

Musharraf's visit to Turkey

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In today's world of growing interdependence where the establishment of warm ties of one country with the outside world is of paramount importance for the promotion of its national interests, the visit of a head of state to the country is marked with an immense importance. It is more particular in case of the two countries having already established cordial relationship based on mutual trust and integration in the midst of diplomatic changes taking place regionally and internationally under new relationship paradigms.

Similarly, President Musharraf's recent visit to Turkey is marked with such an importance which he acknowledged during the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's first visit to Pakistan in June 2003.

Pakistan and Turkey have established close relationship over the last 56 years, the roots of which go back to period when Indian Muslims in the wake of the outbreak of Balkan Wars and the defeat of Ottoman Sultanate at the hands of the Allied powers after the First World War sympathised with the cause of Turks.

The medical mission led by Dr Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari (1880-1928) had poured into battles to help wounded Turk soldiers. A large number of those shed their blood for the preservation of the independence of the Turk statehood. As Arnold Toynbee wrote in that pitiable and friendless situation, the only friends Turks had were the Indian Muslims: "Turkey's provinces were gone; her allies were crushed; and except for her champions among the Indian Muslims, she was friendless even in the cap of Islam."

The Sub-Continent's Muslim press and media in its meagre capacity played a very vital role in highlighting Mustafa Kemal's brilliant personality and achievements against imperialism. The dailies, 'Siyasat', 'Paisha Akhbar', 'Humayun' and 'Zamindar' published day to day reports on Kemal Atatürk's military achievements in Anatolia.

The first ever books on Mustafa Kemal were written by Indian Muslim writers. Wajahat Hussain Wajahat's, *Mustafa Kemal Pasha* was published in 1921. Hakeem Abdul Majeed Ateeqi's *Turkan-i-Ahrar* was published in

Since then almost every head of state and government of Pakistan has been very well-received in Turkey and numerous MoUs have been signed in the field of arts, science, culture, trade etc.

Turkey supplied 50,000,000 dollars arms and ammunition to Pakistan during 1965 War. Pakistan provided diplomatic support to the Turkish military action in Cyprus in 1974 soon after the Turkish forces occupied the island. Pakistan is one of the few countries to have provided de facto recognition to the Northern Cyprus. Benazir Bhutto during her first term of office visited Turkey and stated, "Turkey is Pakistan's second country".

Compared to his predecessors President Musharraf is more keen on growing bilateralism. He paid a short visit to Turkey soon after he took over in October 1999. Being low in profile with deepened crisis of legitimacy generals face after seizing power, he was still shown a welcome in public.

His six year schooling in a public school in Ankara during his father's foreign deputation in CENTO Secretariat as accountant, enabled him to make many short statements in Turkish, which raised Turkish sentiments. He acknowledged the heroism of Atatürk as a great leader and as his personal ideal, and also recalled sweet memories of his school going years along with his Turk brethren.

His present visit can be analysed in a situation where Pakistan is not only seeking closer ties with Turkey, but also needs to garner its support in the ongoing international scenario in which Pakistan is playing a core role in the elimination of terrorism in the region and requires more political/military and economic support from America.

Turkey, despite many differences between the Erodogan AK Party government and Bush Administration

over Iraq, is still regarded as a close American ally in the Middle East with active participation in NATO. Turkey enjoys a very close relationship with Israel. It is a secular state with standing role of army in its politics under 1981 Constitution, the replica of which Musharraf wants to adopt under the 17th Amendment.

Pakistan and Turkey collabo-



the same year from Lahore. Its intro-

duction was written by Syed Sulieman Nadvi, who, despite being a supporter of the cause of Turkish Caliphate, nonetheless, always spoke of the brilliant feats Ataturk accomplished for the liberation of Turkey from foreign imperialism. He writes, "O Mustafa Kemal, you have restored Turkey. Really O Mustafa Kemal, you have done a marvelous job against foreign imperialism....."

In 1947, the creation of Pakistan was perceived by Turks as an emergence of a friendly nation-state. The Turk modern historians regard Quaid-e-Azam as one of the greatest leaders of the East. One of the main boulevards in Ankara was named after him in recognition of his services for the Indian Muslims. Spelled *Cinnah* (in Turkish) *Caddesi* (boulevard) is one of the leading boulevards in the city. The boulevard contains a couple of embassies, including Indian. Pakistan was recognised by Turkey soon after its independence.

The regular diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in April 1949 with Mian Bashir Ahmed, a writer and Muslim League veteran, as the first Pakistani ambassador. His three year-stay was commendable in bridging the gap between Turkey and Pakistan by translating a large number of works from Urdu into Turkish. A permanent circulation of the Embassy *Pakistan Postaci* (Pakistani postman) for Turks contained articles for promotion of ties. The envoy organised a number of seminars on Iqbal and invited Turk intellectuals.

The relationship between the two countries were further strengthened under the 10 year-period of Adnan Mendres (May 1950-60) as Prime Minister of Turkey. A number of memorandums and friendship accords were signed during the period through frequent good will visits of the heads of state and government. The most important of them was the Treaty of Friendship and Cultural Agreement in 1951 between the Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Ali and Mendres.

Three years later another treaty was signed between the two countries known as the Pakistan-Turkey Pact for Friendly Cooperation of 1954. The same year another accord 'Political, Economic, Defence and Cultural Cooperation agreement was reached. In January 1956 the visa system was abolished between the two countries, and direct air link was established.

The visa was restored at the request of the Pakistan due to a large number of immigrants' entrance to Turkey. Pakistan joined the Turkish-Iraqi Pact in July 1955 known as Baghdad Pact, later on CENTO, and SEATO. The Turkish President Celal Bayar's state visit to Pakistan in 1956 was given a country-wide reception. He was awarded honorary Ph.D by Peshawar University.

rate on a number of joint ventures

bilaterally and under ECO which include the allotment of construction contracts for Turkish firms, but they need to be strengthened given the growing relationship between Turkey and India.

The trade integration between Turkey and Pakistan improved during the last one decade but more can be achieved if the two agree on the reduction of tariff duties. Turkey can be a leading market for a number of items from Pakistan such as surgical equipment, rice, leather, cotton and sports goods (football). Presently these items are sold to Turkey by German firms which they actually buy from Pakistan. Turkey can help Pakistan in the port/harbour and industrial sectors. The Turkish shipping industry having gained its skills and expertise from Greece can be a help to Pakistan in development of port/shipping sector.

Turkish economy is strong and price of Lira is stable due to Erdogan leadership and foreign investment by Islamists in Turkey. The Turkish economy lies in the hands of Islamists/Moderates, who due to Ak Party government are willing to invest their money in Turkey from abroad. The restoration of economy and control of inflation was one of the factors which brought Erdogan into power. Commanding an unquestioned popularity the leader was banned and sent to jail in past. It is said that Erdogan like Mahatir may be an emerging leader of the Islamic bloc.

President Musharraf during the visit met his counterpart, Mr Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the tenth President of the Republic, a retired Supreme court judge better known for his silence and integrity. His meetings included Erdogan and the members of Turkish Grand National Assembly. Musharraf will meet the four-star Chief of Army Staff and his top command who in 1999 not only smilingly welcomed Musharraf but paved the grounds for his visit.

The then President and Prime Minister, Sulieman Demiral and Bulent Ecevit, both showed public annoyance with the General over the displacement of elected government of Nawaz Sharif, who had visited Turkey and given huge aid for earthquake disaster in August 1999 and allotted big contracts to Turkish firms, one of which was owned by Demiral's son-in-law.

The present visit of President Musharraf to Turkey, other than symbolic importance, can be significant in bringing the two countries closer in their political, economic and trade relationship under the changing international scene. It is in the interest of both countries to increase collaboration with more MoUs signed.

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