

PAKISTAN-INDIA
RELATIONS AND THE US

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By Prof Khurshid Ahmad

DESPITE all Indian stubbornness on the Kashmir issue and its designs to become a regional power, as most recently reflected through its tests of Agni II and Trishul missiles, the Pakistan government seems convinced to 'hope after hope'. The extent of its craze is evident from Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz's assertion that any change in Delhi would not affect the process of dialogue between the two countries.

When India is keeping up its hostile posture, our talking about 'friendly relations' with India seems a wishful thinking. Or, is it the US-led foreign coercion that makes us undergo futile exercise of talks? In this respect, it is necessary to know as to how far the Vajpayee visit (Feb 1999) and its agenda were designed in Delhi and Islamabad and to what extent it was the fraudulent conjuring of Washington.

The US does not seem concerned with Pakistan's problems. While it continuously fails to stop India from pursuing hegemonic designs, the subject of all its pressure is Pakistan which is merely trying to cope the Indian challenge. For instance when Pakistan tested Ghauri and Shaheen missiles in response to India's Agni II, the US under secretary of State Karl Inderfurth said "we had hoped that Pakistan would not respond in a tit-for-tat fashion to India's missile test." A State Department official said that "the fact that Pakistan was responding does not mean that they were doing the right thing."

While US officials were busy regretting Pakistan's missile tests, India launched another surface-to-air Trishul missile. In fact, Trishul, Agni I and Agni II are part of a 16-year old ambitious Indian project to develop and build five types of guided missiles.

Also, India has not moved an inch from its unfounded stance on Kashmir. Arriving at Islamabad from Delhi after the collapse of the Vajpayee government, Indian High Commissioner G. Parthasarathy

said Delhi never accepted Kashmir as disputed territory and its known position on the question is that "India and Pakistan have differences on the Kashmir issue." "Our interpretation of the Lahore Declaration is that it envisages that the Kashmir question is to be settled through bilateral talks in the spirit of the Simla Accord which means that it cannot be raised at any international forum, not even the United Nations." When asked why Indian home minister L.K. Advani persistently referred to Kashmir as an integral part of India, he argued that it was the "known position of India."

It seems that the present government of Pakistan and, more particularly, the Prime Minister suffer from an intense longing to befriend India. They are following a path that leads only to destruction. To work for preventing such a catastrophe is the duty of every patriotic citizen. An objective analysis of the situation reveals that Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz Sharif think that if they are to stay in power they have to ensure:

1. Full compliance with the American agenda and to see salvation and progress in being part of its global order and work according to its scheme;
2. Friendship with India, at all cost;
3. Decrease in defence budget, downsizing the army and engaging it in civil affairs to make its interest subservient to that of the political leadership; or else the army loses popular respect and credibility along with the political leadership;
4. Complete subjugation of all constitutional organs, political forces and administrative machinery to establish a centralized rule so that they may enjoy exclusive decision-making authority;
5. Running of state affairs on the criteria of personal loyalty considering it the secret for perpetuating their rule.

This is their actual 5-point manifesto. The points are inter-related and mutually reinforcing. These trends are manifest through the policies and deeds of the government over the past two years.

September 1999 marks the deadline for a decision on CTBT. The rulers are ready to sign it. All arrangements are in this direction. Till that time comes, the drama of Pakistan-India friendship will be staged. This would dissolve the Kashmir issue. Moreover, signing of CTBT would practically amount to rolling back of the nuclear programme. President Clinton and Madeleine Albright have openly stated the Pakistani Prime Minister has promised in September and December 1998 to do this and what is being done now is like taming of the nation for that eventuality. The US is also dealing with India, but separately. The drama of Pakistan-India friendship is being staged under the US direction. The frequent visits of, Shahbaz Sharif are part of the same game. Matters are being settled without being brought into the knowledge of and advice from the foreign office, defence establishment, cabinet, parliament and the nation. Vajpayee's bus trip was part of this game-plan and the Lahore Declaration is its logical outcome.

How far does the friendship with the US and India conform to the national interests and the freedom and honour of the nation? Our rulers are simply blind to this dimension. There is no argument, nor any evidence to indicate that US and India have made any basic changes in their stance. We have been paying for the US friendship since 1965. US betrayed us at every moment of trial and used Pakistan only to further its own interests. Our experience of India and its leadership is even older.

So, we have to be cautious about the US motives in the region as well as watchful of the Indian designs. Dialogue is an important part of diplomacy. No one is denying this. It is also granted that

Pakistan's foreign policy should be designed to establish friendly relations with all nations of the world. The difference is on not differentiating between a friend and a foe. Every one wishes peace and security, but not at the cost of justice and national honour. Otherwise, mere "living" is possible even under slavery and subjugation and a sort of peace can be had in a graveyard. So, friendship with India will be possible only when it is ready to

shun inimical designs against Pakistan, to give us our due rights and to stop killing the Kashmiris and grant them their right to self-determination as guaranteed under the UN resolutions.

The sequence of events reveals astounding facts. The way Lahore Declaration has been lauded in the West and particularly welcomed by President Clinton as well as the State Department, and the manner in which nuclear non-proliferation is taken care of in the Declaration and the Memorandum suggests that we are at the losing end. What the informed circles say, therefore, merits immediate and deep consideration.

It is also worth noting that on the occasion of Mr Vajpayee's visit to Lahore, not only the US ambassador to Pakistan but its current and former ambassadors to India, Richard Celaste and Frank Weizner, were also present.

The question is what is the real American agenda? An article by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott in the famous US journal Foreign Affairs (March-April) and comments in London Times, New York Times, Washington Post, etc make the US plans abundantly clear:

1. The ultimate American objective is to eliminate the nuclear programmes of the two countries particularly that of Pakistan. For this the US insists on first signing the CIBT (a treaty not yet ratified by US, Russia and China). Then comes its demand to stop enriching nuclear material under FMCT,

although even the preliminaries of this proposed treaty are yet to be decided. It would probably take two years to take some final shape, but the demand is that Pakistan and India immediately stop enrichment, open their installations and test-sites for inspection (something which the US and the other four

nuclear powers are not ready to comply with, under NPT protection).

In the case of India, there are indications that the US will accept the principle of 'critical minimum deterrence,' which India is not ready to define, rather wants to keep ambiguous. US is not prepared to give this option to Pakistan. In short, the US demand is embodied in four points: nuclear programme 1) be practically capped; ii) be reversed to old status; iii) delivery system be controlled; and (iv) be opened for inspection by the West - under persuasion or under compulsion.

2. Initiation of Pak-India dialogue and ensuring Indian agenda that all matters be discussed and agreed upon without linking them to Kashmir issue. The strategy is to start cooperating in various fields without making anything public so that these become 'accepted facts' later on.

3. As far as the Kashmir issue is concerned, arrangements are made to ensure:

face-saving for both parties;

Pakistan gets neither more territory nor a better military position;

India may leave some area but it should not come to Pakistan. This is to help Indian army to get out of the mire without any advantage to Pakistan;

Certain areas be merged either

with Pakistan or with India, while others be given semi-autonomy administered either jointly by the two countries or by India alone or by the United Nations.

In other words the purport is to prevent India from getting weak and Pakistan from getting strong; to have ways for pressurizing and monitoring China while allowing India get out of its present troubles. Though details are being hammered out and various possible scenarios are being examined, yet the targets are the ones as mentioned above.

Pakistan is being persuaded and cajoled that it cannot get Kashmir by force; that the resistance movement is getting weak; that Pakistan should better stop helping freedom-fighters or else it will be declared a terrorist state. On the other hand, if it acts upon US advice it might get some area, its tussle with India would come to a close and the resources thus saved could then be used for economic welfare.

India is told that it can save billions that are now being spent in Kashmir; that Pakistan will not get the upper hand; that the Kashmiris do not wish to stay with it but under the semi-autonomous status they will be persuaded to live under Indian control.

The whole exercise is to enhance US influence in the area and, with the help of India, to work out new monitoring system against China. That is why China has expressed concern over Mr Vajpayee's visit.

4. In this whole game, Pakistan is subjected to two kinds of pressure. First is economic which has become quite serious because of the governments' wrong policies, corruption and mis-management. Second is the threat of the rise of regional separatist movements and Pakistan's threatened break up into four or five states in the wake of its rejection of US plans for friendship with India and division of Kashmir.

This is the real US agenda. So far, neither Pakistan nor India has fully agreed with it, yet both are being slowly pushed into the trap.

The real target of the whole scheme is Pakistan, not India; but unfortunately Pakistan's leadership has no clear perception of it. It has practically accepted foreign demands for capping and control of the only leverage i.e. the nuclear capability. If nationwide popular pressure is not built, then there is a great risk of signing CTBT somewhere between July and September. This would be the first step to the trap. Pakistan should realize that if it stands the pressure, CTBT will become ineffective after September 1999 and then Pakistan, along with the whole Muslim Ummah and the Third World, would be able to play an important role in any fresh parleys. It is also most probable that the US, Russia and China would defer their ratification till September and will do so only when the rest of the 44 countries ratify. Therefore, a wisely devised strategy promises great dividends though at the same time demands strong nerves and unflinching commitment to our ideals.

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