**[The Foreign Minister of Iran](https://nation.com.pk/25-Nov-2020/the-foreign-minister-of-iran" \t "_new)**

Dr Farid A Malik November 25, 2020

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Recently Dr Javad Zarif, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran visited the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and met Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Imran Khan. Perhaps Dr Zarif has the toughest diplomatic assignment in the world. Despite all odds, he has performed exceptionally well in this position, totally committed to serve the best interests of his country. He staged an international coup against the status-quo when he succeeded in reaching an agreement with the West under which sanctions were lifted against the republic. He is also a Professor of International Relations at the University of Tehran. As an astute foreign policy expert, he is preparing his country to meet the challenges posed by the changed scenario both in neighbouring Afghanistan and arch-rival, the United States of America.

There was a time that our foreign office was ably led by stalwarts like Sir Zafarullah Khan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB), Agha Shahi, Agha Hillali, Sahibzada Yakub Ali Khan etc. ZAB was the architect of the Pak-China friendship which then moulded into Iron Brothers. It was through his efforts that the USA and China came closer to counter the Soviet Union influence.

Every country must formulate policies in its nation’s interests. After the revolution in 1979, IRI has stood up for its freedom. It took a hardline against the USA and was made to suffer for its stand. It was the wisdom of professionals like Dr Zarif that the damage was contained. He first negotiated an end to the US hostage crisis and then as Foreign Minister succeeded in getting the sanctions removed. When his nation was cornered and made to suffer he decided to resign, but President Rouhani refused to accept his resignation as his services for his country were irreplaceable. Dr Zarif’s credentials are unmatched. He studied in the top universities of USA for his B.A. two M.A.s and finally PhD in International Law and Policy in 1988 from University of Denver. He was highly rated by his committee as an outstanding scholar. Indeed, he has lived up to the expectations of his teachers.

I am sure by rubbing shoulders with Dr Zarif, our side must have learnt a lesson or two from the top foreign policy expert of the world. Shah Mahmood, the incumbent Foreign Minister held this portfolio from 2008 to 2011 in the People’s Party Government. After the Raymond Davis debacle in January 2011 in which two people were shot dead by him in broad daylight on Jail Road, Lahore the Foreign Office came under scrutiny. He was then removed from this position, he left the People’s Party and joined PTI after the mammoth Jalsa of October 2011 at Lahore. The previous government of Nawaz Sharif operated without a Foreign Minister, instead there were two advisors (Sartaj Aziz and Tariq Fatemi).

I remember when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in the seventies, ZAB warned the government from his death cell against any intervention from our side. But the Generals fell into the trap mainly to prolong their rule. The same mistake was committed by the fourth dictator when he decided to go against their own trained force. In both situations, the country and its people had to suffer for the mistakes of the few at the top. Since August 2019, Kashmir has been bleeding. The year 2021 is very crucial for the future of the valley; if India succeeds in changing the demography it will be all over for the Kashmiris. That is why the National leadership of Kashmiris has decided to fight for the restoration of their special status under the ‘Gupkar Declaration’. This step has been taken as they are afraid of losing their land forever. I fail to understand why MOFA has not been able to implement the Bangladesh script under which a massive international campaign was launched to highlight the plight of our Bengali brethren. India has sent an occupying force of Hindus under the rule of a Hindu fascist regime of BJP to take over Muslim land. Unarmed civilians are being killed and women raped while our foreign office issues statements of condemnation which are not enough. The plight of our Kashmiri brothers is not being highlighted in the world capitals. I am not sure about Dr Zarif but Imam Khomeni, the undisputed leader of the Iranian Revolution had Kashmiri roots. While the Arabs have decided to look the other way, it makes perfect sense to forge an alliance with our neighbours and friends like Iran, Turkey, China and Russia to help liberate Kashmir. MOFA has a major role to play by launching creative international diplomatic initiatives for which a fresh start has to be made under skilled professional leadership which has been missing.

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