[Does India want peace with Pakistan?](https://nation.com.pk/21-Dec-2018/does-india-want-peace-with-pakistan" \t "_new)

Imran Jan December 21, 2018 the Nation

Other than the ultra-right nationalistic tendencies and parties sweeping across many continents, there is another, perhaps somewhat unnoticed, wave sweeping across nations around the world; one of ending wars and animosities and achieving peace. Donald Trump incessantly made the case for peace with Russia even before becoming the President of the United States. Russia has never been a country talked about favourably by any American president even after the end of the Cold War. Trump also repeatedly announced that on his watch, America’s longest war would come to an end. To that end, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad was in Islamabad just weeks ago to seek Pakistan’s assistance in negotiating an end to the war in Afghanistan.

After insulting Pakistan on Fox News claiming that “they don’t do a damn thing for us” and then doubling down in subsequent tweets, Trump sent a letter to Imran Khan seeking help in getting out of the Afghanistan quagmire. The letter seemed to have written by more experienced hands at the White House. Nevertheless, it shows Trump’s commitment to ending the war. A fact often unnoticed and unmentioned, may be due to Trump’s hyperbolic personality and his melodramatic tweets, is that Trump despite his lunacy driven and hatred laden rhetoric has not started a war, at least not yet. That is a vivid departure from American presidential tradition, if you will.

Imran Khan similarly, before being elected and even now as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, has repeatedly called for achieving peace with India, Pakistan’s arch-enemy. While the nationalist tide has swept across India as well, no urge for peace has come to greet it. Prime Minister Imran Khan, one could argue, has acted unprecedentedly by making peace overtures to India, which has come up with laughable excuses. Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said, “terror and talks cannot go together.”

When a seller isn’t very interested in selling his or her product, he or she demands some ridiculous price to either discourage the buyer or sell it for, who knows, the ridiculous price. So, the excuse of “terror and talks cannot go together”, Miss Sushma Swaraj say it to the Americans who swapped Bowe Bergdahl with the Taliban and or the when they facilitated the opening up of a Taliban office in Doha, or when the Americans and Soviets swapped with each other the spies Rudolph Abel Ivanovich and Francis Gary Powers at the height of the Cold War. In all these instances and many not mentioned here, the hostilities were ongoing while these difficult exchanges were made. All that is needed is a will, which is absent not just in New Delhi but in India at large.

Persistence peace overtures by Imran Khan prompted Indian army chief Bipin Rawat to demand that Pakistan become a secular state if it wants peace with India. That is the most mind boggling demand. Let me ascertain that Jinnah had envisioned a secular state in Pakistan. Nevertheless, even superpower states do not ask other countries to go secular as a precondition for achieving peace, let alone a hungry, naked, extremist, and rape-and-caste-infested nation like India. The United States doesn’t ask Saudi Arabia to become secular for there to be peace between the two countries. Israel, India’s ally, is neither a secular state nor did India demand it to be.

More importantly, is India itself a secular state? There are endless stories of abuse and discrimination against Muslims, Sikhs, and low caste Hindus. There was a New York Times story titled ‘Tell Everyone We Scalped You!’ How Caste Still Rules in India. In late October, a 14 year old Dalit girl was beheaded by an upper-caste man. Dalit men aren’t allowed to ride horses. In March, one Dalit man broke with the tradition and rode one, causing higher caste men to kill him. Avatthi Ramaiah, a Sociology professor in Mumbai said, “You may talk about India being a world power, a global power, sending satellites into space but the outside world has an image of India they don’t know. As long as Hinduism is strong, caste will be strong, and as long as there is caste, there will be lower caste.”

The sophisticated propaganda machine has always had us think that it is the Pakistan army generals that do not want peace with India for their nefarious causes. Nothing can be further from the truth. And the current rude rejection by India of the peace overtures from Pakistan is a continuation of India’s decades old belligerent mindset.

Imran Khan’s belief that India is rejecting his peace offer because of the upcoming elections in India is wishful thinking. The fact that Indian leadership needs anti-Pakistan credentials for winning the election speaks volumes about how futile these peace overtures would prove to be even after the election. Imran Khan himself said that the BJP has an “anti-Muslim, anti-Pakistan approach.” I want to warn here that the problem is not merely with the BJP but rather more with the constituency of BJP, which happens to be the majority of the Indian population. It is not just the BJP, it is this anti-Pakistan mindset that wouldn’t just disappear even if a different party is voted to power.

People question how Trump won the election despite his racist and anti-immigrant hostile talk. He didn’t win despite his ugly rhetoric but actually because of it. This is about the constituency not the individual leader or a party. A change of government would merely mean the majority of the Indians putting their trust in another party and another leader to achieve no different goals. The Indian media consistently drills an anti-Pakistan propaganda into the minds of the Indian people. They wouldn’t wake up the morning after the election with deep love for Pakistan. Imran Khan should smell the coffee.

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