

Indo – Pak Friendship

OCCASION TO LOOK BEYOND FRONTIERS

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1. Indo-Pak friendship seems to be a priority agenda of UPA II as is reiterated by Honb'le P M at every forum. Although horrors of partition and follow up hostility by Pakistan starting with Kashmir invasion just after its birth as well 1965, 1971, Kargil Conflict and continued Jihad and export of terrorism to bleed India by thousand cuts are still fresh in his and nations mind. Can our moral & ideological enemies be our friends? Hence at the very outset need arises to ask ourselves a very basic question as to why should we engage Pakistan in an uninterrupted dialogue and befriend her despite its open hatred and hostility. A brief answer to this question that would not sound rhetorical any longer can be summerised as under:-

- (i) To prevent a future war & break out of prolonged civil war.
- (ii) To prevent its total Talibanisation.
- (iii) To prevent export of state and non state sponsored terrorism/Jihad.
- (iv) To exploit our full economic and development potential by promoting trans-border trade and transit.
- (v) To assist in strengthening democratic institutions and weakening of ISI/Army.
- (vi) To minimise nuclear threat.
- (vii) To prevent export of regressive Islamisation by repression & terror in to Kashmir valley.
- (viii) Finally to eliminate trust deficit as stated by the P M.

2. Today we live in what is widely described as most dangerous part of the world and a nuclear flash point with two nuclear powers, one very powerful and unpredictable; breathing scare down our throat. Unfortunately we share the geographical borders and the history of hatred with both of them. As it stands we are at constant hostility with them and not very far from disastrous wars. The neighborhood we live in today is the bloodiest in the world. Presence of blood thirsty agents of terrorism around us and their horrors directed against us and their own people have made the life of common masses miserable. Peace and prosperity as an idea does not seem to be possible in the region because of the prevailing terrorism and pronouncements of Jihad. Given the horror of 26/11 at Mumbai and similar attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, China and Bangladesh, such an assumption is not surprising. The memories of fist decade of 21st century will be nagging for long times to come. Brutal attack on Indian Embassy in Kabul, tragic assassination of Benazir Bhutto, military coup in Bangladesh, 9/11 and 26/11 would remain most spectacular incidents of terrorism of the century.

3. The troubled Pak-Afg, Nepal, Tibet and Iraq has its impact on our domestic and foreign policies. Decades old Indo-Pak tensions over Kashmir, Balochistan and Afghanistan are going to live long. Over and above that Pak-Afg will continue to be violent and collapsing states of the region for decades despite US crutches. Pak based

organizations will continue their Jihad & suicide attacks against India and Afghanistan to force them to take punitive actions against them in Pakistan. This is amply vindicated by assertions of US Defense Secretary Robert Gates in this context in Delhi in Jan this year. Such probability leaves little space and scope for a lasting peace between hostile neighbors.

4. Indian approach and conduct of its foreign policy must change keeping in view the challenges ahead. A broader region directed indigenous policy is the solution to many of our impending dangers and must be pursued simultaneously. If US leaves Afghanistan ending 2011, (will Russia or other vested interests allow it to disengage) Taliban will reorganize and no power on earth will be able to prevent their major role in shaping the future of undemocratic and unstable country. Therefore shouldn't India support dialogue with Taliban as USA & UK are supporting President Karzai's effort of dialogue with moderate Taliban. India, Iran, China and Russia as well as countries bordering Afghanistan should be part of regional conclave on Afghanistan as they can better influence the peace process in the region than far off West which cannot gain the trust of majority of Muslim population of the region.

5. In addition India must resume composite dialogue with Pakistan on 15 July which she pretends to be constantly seeking. India's insistence on Pakistan taking strong punitive & transparent action against the perpetrators of 26/11 and dismantling of terror infrastructure is not a wise stand off policy because both the conditions are too high a price to be drawn from an unstable and collapsing neighbor and its weak and corrupt leadership. The composite dialogue between the two has been going on for long and sometimes had some positive impact on the existing tensions. This has been the best recipe of resolution of bilateral issues and had led to convergence of ideas on Kashmir in the past and hence should continue uninterrupted despite scepticism. New Delhi proposes talks with Kashmiris and ruling NC for finding a lasting solution to the tangle. Justice Saghir Committee recommendation indicates center's willingness to consider granting more autonomy as a way forward. Prime Minister's visit to the valley in the 1st week of June is a pointer in that direction. Devolution of autonomy is expected to be the main focus and should be welcomed if that is a solution to the internal dimension which is intertwined to the external dimension. India has to manage the discontent in the valley and prevent people with vested interests from exploiting public sentiments. Our moral enemies of course will not be our moral friends. No miraculous change can turn the enemies of histories of conflicts into lasting friends. Can the long history of hatred be turned into destiny of love? Will Pakistan ever abandon separatists for our sake or will US ever pressurize Pak for lasting peace? The answer is No & Never. These are the imponderables in our path to peace and prosperity which call for a renewed approach to these imponderables.

6. As it stands we are at constant static state of hostility with Pakistan and not very far from another war because more than half of opposing armed forces of both nations located on the borders continue facing each other in offensive posture. Construction of new bunkers and violations of cease fire continue unabated. Should the armies be pulled out to reduce trust deficit? None would do that. How to turn sworn adversaries into allies

and usher in the era of peace and prosperity is a formidable challenge. Therefore all stake holders particularly our top leadership have to abandon their firmly held ideology for promotion of friendship and abiding peace by bilateral dialogue alone. The talks must go on but imponderables must not be overlooked. Therefore we should look beyond the frontiers of Kashmir & Pakistan.

7. Congress led UPA II seems to be sincere to resolve conflicts and befriend neighbors. Thimpu SAARC Summit was very special for our P M who has been an ardent supporter of Happy & Prosperous South Asia, like former Premier Atal Ji, by promoting & strengthening economic cooperation. India under his leadership continues to play its positive role in the resurgence of SAARC. He has a vision of inclusive growth for the region. The winds of change are blowing across the world. Winds of change are conspicuous in Maldives, Bangladesh and Srilanka. South Asia cannot be immune to the trend of greater integration, both at the regional and global levels. Indian civilization heritage of mutual respect and tolerance as well as abhorrence of repression, extremism, radicalism & terrorism makes it a magnetic point of regional integration. Once India's bigger objective of South Asian peace and prosperity is achieved, neighborhood tensions will get addressed easily and amicably because the West and East are equally keen to see peace and prosperity in South Asia, more importantly in India, Pakistan & Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia has very cordial and effective relationship with Pakistan and is our friend too. She can be involved in resolving contractions between us. That is what Mr. Shashi Tharoor, ex MOS for the External Affairs stated on their soil during P M's visit to Saudi Arabia. Hence why not have indulgence of friendly countries in resolving local and regional conflicts. Therefore the scope of Indo Pak relations is enlarged more widely over the often repeated rhetoric of bilateralism. In the winds of change let us change our tracks and look beyond the frontiers for a pragmatic peaceful co existence with Pakistan.