**Diplomatic Trust Deficit**

[Abdul Hadi Mayar](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/abdul-hadi-mayar/)

April 30, 2022

The willful mishandling of Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan’s diplomatic cable, which was based on the reporting of an “unofficial and informal chat of a US official at a farewell lunch,” has not only dealt a blow to US-Pakistan relations but also dented Pakistan’s diplomatic credibility.

In the ensuing circumstances of virtually Pakistan’s own making, the foreign policy-makers in Islamabad must not wonder if the issue is excessively exploited by the Indian and the international media to the detriment of Pakistan.

There is no doubt Pakistan may not be as much willful in its decisions as Iran, North Korea and Cuba. Even India, which nurtures strategic partnership with the United States, may act more defiantly than Pakistan.

But that doesn’t mean that Pakistan acts as a subordinate country to the United States. On many occasions, Islamabad has flatly refused if any US demand has gone in contravention of its national interests.

Even when Pakistan joined the US war on terror, our leaders went on record saying that the country was fighting its own war against terrorism, rather than toeing the American line. Of course, a country has to be more careful if it is dependent on foreign aid and assistance programs of international organisations. But to name it slavery is totally insane under the proverbial global village.

Secondly, if we have good relations with the United States and other Western countries, we also enjoy equal warmth in our partnership with China, Russia and even Iran. Just two months back, Pakistan abstained from voting against Russia when a resolution was passed on the Ukraine war in the United Nations.

It was pretty understandable when Imran Khan misused the diplomatic cable to his rescue when the boat of his government was about to sink.

For most of its history, Pakistan has remained an ally of the United States. Despite ups and downs in bilateral relations, both sides have remained together through many a thick and thin.

It is also a fact that inter-state relations are governed by vested interests and status-based decorum. If India has a larger market than Pakistan, the world powers will naturally prefer the former. But when it comes to strategic location in the context of Afghanistan and Central Asia, they give credence to Pakistan.

Even if, at any stage, relations between Pakistan and the United States run through snags, it does not mean that we should jump to drawing daggers against each other. After all, we are not a nation with a militant mindset.

The hawkish brand Islamists among us might be correct that we will not die of hunger if we give up our dependence on the United States. We are certainly not beggars. But we are not rascals either. Should we pick up enmity if we have a difference of opinion with any country? Pakistan cannot act like Iran or North Korea in international politics. It has its peculiar circumstances and limitations. Its education, economy, banking, health, jurisprudence and every single sector is based on the English system. All these sectors continue to draw inspiration and strength from Western culture.

Even if we want to give up this dependence and shift to some oriental or Islamic model, it will take decades to adapt ourselves, which is not possible in the absence of coherent socioeconomic and political ideology.

Secondly, hundreds of thousands of our countrymen are working in Western countries, sending billions of dollars worth of remittances back home. Will they get the same treatment there if we opt to antagonise them?

A bit of common sense! Can it, by any definition, be described as interference if the official of one country, in a private chat with a fellow diplomat, says that his government is not happy with the policies of a particular leader in his country?

On many occasions, former Prime Minister Imran Khan has openly praised India’s foreign policy and even expected “good relations if Narendra Modi is elected” as Prime Minister of India. Should we then construe that the PTI chief is an Indian agent?

History is replete with instances when a politician in one country has criticised the policies of leaders in another country.

Do we forget that till just a few months back, Imran Khan had been dying for even one phone call from President Joe Biden?

Frankly speaking, our foreign policy has remained in shambles during the tenure of Imran Khan’s government and Shah Mahmood Qureshi’s leadership.

It was pretty understandable when Imran Khan misused the diplomatic cable to his rescue when the boat of his government was about to sink in the no-confidence move. But taking the issue to such limits may not suit Pakistan’s national interests.

There are many things said unofficially and off the record in almost every country of the world, even in international organisations.

Only foreign policy experts can say as to what extent the US State Department official has exceeded the limits permissible under the diplomatic decorum. But normally, unofficial exchanges are not taken so seriously. To the most, such things can be described as unethical.

If not given a proper turn, the echoes of politicising of the diplomatic cable, describing of the cable as US “interference” and summoning of US diplomat for lodging “strong protest” over “interference” in Pakistan’s internal affairs may cause difficulties to our diplomats in their professional interactions.

*The writer is an independent freelance journalist based in Islamabad covering South Asia/ Central Asia.*