**Foreign affairs strategy**

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A few days ago, my close friend forwarded me a video clip on WhatsApp, in which Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is speaking at the launching ceremony of the National Logistics Policy held in New Delhi.

My friend knows that I have been criticizing Modi’s extremist anti-Pakistan policies over the years, so he also asked me to listen to what was being said and not focus on who was saying it; “learning from enemies is not forbidden,” he said. In the video, Modi can be seen saying that “today the world’s attitude towards India is changing. Today the world is evaluating India very positively.”

According to the Indian PM, India, which is the world’s fifth largest economy, is now determined to become a developed nation and compete with developed countries. He added that “everything should be competitive.” In this regard, he elaborated the importance of performance, timeline, and road map, which, if followed in a positive manner, can transform a nation into an economic power.

Pakistan and India have been competing with each other since their independence. Both countries have fought wars and given each other a tough time on the diplomatic and other fronts. However, Pakistan is now indulged in its internal issues, and our neighbouring country is advancing rapidly on the foreign front. This year in December, India will get the presidency of the United Nations Security Council and of the G20.

India will also hold the G20 summit in New Delhi next year. It has already achieved the presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and is ready to host its summit next year. India’s participation in the G7 group of the world’s most powerful economic countries is also under consideration after which this group will become the G8. India is also a significant member country of the Middle East regional alliance I2U2, which includes India, Israel, the US and the UAE.

I believe that a country’s economic development is directly associated with its diplomatic achievements on the foreign front. Today, on the one hand, India is moving ahead on the diplomatic front, and on the other hand, Pakistan’s criteria for diplomatic success is all about securing foreign aid to overcome the losses of natural disasters. The irony of the situation is that 50 years ago, Pakistan sent aid for flood victims in erstwhile East Pakistan (Bangladesh), and now we are receiving humanitarian aid from Bangladesh to mitigate the impacts of the recent floods.

Those countries which got independence after us and which were once far behind Pakistan in terms of resource availability and development have joined the list of developed countries. Regardless of the differences with Indian PM Modi’s past extremist policies, we must acknowledge that India understands the importance of maintaining peace with its neighbours to move forward. This is why India is making efforts for normalization of diplomatic ties with China; Modi also expressed sympathy with flood victims in Pakistan.

In our 75-year national history, the interest of Pakistan has never been prioritized on the diplomatic front. No doubt, overcoming our internal problems should be our first priority for the country’s progress, but the foreign front also needs our full attention. India has achieved the goal of economic prosperity due to its successful diplomatic policies.

Coincidentally, as I am writing this column, the young Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is celebrating his 34th birthday. While wishing him on his birthday, I would like to add that he has been an amazing opportunity to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on the diplomatic front. My advice is to reject the stereotypical policies of the past and explore new horizons and say goodbye to the hostile approach towards India and the international community.

The writer is a member of the National Assembly and patron-in-chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council.

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