

The India- Pakistan Peace Process and Personality Factor of Pervez Musharraf

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ABSTRACT

India and Pakistan are two giant powers of South Asia region consisting of strong military capability and nuclear weapons. The relationships between two countries have been hostile and in the state of incessant tension and tussle since they came into existence in 1947. In spite of being part of the same continent and sharing a common heritage on social, political and cultural level, they were forced to be separated due to mutual animosity between two communities. This paper takes the issue of peace process between both the countries which moved in the Pervez Musharraf's regime and analyses how apart from previous governments in Pakistan, Musharraf took some positive, effective and constructive steps in determining its foreign policies with rest of the world in general and India in particular. As a champion of liberal values and modern thought, he impeded the spread of extremism and terrorism and took initiatives for friendly relations with India. It was the era of Musharraf where the Composite Dialogue Process, covering eight disputed issues, resumed in a cordial manner. During this regime, efforts on the issue of confidence building measures, people to people contact, Kashmir and terrorism were noteworthy to discuss because the innovative steps taken to the management and resolution of the conflicts, were totally new in India Pakistan relations.


Keywords: Peace Process, Terrorism, Four point Formulae, Extremism, liberal, people to people contact.

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1. Introduction

India and Pakistan are two giant powers of South Asia region consisting of strong military capability and nuclear weapons. The relations between the two countries developed in the backdrop of historical and cultural context and were made extremely complicated by the events and circumstances aftermath the division. It was of a great challenge for both the countries to develop a sensible, constructive and forward-looking foreign policy to settle all disputed issues with mutual cooperation.¹ In the era of Pervez Musharraf regime, India-Pakistan relations attained a new dimension. After coming into power by a bloodless coup, Pervez Musharraf tried hard to bring the wheel of peace-process on right track. As a champion of Modern Liberal thinking and secular attitude, Musharraf formed policies against the spread of terrorism, gave ample liberty to press and Media and restrained the activities of extremists and Mullah Maulvis, who were unnecessarily intervening into the political affairs of the country. Musharraf had a direct control on the total authoritative structure of Pakistan which was also an important factor in the normalization of relations. In spite of all the factors mentioned above, one component that was primarily playing a great role to normalize the relations was the will of people of both countries to come together and share their happiness and distress. Every government or regime is a mixture of some bright and dark records but Musharraf will always be remembered as the harbinger of initiating peace process and taking tight action against terrorism.

2. Foreign Policy Initiatives

The period of Musharraf started with some tragic events, e.g., hijacking of Indian Air Lines Aircraft C-814, recurrent terrorist attacks on Indian soil like attack on Jammu Kashmir Assembly and on the heart of Indian democracy, the Parliament. The occurrence

¹ Ziring, Lawrence (2003), Pakistan: At the Crosscurrent of History, University of Michigan, One World, pp.93-99.

of these events and apparent evidences of involvement of Pakistan stopped the dialogue process between two countries. But the event of 9/11 and the resultant American pressure compelled both the countries to initiate peace process. In 2003, during Srinagar visit Indian premier Atal Bihari Vajpayee extended the 'Hand of Friendship' to Pakistan. This initiation by Indian-side marked a new beginning in the improvement of India-Pakistan relations. On 26 November 2003, both states agreed to maintain ceasefire along their 1126 K.M. border. Both states agreed to start hot lines at three levels: political, executive and military. At the political level, they agreed to establish direct hot lines between the Prime Ministers of the two countries. At the executive level, foreign secretaries of the two countries had been linked. At the military level, Director Generals of Military Operations of the two countries had been connected. Both states agreed to start a new rail service between Khokharpar (Pakistan) and Munnabao (India) in addition to train service already running. By this initiation, the parliamentary delegation of both countries visited each other's to develop a congenial atmosphere of peace and friendship and to give encouraging push to people to people contact. In January 2004, during SAARC Summit, the head of both the nations met and agreed to convene dialogues on foreign secretary level. In this connection on 18th February, in Islamabad, in three day meeting of foreign secretary, the representatives of both the countries reached at a mutual consensus to initiate peace process and agreed on a joint declaration to start composite dialogue process for the resolution of all the contentious issues including the Kashmir.²

3. The issue of Terrorism

Terrorism is one of the dangerous and harsh epidemics by which South Asian Countries, especially, India-Pakistan are suffered with. A major factor, which has complicated matters for Pakistan and India on the anti- terrorism front, is the difference in their approach towards terrorism. Due to ideological differences, and mainly because of Kashmir, Pakistan and India look at terrorism from two diametrically opposite ends. India considers terrorism as execution of anti-state elements' political objective attained through violence with the help external agents. For Pakistan, terrorism is a result of injustices and the oppressive policies of government and, more importantly illegal occupation by foreign forces as in the case of Kashmir. The Musharraf's era in India Pakistan relations would be remembered for bringing extremely hostile relationship to a halt and for making enough places for mutual cooperation and sorting out the contentious issues through bilateral negotiations. Before Pervez Musharraf regime, the governments in Pakistan, either they are democratic or military, gave extensive supports to terrorism and extremism. But Pervez Musharraf, influenced by Liberal thinking and modern attitude, took strong steps to curb this menace. He took strong actions against extremism, secession and undesirable intervention of Mullah in political activities. Musharraf also cooperated with India on bilateral level to prevent this epidemic from spreading. The prime minister of India and President Musharraf agreed on "Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism" during their meeting at NAM summit in Havana on 16 September, 2006. The first meeting of Anti-Terrorism Mechanism was held in Islamabad on 6 March 2007. As a result, both not only condemned all acts of terrorism but also underlined the need for effective and sustained measures against terrorist activities.³

4. The Issue of Jammu Kashmir

The territory of Kashmir has been the major bone of contention between the two countries. Many wars were fought to resolve this issue but it is yet to be resolved. It was during the Pervez Musharraf's regime that Pakistan observed a totally unconventional path in dealing with its contentious issues with India, especially, the core issue of Jammu Kashmir. Conventional stand of Pakistan to moot support for the insurgency in Kashmir and advocacy of right to self-determination for Kashmiris have been dropped. India also kept pace with Pakistan and adopted a moderated approach on Kashmir. This event of 9/11 regarded as the paradigm shift in India Pakistan relations. Under U.S. pressure, Pakistan tried hard to stop Militant insurgency in the Kashmir region. In his autobiography, "*In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*", General Pervez Musharraf gave a four point proposal for the resolution of this highly contentious issue. *First*, identify the geographical regions of Kashmir that need solution. At present, the Pakistani part is divided into two regions-North Areas and Azad Kashmir. The Indian part is divided into three regions: Jammu, Srinagar and Ladhak. *Second*, demilitarize the identified region or regions and curb all militant aspect of the struggle for freedom. *Third*, introduce self-governance or self-rule in the identified region or regions, *fourth*, and the most important, have a joint management mechanism with a membership consisting of Pakistanis, Indians and Kashmiris overseeing self-governance and dealing with residual subjects common to all identified regions and those subjects that are beyond the scope of self-governance.⁴

² Katyal, K.K. (2006), *Journey to Amity: India and Musharraf's Pakistan*, Har- Anand, New Delhi, pp.193-99.

³ Kumar, Ajit M.P. (2006), *India-Pakistan Relations: The Story of Fractured Fraternity*, Gyan Books, New Delhi pp.173-179.

⁴ Musharraf, Pervez (2006), *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*, Free Press, New York, pp.167-169.

5. Conclusion

The era of Musharraf provided a congenial atmosphere for the development of a friendly relationship between India and Pakistan. The personality of Musharraf, his policies and his strong grip on the authoritative structure of Pakistan, played an important role in normalizing the relations with India. The Composite Dialogue Process was resumed during his regime and progresses were made on disputed issues at foreign secretary level. It would be exaggerating to say that the peace process was completely successful in this era, but it is noteworthy that progress which was made on the issue of confidence building measures, Jammu and Kashmir and terrorism were totally unconventional in nature. Pakistan's policy of 'Bleeding India by Thousands of Cuts' was somewhat lessened and both countries presented compromising attitude on the issue of Kashmir and terrorism. It was totally a paradigm shift in the attitude of Pakistan when, Musharraf pledged to drop the idea of plebiscite for the resolution of Kashmir issue. The centrality of the Kashmir issue was compromised when it was kept with the other disputed issues. India also agreed to keep the issue of terrorism with others. Both countries agreed to build a Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism to reign in the spread of terrorism in the region. Some destructive forces officially and unofficially, were also active for disrupting the peace process and limited the scope for more confidence building. But the achievement of this era was that negotiation took place on each issue. The efforts for resolving the conflict are as important as the resolution of the conflicts.

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