

In-House Seminar

CHALLENGES IN THE INDIA-PAKISTAN
RELATIONS UNDER BJP GOVERNMENT:
SECURITY AND DIPLOMATIC PERSPECTIVES



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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) organized a one day seminar on the topic titled “Challenges in the India-Pakistan Relations under BJP Government: Security & Diplomatic Perspectives” held on September 15, 2015. Two guest speakers former Defence Secretary Lt. Gen (Retd) Khalid Naeem Lodhi and Ambassador (Retd) Sohail Amin were invited to discuss the dynamics of heightened tensions with India, their security implications, possible scenarios, and Pakistan’s response. They elaborated in detail on the security and diplomatic dimensions of the bilateral relations respectively. Dr. Zafar I. Cheema, President SVI, thanked the speakers and participants for gracing the occasion with their presence.

Dr. Cheema in his opening remarks stated that even though the issues between India and Pakistan are well known, with time they have become complex. Since 1947 the two states have not been able to resolve their bilateral problems.

For instance Kashmir is the major bone of contention for which India and Pakistan have fought two major wars in 1948 and 1965 and later had a limited engagement in Kargil in 1999. Added to this issue are Siachen and Sir Creek disputes. Water issue is another critical problem although the Indus Water Treaty (1960) is hailed as the most remarkable

achievement. There have been violations by India which indicates that the problem is still there and has not been fully resolved. Suspension of composite dialogues is also a regular practice. Now Modi is labeled with anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim baggage which makes it even more difficult to find solution to the problems. He said that it is not just Modi but even when Congress was holding office; it did not help much in resolving any of the prevailing issues. Dr. Cheema then offered the worthy guest speakers to enlighten the audience with their expert thoughts on the subject.

Lt. Gen (Retd) Khalid Lodhi while discussing the security perspective opined that Pakistan’s relations with India have not been easy since inception. With Afghanistan other than 10 to 20 years of relative peace, the relations have largely been marred with turmoil and upheavals. Also Iran seems to be quite dejected with Pakistan. Today even Modi in India has an anti-Pakistan agenda and one cannot be sure if he can separate himself from that agenda. The present Indian



Army Chief Gen.VK Singh is quite hawkish in his approach towards Pakistan issuing warnings and once again hinting at the possibility of Limited War and Cold Start in his narratives. One positive development however is China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which will not just carry economic benefits but will also make Pakistan's internal and regional policy undergo a huge change.



Talking about the security environment, he stated it is important to first consider the internal threats. Terrorism according to him is the first and major threat to Pakistan's internal as well as external security. Pakistan is continuously fighting this menace but most of the top leadership of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has been able to escape and found refuge in Afghanistan. Their presence in the adjacent Afghanistan region along with Daesh, ISIS, Khurasani and their splinter groups is a looming threat for Pakistan. He stated that even though Pakistan has taken some measures such as formulation of National Action Plan (NAP), there hasn't been any considerable progress on its implementation. He also said that terrorism in Pakistan did not just flourish on its own but there was a conducive internal environment for its proliferation.

He further mentioned other factors such as extremism which is a major internal problem posing direct threat to Pakistan's internal security. The reasons according to him for widespread extremism are essentially social problems, which have been allowed to prevail in the society such as lack of education, dearth of appropriate health opportunities, extreme poverty, and above all the lack of justice. It is believed that Pakistan has a lot of potential but what is the use of this potential if it just lies there and is not converted into anything good for its people. With rampant injustice, and illiteracy etc., one cannot hope for a promising future for Pakistan. He placed major emphasis on the treatment and eradication of extremism from the society, because only then Pakistan will be able to control terrorism which has its roots in extremism.

He also stated that external and internal security threats are interlinked and most of the time internal threats have been abetted by the external threats. Talking about external security threats, first and foremost challenge that Pakistan faces is from India. While in case of Afghanistan he mentioned two sources of threats. One is the presence of TTP leadership that has found sanctuary in Afghanistan, and the other is the existence of ISIS inside Afghanistan. Along with that, the

role of United States is another area that needs attention. Mr. Lodhi stated that US is constantly emphasizing Pakistan to “do more” with regards to Haqqani Network. This “do more” mantra shows that US doubts Pakistan’s sincerity of efforts in curbing terrorism. If this distrust is allowed to subsist it might bring in several other problems for Pakistan. There is also a need to be watchful as to why the US has suddenly grown doubtful of Pakistan’s efforts. Could it possibly be because of China and CPEC? He suggested that Pakistani decision makers need to evaluate this possibility as well.

Talking about the international concerns, he mentioned that although Pakistan has a good command and control system, it is still not good enough for the West. American think tanks have reported that Pakistan’s nuclear stock pile is going to be the third largest in the world in next five to ten years. Mr. Lodhi expressed his disappointment by saying that while some people in Pakistan might rejoice at this claim, but I find mischief in this report. Because in reality it is the part of a bigger plan i.e. to make Pakistan sign FMCT. Hence the international lobby is adamant at proving that Pakistan’s arsenal size is outpacing India’s and will have the largest number of nuclear warheads than any other country after the United States and Russia. This is being done so that a case could be prepared where Pakistan will be made to cede to FMCT.

He also mentioned Middle East as an emerging trouble spot for Pakistan. He stated that although Pakistan’s decision during Yemen crisis was right but the diplomacy was wrong which has led to the “cold patch” in relations between the two. He suggested that Pakistan should concentrate more on China but at the same time should weigh the pros and cons. It is important to consider if China alone could help in counterbalancing everything.

Mr. Lodhi elaborated specifically on the Military situation of Pakistan and stated that despite Indian’ military’s numerical superiority Pakistan’s military enjoys certain advantages. For instance Pakistan has a battle hardened army. Though it is fighting a different war, its training and strategy is way better. This is mostly because the infantry and army are occupied with a kind of fight which is much difficult than the conventional war. The Air force also possesses a high morale owing to its extremely refined precision capabilities. Another success story is that Pakistan’s army is the only army in the world which is pursuing terrorism and has been able to hunt down terrorists quite successfully.

While elaborating on the situation between Pakistan and India on nuclear front, Mr. Lodhi sounded quite pleased as was evident when he said “We have nuclear parity with India and what

a great level parity it is". He said that as long as we have credible minimum deterrence, the number/size of arsenals does not matter. Pakistan has the second strike capability. It possesses most robust command and control system and its ability to infiltrate and to cause damage has nearly ruled out the possibility of war with India. However India is openly abetting low intensity conflicts and also has plans to undermine CPEC. He advised that Indian planners should weigh the repercussions of their actions aimed at causing turmoil and unrest in Pakistan because an imbalanced nuclear power will be more dangerous to deal with.

He identified frustration as the possible reason for the frequent border violations by India. He stated that India also has a major part to play in the unrest in Baluchistan and Karachi. However situation in Karachi is now getting better while CPEC also promises to give socio-economic boost to Pakistan. These positive developments add to India's annoyance. Hence out of frustration India wants to keep the borders hot and indulges into cross border violations.

Mr. Lodhi also talked about the options that are available to India and Pakistan. For India the leading option is to continue with its upscale indirect strategy. He believed that India will keep fomenting problems in Karachi and Baluchistan, will try to scuttle CPEC through insidious means, and will keep abetting Taliban in order to keep Afghanistan disillusioned with Pakistan. Inciting USA against Pakistan is also on its agenda while at the same time it aims to increase influence in Middle East and work against Pakistan's interest. India would also make use of "info operations", where it intends to take practical steps along with psychological operations. The main goal is the economic strangulation and political isolation of Pakistan.

Another option available to India is to go for direct strategy. On ground hot pursuit is possible only if India fails to achieve its objective through indirect strategy and gets too frustrated in the process. Direct strategy can be carried out in the form of selective air strikes, naval quarantine (which is difficult but not impossible), limited war (as is mentioned several times by the new Indian Army Chief), and an all out war. However Mr. Lodhi reiterated that those who understand the concepts of strategy and nuclear parity don't see any space for limited war between India and Pakistan. Similarly the possibility for an all out war cannot be completely ruled out but it defies logic.

While discussing Pakistan's options, he stated that Pakistan should continue doing what it is doing, as it is clearly hurting India. Pakistan should support Kashmiri freedom movement more aggressively, should keep showing resolve to this cause, should concentrate on CPEC and make

sure that it materializes. Pakistan should also prepare effective contingencies against all possible threats and keep on strengthening deterrence.

In his concluding remarks he stated that Pakistan is heading in the right direction. However it still faces many challenges. Today the future of one and a half billion people is at stake. The political and military leadership must take a fresh look at the security situation and has to rise beyond a certain level. HRD / HRM and Economic development are the main challenges which need to be addressed. He wrapped up his discussion with an observation that détente between India and Pakistan is not in sight, not in the near future at least.

Amb (Retd) Sohail Amin talked about diplomatic perspective of challenges in Indo-Pak relations. He started off by defining the concept of diplomacy. He stated that Diplomacy is the art of possible where one tends to resolve and create an enabling environment coupled with the will of parties to negotiate in order to move forward. He also said that progress is not necessarily quantifiable; it is usually incremental and might reveal itself over a period of time. States adopt various diplomatic approaches, such as prioritizing the issue where they may first address highly important political issues and once those are resolved; tend to the low priority political issues and vice versa. Pakistan has tried several bilateral and multilateral options with India without achieving any fruitful results. Tashkent declaration was carried out through step by step approach. The diplomatic approach employed during Simla Agreement was a combination of step by step and bilateral approach. Lahore Summit and Agra Summit both are reflective of bilateral diplomatic efforts. But none of the approaches have helped either side in achieving their objectives.



He mentioned that the first ever meaningful interaction between the two states took place in 1985 when President Zia and his Indian counterpart Rajiv Gandhi held talks on important bilateral issues. However, unfortunately Kashmir was missing from the agenda. Then in 1997 once again process of talks resumed between Nawaz and Gujral but the two countries carried out nuclear tests in 1998 and the diplomatic process was completely stalled. Later on in 1999 Indian leader Vajpayee visited Lahore and discussed matters with Nawaz Sharif. But the diplomatic process did not continue for long owing to Kargil conflict in the same year. Another attempt at opening diplomatic channel was tried by President Musharraf in 2001 but culminated in a failure.

Later on President Musharaf also presented a Four Point Formula as a framework to resolve Kashmir problem. These various events indicate that several step by step diplomatic approaches have been tried but India clearly has no inclination to resolve issues with Pakistan. Nonetheless both states have a realization that there are serious pending issues.

Mr. Amin also elaborated on the fact that Pakistan is the only country in the region which can see eye to eye with India. Other South Asian states cannot enjoy this luxury partially because of their geographical constraints. For instance Nepal was completely suffocated when India closed its border. Similarly with Bangladesh it has several contentious boundary, territorial, and water disputes, where it tends to stubbornly exert its dominance. These facts show that India has a natural tendency for regional hegemony. But Pakistan's security structure is based on nuclear weapons and it is working well. Hence Pakistan is the only thorn in India's eye.

While pondering upon a question as to why the diplomacy between the two states hasn't worked, he stated that India's intentions are not to solve problems but to cripple Pakistan economically and to defame it internationally. India has always been trying to restrict the space for Pakistan's economic development. 1960's is considered to be a golden era in Pakistan economic history. The industrial growth rate was at its highest at 70%. This was naturally not acceptable to India. As a result Pakistan had to face adverse economic repercussions of 1965 war. Again in 1971 Pakistan was dismembered. India now openly claims the responsibility for the pivotal role it played in disintegration of Pakistan. Later with Gen. Zia assuming office, Pakistan was slapped with several sanctions by the West. This also severely affected Pakistan's economy. However Pakistan was embraced with open arms by the US and the West during Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Once again the economy started showing improvements which was against India's interest so India embarked upon Operation Brasstacks; resultantly Pakistan's economy took a nose dive. During 1990's when Pakistan became the most sanctioned ally of the United States, India kept looking from the sidelines and continued its indigenous upsurge in Kashmir. However Pakistan suddenly gained immense importance for the US after September 11 attacks. It brought several economic and political benefits to Pakistan. This time India was forced to behave for the fear of reprisal from the US. Today the situation is again improving. There is a steady rise in economy. However Pakistan needs to keep in mind that whenever its economy starts showing improvement, the enemy has a tendency to cripple it and put it five years back. Therefore in the wake of present economic progress, Pakistan needs to be on guard.

He also pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a background which serves as an explanation for his unfavorable disposition towards Pakistan. The fact that Modi joined RSS when he was only 8 years old has a huge impact on his personality and on his spiritual orientation. This makes him quite openly follow a philosophy where religious pluralism is seldom tolerated. Also once connected to RSS, it is almost impossible to leave it under any circumstances. He is also very fond of Yatras. In 1991 he travelled all the way up to Srinagar and hoisted the Indian flag there. Seeing his enthusiasm, BJP asked him to help them organize their party not just in parts of India but also in IOK. Hence this is generally why he is seen as a successful and determined person in India. Looking at his performance over last one year, it seems that he is interested in integrating India with all the other South Asian states excluding Pakistan, as can be seen from non-conciliatory statements coming from India against Pakistan. However Amb. Amin was of the view that sooner or later Modi will realize just like his predecessors that lasting peace in the region will only come with the resolution of Kashmir, which requires consultation with Pakistan and Kashmiri leaders.

He also expressed his views on the future of talks by mentioning that it will take time for the dialogues to resume between India and Pakistan. The relations might remain frozen for a few months or may be even for years but the talks will resume eventually. Meanwhile Pakistan should not give up its stance on Kashmir and insist on making Hurriyat leaders part of the composite dialogue process. He also suggested that Pakistan doesn't have to appear apologetic and should view dialogues as a means to an end and not the end in itself. He proposed that Pakistan should not be too keen on having bilateral meeting at this point in time.

With these remarks Amb. (Retd) Sohail Amin wrapped up his discussion and a very interactive Question-Answer session followed after that.

Amb (Retd) Akram Zaki congratulated Amb. (Retd) Sohail Amin for a very succinct presentation. Further developing on the topic, Mr. Zaki said that there has to be one important principle that needs to be considered at all times, i.e. the rule of reciprocity. If it is followed properly it will give dignity to Pakistan. So there is no need for Pakistan to show eagerness to hold talks with India. He said that Pakistan's situation has greatly improved. US, even though demands Pakistan to "do more", realizes that Pakistan is crucial in finding a durable solution to Afghanistan problem. That is why during Obama's recent visit to India, he suggested that India should rather focus on South China Sea and must not worry about Afghanistan. Similarly

Pakistan's position with Ashraf Ghani has been improved considerably though not consolidated yet. One possible reason is that the former President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai, has successfully established himself in the center of the country where he regularly holds anti-Pakistan meetings. Also the presence of Northern Alliance and Mullah Omar's death, have been the reasons behind slow progress in Pak-Afghan relations. He also said that Pakistan should take notice of Modi's vulnerable position in eastern part of India. Pakistan can and should make use of this opportunity and start an "info war" to exploit in its favor. He also mentioned that bilateral efforts are not going to take us anywhere so Pakistan should always insist on including Hurriyat leaders in the talks. This will help Pakistan win the trust of Kashmiris and have them on its side. He said that India follows Hitler's policy of Lebensraum, hence Pakistan should focus more on China to counter India. While concluding his remarks he said that terrorism is the child of injustice. Lack of justice should be looked into and should be corrected if one truly wants to eradicate terrorism.



Commander Imran asked Amb. Amin about the role of ideology in Indo-Pak relations. Referring to Modi's religious slant, he expressed concerns that if complex ideological dimension is added to already complex political situation, will it not further deteriorate the possibility of resolving pending issues between the two states? Amb. Amin replied that Modi's policies are largely ideologically driven as is evident from the way he came into power in Gujrat through a mass massacre of Muslims. However, when Pakistan thinks of resolving issues with India, religion doesn't come to our mind but predominantly in their minds.

Air Commodore (Retd) Ghulam Mujadid added to the debate and said that Modi's real intention is to exert Hindu dominated India over Pakistan. He then asked that if India should not be pursued for talks then what mechanism is available to Pakistan to resolve the issues and what guarantee does Pakistan have that Kashmiris are on Pakistan's side? Amb. Amin elaborated that Pakistan should not completely put an end to the talks but try to postpone the process. If India doesn't show flexibility then Pakistan just doesn't have to keep pressing for the talks. He also added that Kashmir becomes a lost cause if Pakistan is not sure whose side Kashmiris are on. India needs to realize that Kashmir is the core issue and without including Kashmir in the agenda, it will be useless to work together for peace. He further reiterated his point by suggesting

that Pakistan should not be in a hurry and may even wait for another 10 years if need be as Pakistan should just not compromise.

Dr. Zafar Khan, Assistant Professor from Strategic Studies Department, NDU, posed two questions to Lt. Gen (Retd) Kahlid Lodhi. He pointed out that Mr. Lodhi in his presentation stated that Pakistan has been able to successfully fight terrorism. He asked what specific mechanism Pakistan has deployed to achieve that. The other question was about second strike capability, where he wanted the speaker to elaborate on “How” he claims that Pakistan or India have the second strike capability? Are there any indicators that confirm and support this assertion? Mr. Lodhi maintained that certain things can only be replied to a limit hence without going into too many details he stated that one positive side to fighting terrorism whether it has been successful or not, is that Pakistan and its army has used the experience as a learning process where they have now been able to re-organize, re-train and re-equip themselves and are in a better position to carry out the operation. He also added that since mutual deterrence exists between India and Pakistan, this in itself is an indication that both the countries possess second strike capability. Without second strike capability, the deterrence will not exist. He said that we do not need to go in the details of “How” we have achieved that.



Dr. Zafar Cheema also added to the discussion and said that the basic provision for second strike capability is that if the states can hide the weapons in secure location and keep them safe, it naturally provides ground for effective second strike capability. He further said that closely coupled with this pre-requisite are two more requirements which need to be met in order to have an effective and secure second strike capability. These are, (a) Air Launched Ballistic Missiles (ALBMs), and (b) underwater or Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). He further elucidated that Pakistan possesses Hatf VII and Hatf VIII which are nuclear capable cruise missiles that can be launched from aircrafts and conventional submarines. On the other hand India is working extensively on the development of Arihant and Aridhaman; nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines. However at present neither Pakistan nor India have developed the submarine launched ballistic missile capability, hence both lack an excellent kind of second strike capability.

Commander Rashid Nazir added to the discussion and mentioned that nuclear triad is the most important requirement to have second strike capability. He said that Pakistan is aggressively working on it and is quite close to achieving assured second strike capability.

Commander (Retd) Dr. Azhar Ahmed said that one needs to remember that deterrence has not been tested and is not meant to be tested either. Talking about the reason as to why India is reluctant to hold talks with Pakistan, he said that since Pakistan had generally been on a road to decline, India intentionally wanted to delay the process so it could talk from position of strength. However he believed that since Pakistan is showing lots of progress at various levels, soon India will be the one pursuing Pakistan for the talks.

Dr. Rizwana Abbasi, Assistant Professor from Strategic Studies Department, NDU, made a very significant contribution to the whole debate by making some important recommendations.



She mentioned that the map of Kashmir has been marginalized and undermined which shows clear violations of International Law and Pakistan needs to focus on that. She also stated that India is quite advanced in secret diplomacy. It has implanted people in important position to speak and raise their particular perspective on various forums. Pakistan needs to devise a counter measure to that. Kashmiri Liberation Movement is another new and alarming phenomenon and Pakistan needs to draw an international attention towards this issue also. She placed special emphasis on the need to pay attention to the social indicators particularly the empowerment of society and the youth.

Lt. Gen (Retd.) Assad Durrani said that one should not forget that deterrence is psychological. He also added that second strike capability is an inbuilt feature of nuclear weapons and to make deterrence successful, one only needs to ensure the survivability of a few arsenals. Reflecting upon India's behavior, he said that India is pursuing the policy of "not talking" since last 10 years. India is a status quo power and delaying or abandoning talks favors them. Their sole strategy is to maintain the status quo. Also Pakistan needs to keep a balance. It cannot completely refrain from the talks as it will further deteriorate the situation, nor can it go ahead without having Kashmir included in the agenda, as it will definitely create troubles on domestic front for Pakistan.



Dr. Zafar Cheema, President SVI, posed a question about Ufa agreement and failure of the NSA level talks. He stated that he finds it strange that in Ufa, the official representatives of both India and Pakistan agreed to hold talks with only single item on the agenda for discussion i.e., terrorism. He was interested to know what happened later on when the Pakistani representatives went back and suddenly decided to include Kashmir in the talks. Were they dictated by someone and told not to go ahead with the scheduled talks without first adding Kashmir in the agenda? He asked both the guest speakers to give their educated and knowledgeable input on this particular issue. Amb.(Retd) Sohail Amin, provided that it was basically the people of Pakistan who resolutely condemned the exclusion of Kashmir issue and advised to make it part of the NSA level talks. Lt. Gen (Retd) Khalid Naeem Lodhi however showed some reluctance in deliberating upon the subject, saying he was not privy to it or any confidential information related to it, hence not in a position to say anything. Amb (Retd) Khalid Mehmood, Chairman Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) added that there is also a positive aspect to the way things have turned out between India and Pakistan regarding Kashmir. Pakistan has always been pushed into bilateral option over Kashmir by India however it is now India itself who is reluctant to exercise the option of bilateral talks, which ultimately goes in the favor of Pakistan.

Ms. Shamsa Nawaz, Research Fellow, ISSI, asked how does Pakistan plan on dealing with transnational threats and terrorism with regards to SCO charter which speaks of collective regional security, considering India is the member also. Amb. (Retd) Sohail Amin answered that there is a 28 point formula although no official information is out on that yet.

Mr. Sajjad Ahmed, Senior Reporter, representing Weekly Hamshehri, asked why Pakistan is continuously consulting India regarding Kashmir issue when the real responsibility rests with the UN to hold the plebiscite and find a solution to this problem. Amb. (Retd.)Sohail Amin replied that the responsibility surely lies with the UN. He said that Pakistan has been raising the issue with the UN since long at different occasion in the past. These days Dr. Maleeha Lodhi is quite successfully performing the same task by raising voice at the UN and on other forums. Pakistan is also quite vocal in denouncing India's membership to the UN Security Council as it doesn't make sense that a country which doesn't abide by the rules set by UN should be given such a privilege. He also said that regular speeches are being delivered by the Prime Minister to voice this stance. These incidents indicate that Pakistan is trying all the relevant channels regarding Kashmir issue. Dr. Zafar Cheema, added that United Nations has five permanent members who

hold the power to veto. Unless all the five members have a mutual consensus on the issue, the solution to the problem is unlikely to be reached, especially when the US shares its major strategic interests with India.

In the end Dr. Zafar Cheema extended his profound thanks to the guest speakers for their excellent presentations and to all the participants in attendance. He expressed great appreciation for a very educative, intense and informative session. In the concluding remarks he specifically mentioned that it is only SVI that enjoys the unique honor of having a sublime patronage of senior ambassadors and military personnel and that it is duly cherished.