

Pakistan-India relations

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The Nation

Relations between states are established to seek cooperation in the political, socio-economic, cultural and educational fields as well as to promote trade, science and technology. Added to these fields of cooperation, a nation's foreign policy always has some kind of an ideological dimension either in the limited sense or in the wider religious, cultural and moral sense. In recent times, economic dimension to foreign relations has been very pronounced, though there is not a single era in history when economics was not playing some role in international relations.

Since mid-1970s a new element of human rights concerns has found place in foreign policy dealings. The Helsinki accords have added cultural, informational and human rights dimensions to international relations.

When I look at Pakistan-India relations in the past about 57 years, I find an element of negative consistency in this process, an element of doubt, of unrest, sometimes tensions, sometimes fear of conflict and on three occasions the war did break out. The relations between the two immediate neighbours had seldom been friendly, there have generally been dark clouds on the horizon. There were periods of low tension, giving rise to hopes, but unfortunately those hopes were dashed to ground.

We should seriously think as to why it was so, especially when both Pakistan and India gained independence from a single colonial power through a political process, negotiated freely between two main political parties namely the Indian National Congress, which party has again come into power in India, and the Muslim League.

It would be pertinent to think over and discuss open heartedly the irritants that marred Pak-India relations. We should try to remove those irritants if we want to establish good and friendly relations between Pakistan and India.

I think the biggest irritant in the establishment of friendly relations and the main cause of conflict between the two neighbours is the dispute of Kashmir where basic human rights are being blatantly denied to millions of Kashmiris. The civil society is witnessing a state-sponsored terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir by more than 700,000 Indian troops and para-military forces, well-equipped with the most modern weapons and using gunship helicopters and even surveillance and strike aircrafts. For every seven unarmed civilian Kashmiris, there is one Indian soldier armed with the most sophisticated weapons.

About eighty thousand Kashmiris have been martyred, even more than that have been tortured and even maimed. Thousands of women have been molested, thousands of houses and shops of Kashmiris

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Economically, the Kashmiris sufferings remain unmitigated, each day bringing them worst type of misery. All the three components of their economy, namely fruits, handicrafts and tourism have been strained causing untold financial hardships.

There is an awesome financial burden on Indian exchequer also to the tune of hundreds of billion rupees every year on deploying more than half of the total Indian army in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Besides the huge financial burden, the Indian Army is suffering loss of lives as well as morale. An Indian Chief of Staff was forced to say in the past that long application of the army to an insurgency with political ends would demoralise his troops. The troops have actually been demoralised by now. The Indian leadership should think seriously as to how long can India measure up to such a grave situation?

We are witnessing that successive Indian leaderships committed a continued violation of the international commitments made by the founding fathers of Indian freedom movement. The first Indian Prime Minister Pandit Nehru had said at least twenty times to the UN as well as Indian parliament and to the press that: "We have given our pledge to the people of Kashmir and subsequently to the United Nations....we stand by it". The pledge was to give to Kashmiris their right of self-determination. This is a sacred right, guaranteed by the UN charter.

People of Jammu and Kashmir have boycotted the present election as they had boycotted the previous elections. World media has reported that there was very low turn-out of voters in the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir. The leaders of Hurriyat Conference have declared that people of Jammu and

Kashmir are not interested in election to Indian Parliament as they do not consider themselves as Indian citizens, they in fact, demand an impartial plebiscite under auspices of UN to decide about their future.

It would be pertinent to point out that UN Security Council had declared in December 1957, that election (in occupied Kashmir) could not be a substitute for plebiscite.

It is requested that Kashmir issue should no more be made a point of ego on the part of Indian leaders, nor it should be a point of win or lose, rather it should be considered as human problem involving 12 million people suffering for the last about 57 years. The never ending fear in the minds of Kashmiris, not only Muslims, but also Hindu Pundits and other minorities, should be removed now.

The second irritant in the establishment of good neighbourly relations between Pakistan and India, is the non-compliance of the Indus Basis Treaty. In spite of this treaty India is continuing with building Wuller Barrage, totally ignoring Pakistan's protests. This barrage, when completed, will deny us the river's water, which is our right according to the treaty. Besides, our hydro-electricity resources will be reduced to our detriment.

Similarly we had an agreement on Siachen, but India is not implementing that agreement as well, although India has to spend a huge amount on deploying armed forces there.

Another irritant is the treatment meted out to Indian Muslims in Gujarat and other parts of India. Although the Supreme Court of India has passed a remarkable judgment in the Best Bakery Case, but the order of the Supreme Court is not being implemented by the state government. A State that cannot protect its minorities is neither humane nor democratic.

In the end I want to say that it is a well considered perception that solution of disputes especially the core dispute of Kashmir, between the two countries—Pakistan and India, is *sine qua non* to a long-term reconciliation effectively. Mere superficial moves or cosmetic cooperation will not help restore friendly relations permanently.

The twenty first century calls for fresh futuristic long-term strategies for resolving old disputes on the basis of justice and restoration of human rights. Adoption of such strategies are necessary for survival of both Pakistan and India based on peaceful sustainability. It is hoped that the new Indian leadership will heed to resolve all outstanding disputes including the core dispute of Kashmir and will try to restore friendly relations with Pakistan.

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