delegation of the Members of Pakistan-Iran PFG visited Iran from 8-13 November 2019 on the invitation of the head of the friendship group in Iranian parliament. The members of the group had fruitful meetings with various parliamentary authorities including Speaker of the Islamic Parliament of Iran during the visit. An invitation from the Speaker National Assembly was extended on 11th April 2019 to his then counterpart in the Islamic Parliament of Iran for leading a parliamentary delegation to Pakistan on mutually convenient dates. The same invitation was reiterated on 23rd April, 2019.

Later on, National Assembly of Pakistan had proposed two sets of dates either from 7-10 October 2019 or 22-25 October 2019 for visit of the Iranian Speaker to Pakistan. However, no response on the sets of dates from Iranian side was received. A 6-Member Parliamentary delegation of Iran-Pakistan Friendship Group led by H.E. Mr. Ahmad Amir Abadi Farahani visited Pakistan from 16-21 June, 2019 on invitation of the National Assembly of Pakistan. During their stay in Pakistan, the Iranian delegates had fruitful meetings with Pakistani leadership and also provincial authorities during stay at Karachi.

The Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran hosted the second Speakers' Conference of the Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey on "the Challenges of Terrorism and Inter-Regional Connectivity" from December 7-8, 2018 at Tehran as per decision taken during the 1st Conference in Islamabad, Pakistan. The Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan

led a high-powered parliamentary delegation to Iran on invitation of his Iranian counterpart for participation in the Second Speakers' Conference. On the side-lines of the conference, the Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan called on the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and also met with the then Speaker of the Islamic Parliament of Iran.

In order to make relevant coordination for the conference between National Assembly Secretariat and Parliament of Iran, National Assembly of Pakistan hosted delegation of two officials of Iranian Parliament from November 22-24, 2018. The National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan had successfully hosted First Speaker's Conference of Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey to address the Challenges of Terrorism and Regional Connectivity from 23-26 December 2017. H. E. Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic visited Pakistan and called on the Honourable Speaker National Assembly H.E. Mr. Asad Qaiser on 24th May 2019.

Former Iranian Speaker Hon. Dr. Ali Larijani led a parliamentary delegation to Pakistan for participation in the first Assembly of PAECO which was held in Islamabad from February 10-13, 2013. Pakistan-Iran Parliamentary Friendship Group has been reactivated in the National Assembly. Honourable Syed Naveed Qamar, MNA has been nominated as Convener of the Pak-Iran PFG and group is having 135 Members. Further, there is a need to activate PFG's in the parliaments of both Pakistan and Iran. The Parliamentary Friendship Groups of both the countries would contribute in bringing the two neighbors even closer and strengthen the bilateral ties.

3.4.4 Pakistan-China Bilateral Parliamentary Cooperation

China was the only country which expressed support for Pakistan's independence and sovereignty after OBL and Salala incidents. In an unprecedented gesture, China publicly announced support to our candidature for UNSC non-permanent seat before the elections in 2011. In its interaction with the US and its allies, China has advised them to acknowledge Pakistan's sacrifices in the war on terror. Chinese leadership deeply appreciates Pakistan's supportive statements on South China Sea issue in the ARF and ASEM. We are also coordinating with China on issues like FMCT, NSG, and UNSC reform. On Security Council reform, Pakistan and China have a united position against the candidacy of India, Japan, Germany and Brazil (G-4) for permanent seats at the Security Council. On matters of peace and security, Pakistan has a growing relevance for China.

In the regional context, Pakistan and China are reliable partners with common strategic objectives. Pakistan and China are, therefore, working towards a stable and peaceful Afghanistan by institutionalized mutual consultations processes. Improvement in China-India relations also favors Pakistan as it promotes regional stability and obviates the justification of India's military buildup against perceived China-treat. China has assured us that its growing relations with India would not be at the expense of Pakistan. China also appreciates Pakistan effort to provide security to over 13,000 Chinese nationals in Pakistan but has urged us to enhance their security due to stepped up activities of ETIM. Pakistan and China have regular consultations on counterterrorism since 2002.

The 7th round of such consultations was held on 15 April 2013. Our Joint CT Mechanism is in place since 2008 to identify and locate ETIM elements. The launch of Operation Zarb-e-

Azb is being seen positively in China. Our focus on elimination of all terrorist/extremist elements "irrespective of their hue and colour" is appreciated by the Chinese side. Chinese leadership has conveyed condolences and support in the wake of the terrorist attack in Peshawar. There is a satisfactory level of interaction at multilateral and bilateral level between the two legislative bodies. National Assembly has the highest number of Parliamentary Exchanges with National People's Congress. These exchanges have given momentum to our growing bilateral friendship. We look forward to sustain this momentum to deepen our political and economic cooperation. On election of the Honourable Sardar Ayaz Sadiq as Speaker National Assembly; the Chairman National Congress felicitated him on June 7, 2013.

Besides, the Honourable Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan has invited Chairman of the 12th NPC to lead a parliamentary delegation to Pakistan. The invitation letter was extended on October 22nd, 2013. The Pakistan-China Parliamentary Friendship Group has already established contacts with the Chinese side. Recently, at the invitation from the Chinese side, the group led by Hon. Convener of the Pakistan China PFG, Rana. M. Afzal Khan paid a successful visit to China from October 29-November 07, 2007. The delegation made important deliberations with the Chinese side aiming at promotion of parliamentary exchanges and further strengthening of the Pak-China friendship. Deputy Speaker led an eight member multiparty Parliamentary delegation to China from 20-29 September 2013. Parliamentarians attended various forums concerning Pakistan-Afghanistan -China relations.

One of the main tenet and thus advantage of PD is the multiplicity of political actors to jointly act on international forums. They maintain open channels for dialogue to find common grounds of interest while dealing with different cultures and constitutional systems. It is imperative to note here that PD is not restricted to certain limitations as in formal diplomacy. It is

not a discussion restricted to Parliamentary Chambers. They elucidate responsibility of beliefs in relationships. Contention and intolerance in relations supported by religious convictions brings security uncertainty. Intercultural dialogue and PD complement each other in conflict resolutions. Interfaith harmony entitles for a communally up to standard scenario, all-encompassing.

4. Conclusion

A war in future on religious grounds between and among states can be a worst nightmare for human kind because of advance weapons and technology. The damage will be much more in size than those in world war I and II. PD can deliberate on the religious aspects of political relations. It can soften the ground for inter-religious dialogue to achieve interfaith harmony. Diplomacy is not a final word in interfaith affairs. However, parliamentary processes and tools can help resolve inter religious problems in the contemporary scenario. It is imperative that in particular the cases of Kashmir and Palestine, parliamentary diplomacy should actively be pursued. They are one of the main reasons for relegated interfaith harmony between Muslims, Christian, Jews and Hindus. The need of greater parliamentary dialogue on the issue of Kashmir and Palestine is need of the hour.

Both issues are potential enough to aggravate nuclear wars between Pakistan and India and Israel. Furthermore, limited academic work has been undertaken so far on the role of Parliamentary Diplomacy concerning a particular normative goal like interfaith harmony. There is a need to probe further the connection of interfaith relations with the parliamentary diplomacy. Parliamentarians are placed to build bridges between people and the governments. They can

sense the public emotions. They are well-placed to put across views which the official government representatives are not able (or willing) to convey.

The entire comity of nations through their parliaments can be agreed upon signing a charter for respect of religious plurality, international security, lawmaking and the legal framework for the digital future. Lessons from the lives of the prophets can be applied to the contemporary interfaith relations. Dialogue is an important avenue for taking up matters of mutual concern. Islam being a monotheistic is very close in nature to that of Judaism and Christianity. The number of the followers of Islam is much more than Christians, Hindus, Jews and Buddhists died in the post 9/11 terror scenario. The interfaith and infra-faith relations can be effectively used by states to create harmony and coherence among nations of different faith. Interfaith relations among countries renovate with transformed political and economic situations. In methodical age; trends in interfaith harmony are significant.

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