

# TALKING POINTS

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## US-ISLAMIC WORLD FORUM DIALOGUE

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## TALKING POINTS

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- I think we should try to present the viewpoint of the Muslim Ummah and not merely of Pakistan. Wherever necessary Pakistan can come in but the focus should be on the US relationship with the entire Islamic Ummah. We may focus on the thinking and aspirations of the Muslim people in general and the Islamic Movements in particular.
- We should welcome this initiative and acknowledge that America is presently the only super power. Its military might have outreach to the entire globe. But more important, its economic, political, and cultural influence is cast over most of the world. Major instruments of this leverage are diplomacy, policy manipulations, economic incentives and sanctions, media penetrations and use or threat of use of force including military intervention. These ground realities have to be accepted and as such Muslim Ummah cannot afford to ignore America and its policies in the region.
- Having said so, it must also be realized that the Muslim Ummah is also a reality. America cannot ignore the fact that Muslim Ummah goes to make up over one fifth of the human race. Some 56 Muslim states occupy over around 22% of the land area of the world. This region has great strategic importance in all respects- economic, political, energy resources, lines of global communication etc. It is not possible to control or coerce such a vast human and landscape. Despite asymmetry of military, political and economic power the facts of geography demography and economy cannot be ignored or bypassed. Army strategy, on occupation or hegemony may work for a very short period but in the final analysis it is bound to be counterproductive and self-defeating. Moreover its cost in political term cannot but be enormous. As such the only option is dialogue, understanding and establishment of a global regime that is based on justice pluralism and co-existence.
- It is in this context that the Muslim people and Islamic movements welcome the present dialogue and any future efforts to develop better understanding of each other's view point and interests and to search for modalities that can ensure peace with justice and security with respect for each other's values, cultures and enlightened interests. This cannot be achieved merely by government-to-government diplomacy. Hence the relevance of public diplomacy at different levels of civil societies.
- US leadership should have a clear perception of how the Muslim World views USA today. USA is a vast country - a country to whose credit are remarkable achievements in the fields of economy, science and technology, research and development, art and culture, military might and civilizational accomplishments. America is not one monolithic society but is like a rainbow with many colors, thought currents, cultural manifestations and political orientations. America is a thriving democracy and its cultural and political diversity is a great asset. America,

however, is also the powerful country of the world. While its military and economic power is acknowledged and some of its cultural developments and achievements are appreciated the impression that America is set to ensure perpetuation to at least for the next half a century, of its unilateral and hegemonic regime over the world is at the root of present day distrust. This is generating widespread disenchantment and even hatred against American policies, in many parts of the world.

- Historically, the world has looked upon America as a major global liberating force, particularly because of its own anti-colonial struggle. This, unfortunately, is now being replaced by apprehensions about Pax Americana. The anti-colonial role of -America, which began to be identified as Wilsonian paradigm, is now giving way to a neo-imperialistic role as a major political, economic and military power. The Muslim people by and large presently think that America wants to cast the world into the moulds chosen by America to further its own interests. This has changed the scenario. Instead of America becoming a moral LEADER of the world, commensurate with its intellectual, economic and cultured accomplishment, is being looked upon as a BULLY and a MASTER. If this perception is correct it is time for America to rethink its role, as the era of colonialism and imperialism is over. Such a policy can only generate more conflict, more hatred and would be a recipe for provoking of a legion of terrorists. When there is absolute asymmetry of power, terrorism became the weapon of the weak against the strong. If this perception is not correct this provides still greater food for thought for the American policy-makers and strategists. Unilateralism must be eschewed. Co-existence and cooperation, in a genuinely pluralistic world based on justice, rule of law and respect of mutual interest, is the only peaceful and honorable alternative. Natural differences have to be acknowledged with w. grace. It is in the interest of the powerful or weak that such a global arrangement is arrived at. Freedom and equity must go together.
- From the point of the Muslim people it must be clearly understood that Islam is a universal religion and Muslim Ummah has global existence 2/3rd of the Muslim people live in 56 Muslim States and around 1/3<sup>rd</sup> in the rest of the world. Muslim people want to live on the one hand in accordance with their faith, values and traditions, on the other in peace and fraternity with the rest of the world. Muslims would never like to impose their way of life on others and expect others also not to impose their values upon them. It is through peaceful cultural contact and cooperation that civilizational enrichment can take place. Peace and prosperity cannot be achieved by civilizational confrontation and cultural warfare. Promotion of democracy, human development and socio-economic development and well-being are our common objectives. They can be achieved through indigenous efforts and global cooperation respecting each other's values, priorities and interests. We are aware that the first priority for Muslims today is to set their own house in order. But definitely there is a paramount impression that interventions from outside and collusion between vested interest within the Muslim World and World powers is partly responsible for the current malaise of the Muslim World. It is therefore important to realize that genuine flowering of democracy and respect for

the values, aspiration and concerns of the people, even where others may not agree with them, is important for betterment of relations between Muslim people and the West, particularly Government and the people of United States of America.

- It should also be realized in all fairness that there are certain irritants, which cannot be ignored. The way so-called war against terrorism has unfolded over the last two years is one of the major concerns of the Muslim people. Terrorism must be condemned. But so is the case of war against terrorism that has become a cloak for terrorizing the weak, controlling their resources and manipulating their lifestyles in the name of nation building. Occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq to bring about regime change is looked by the Muslims as acts of neo-colonialism. The manner in which genuine struggles for self-determination are stigmatized as 'terrorist movements' has disappointed the Muslim people and exposed double standards of the powerful states. Palestine, Kashmir and Chechnya are victims of this volte-face. Islam and Muslims are being indiscriminately targeted in media and otherwise.
  - This has raised more questions about the real objects of this policy. It is important that the concerns of those who are at the receiving end should be understood in all fairness. Unless the causes of frustration and discontentment amongst the Muslim people, and for that matter any people, are addressed to, the world cannot be a better and safer place. Muslim people, Muslim leaderships are eager to open up a dialogue in order to better understand each other and explore possibilities of better relationship that can ensure freedom, honor, peace and security for all based on justice and respect of each other's rights, values and interests.
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