

# President Trump's Visit to India: Pakistan's Diplomatic Success on Indian Soil

The United States of America and India have come a long way from being crestfallen to being fully cooperative with each other on strategic concerns and matters. While the association between two States became sore amid India's nuclear ambitions in 1998, Bill Clinton, former president of USA, revitalized the ties in 2000 and since then the strategic and economic ties have only gotten sturdier. Fast forward to 2019, as per Indian Ministry of External Affairs, India was anticipated to acquire \$18 billion worth of arsenal from USA along with bilateral military exercises. USA based Indian diaspora has also been very active in promoting India's interests and popularity. Indians are also among the richest immigrant communities in the USA. Despite the fact that India is the US's largest trading partner, they do business of about \$142 billion a year. The USA filed a lawsuit in the World Trade Organization against India and called it a source for US's trade deficit by subsidizing exports.

On February 24<sup>th</sup> of 2020, US President Donald Trump addressed the Indian audience in Ahmedabad during visiting India to meet with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While being on stage President Trump proclaimed to be all set to sell arsenal, energy and "best and most feared" military equipment of worth whopping \$3 billion to India. While making all the statements that Indian media, political leadership and audience wanted to hear, President Trump made a comment that sent a chill down their spines. President Trump, while standing on Indian stage placed on Indian soil, said that the USA is now enjoying good relations with Pakistan and all the efforts made by Pakistan are paying off well in progressing towards a new beginning,

harmony, stability and reduced tensions. President Trump did not just stop there, he went on and said that the Trump administration is working very closely and positively with Pakistan to decrease the risk of militancy along the border.

President Trump's statements praising Pakistan for its efforts on Indian soil were not well received by Indian media and leadership. As Pakistani media, leadership and Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi highlighted that the importance of these statements cannot be denied, Indian media went frenzy and kept bringing up the past references of terror attacks to keep the reputation of Modi government intact. The statements in favor of Pakistan made the Modi government concerned to the level where PM Modi refused to hold an unscripted press conference to avoid any more controversy which might have further killed the euphoria of Indian audience. The reference of having good relations with Pakistan at a public meeting with PM Modi cannot be accidental on part of American president and US's soft policy towards Pakistan qualifies to be an irritant for India in pursuit of having great strategic partnership with the USA.

Among all the commendations for the Modi government, President Trump was unsuccessful in mentioning his remarks over the protest happening in India over its Citizenship Amendment Act and religious persecution of Muslims minority in India. Meanwhile, Pakistan's media and political leadership is thrilled to have received an acknowledgment for their efforts, whereas Indian media has tried it best to curb the idea that Pakistan is a partner in bringing and maintaining. President Trump's acknowledgment of Pakistan's efforts is not only a manifestation of Pakistan's successful foreign policy but also have given legitimacy to Pakistan's and its citizens sacrifices worldwide. The praising statements have given a blow to India's hoax narrative that Pakistan is the problem, rather Pakistan is a part of solution in peace process which is clearly reflected by Pakistan's active participation in US-

Taliban peace talks.

---

# Challenges to the Internal Stability of Pakistan

Pakistan being an important country is in the midst of the crisis because of its geographical position. This geographical location has been imposing threats and challenges to the country and its people. Regional storms have surrounded the country due to its neighbors and global politics that is run by regional interests. Now the traditional and non-traditional threats have become a challenge for the complex security environment of the country. The international affairs have become unpredictable as there is no diffusion of power or problem solving mechanism creating a strategic influx. Pakistan has always been a central point for counter terrorism. It has been facing security threats from west, east and internal. Initially efforts were made to regularize relations with India. But the strategic relations have been affected by the improved atmospheric, business and political environment. The unresolved issue of Kashmir has become the main reason. Moreover, the strategic and conventional buildup of India has also posed a serious threat to the security of Pakistan. Trade liberalization has been taking place to normalize the relations. But the challenge is still there that whether the economic path could be sustained for the longer period without referring the political disputes. This can be referred in terms of strategic developments. India has been focusing more on the operationalization of proactive military doctrines to engage in limited conventional war which is below the nuclear threshold. This has further added a destabilizing aspect to affect the strategic scenario.

Pakistan has responded to this situation by redefining its military strategy and changing its comprehensive response to achieve its full spectrum deterrence in nuclear and conventional domains. Despite these dangers Pakistan is not a hopeless case. Pakistan has been making some serious efforts to end the war in Afghanistan through a political solution. Therefore, only in recent weeks, the diplomatic efforts have paved way to find the possibilities for a peace process involving a dialogue with Taliban. Pakistani Taliban have found their sanctuaries in Nuristan and Kunar and they are conducting cross border attacks which has further aggravated the security threat to Pakistan. Two major military operations in Swat and South Waziristan and ongoing actions elsewhere have driven militants out of some of their bases and halted their advance into the settled areas. But the sleeper cells of these miscellaneous militants in North Waziristan have to be tackled. Violent Extremism has posed a serious threat to the country's law enforcement agencies and army has become a daunting challenge dominating the country's threat perception. Moreover, the external dynamics have also posed a challenge making it necessary that an economically stable and tolerant nation can meet the external challenges.

Pakistan is making reassuringly steady progress out of the grip of militancy. There has been a gradual decrease in the number of fatalities as compared with terrorism-related fatalities in 2013. Moreover, suicide attacks have shown a great decline, as 2019 marks the first year in which no drone attack took place. After nearly two decades of violence in which thousands of innocents lost their lives in the wake of terrorism Pakistan has now turned a corner. This has been made possible only because of the kinetic operations taken by the security forces in the affected areas. The geopolitical factors along with the ideological objectives can spill over in our country. The never ending struggle in Afghanistan and the sleeper cells of militant Islamic State group in contiguous with Pakistan is the cause of concern. We have to

fight a ruthless enemy and the latest interesting figures depicts that the country is moving in the right direction.

---

## **“Overstretch Quagmire”**

Pakistan is and may be one of the very uncommon countries in the world to have militarily active kinetic energy borders. At both fronts i.e. east and west, where mild to bold skirmishes takes place with the Indian army, the Afghan army and the Taliban at almost regularity. When Pakistan manages one side of the front, the other gets hot and when at both ends adversarial armies are not in engaging mood, Taliban's strike. So, overall, it's an overstretch quagmire from which Pakistan must pull out by near future or its security forces may rubber out and that may be the bigger design of the adversary.

Pakistan has an extremely fluid international border with Afghanistan, running almost 2200 KM, from where Afghan army and then the Taliban are always in a mode of radiating energy. Pakistan army and its paramilitary Frontier Corp (F.C) troops are deployed all along the border for the watch out. Almost two years ago, Islamabad decided to fence this border. Since that day till the present running time, skirmishes with Afghan army and at times with the Taliban have spiked to unprecedented levels at different hotspots from Chitral district down till Chaghi district over the zero line. These brief encounters happen either over the subject of construction of bunkers or fencing.

In the just one moth, October 2019, Afghan and Pakistan army exchanged a good ratio of heavy fire at Narai district / Kunar province – Arundu area / Chitral district axis. Plea for

Afghan army to open up was that Pakistan army has constructed few bunkers over their side of the border and that was insupportable to them. Although, at the flag meetings, it was well contended and plumped to amicably solve the matter, but the trigger-happy attitude of Afghan army spoiled the party.

By same month account, Afghan army once again argued and this time it was over the construction of fencing by Pakistan, passing by Zazi Aryub district / Paktia Province – Kurram tribal district axis. A possible exchange of fire was ably forestalled by Pakistan with an apt flag meeting and readjustments were done immediately. There are many more hotspots over the zero line which can erupt at any given time till the time fencing and construction of bunkers is not finalized, once and for all.

So, the riddle to solve here is, that if a mechanism is in place to contemplate over such matters at the flag meetings and settle them affably then why resort to exchange of fire. A well thought out mastery would be that the novice attitudes of the Afghan army is to kill the essence of such peaceful measures. The hate has morphed in the adrenaline of their rank and file so much that they resort to open fire rather than talking. While not realizing from the past experiences, that it's the talking that has always resolved disputes. Prime examples are the heavy exchanges at construction of gate by Pakistan at Torkham border crossing, exchanges over the construction of bunkers at Kurram tribal district – Zazi Maidan district / Khost province, fencing at Killi Luqman at Qilla Abdullah district axis and list goes on. At all these bloody exchanges, talks were held, and issues were settled.

The world has seen that from past two years that there is a completely new policy in place by Pakistan for Afghanistan and that is to further the hand of friendship and bridge gaps. The fulcrum of this policy included water tightening the Pakistan – Afghanistan border by fencing it. The second prime column of this policy was that all high profiles from Pakistan visit

Kabul and assure the Afghans about the genuine efforts being put in place to mend fences. However, these visits were never reciprocated, except for Ashraf Ghanni paying a visit at last when as per his consideration he saw Pakistan taking concrete measures.

At large, the fresh start sooner materialized to produce dividends and that forced Ashraf Ghanni to pay a fertile visit to Islamabad. But this bridging gap does not auger well within certain neighborhoods and power centers within the government which looks at it with soring eyes. So, they take a jab at opportune time and try at length to create a fiasco. These cunning bites have now attained cemented basis to the tune that be it border scuffles, media campaigns or discussions at the parliament and senate of Afghanistan, mocking Pakistan has become a norm.

Recently new episodes of teasing Pakistan's embassy staff at Kabul have begun. From their strolls at Kabul, to driving around, unidentified vehicles and men tormenter them to the fullest. It has spiked to such levels that Pakistan embassy reciprocated and eventually decided to shut her operations till Afghan government investigates the matter.

It's obvious from the fact that such measures are adopted, although being very few, to keep Kabul's dagger drawn with Islamabad. Under these circumstances the government of Pakistan must stay level headed by acting mature and reading these designs well and carry forward the policy of appeasement without being deterred. In case Pakistan falter's and starts to react to these measures, then what would be the difference from being a state with standing institutions to the one with a weak central auditory having ample chaos. With this in mind, foreign secretary of Pakistan and DG-ISI dashed to Kabul and sat down with Afghan high ups to resolve the issue of diplomatic harassment. This act of maturity is surely coming from a country which has indeed the upper hand at calling the shots but wants to tone down and formulate a way out

peacefully.

For the future times, the way ahead for Pakistan and Afghanistan falls in the peaceful working mechanisms that have already been worked out between the two capitals.

---

## **Pakistan-Iran Trade: New Dimensions**

The Pakistan-Iran relations have been progressing with the passage of time. Relations between the two States have been shaped bilaterally on the basis of security concerns that shadowed the economic and political engagement. Pakistan having strong ties with Saudi Arabia and Iran's tilted loyalties towards India only made the bad situation worse. Iran has World's fourth largest oil and second largest gas reserves, it is the second largest economy in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region and the 18th largest in the world, only if Pakistan and Iran pursue to have stable ties this immense potential can be utilized for the development of the region. In Pakistan, there is averseness to augment political ties with countries that have strategic and defense partnerships with India because of its national security concerns. Recently, leadership on both sides have shown interest in increasing border security cooperation to maintain peace and possible escalations.

In May 2019 Pakistan Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, explained that he had four meeting with Iranian leadership and discussed the situation between the two States. Pakistan premier Imran Khan's visit to Iran broke the ice between two countries and that's when they set-off to lay better ties with



a clean slate. Both PM Khan and President Rauhani agreed to set up Joint Rapid Reaction Force to deal with terrorism and smuggling in order to promote bilateral relationship and economic activities. The meeting between Khan and Rauhani brought out some fundamental pronouncements; MoU signed for health sector cooperation, Railway line to connect Gwadar and Chabahar ports, Completion of gas pipeline to Pakistan and Iran showed willingness to tenfold electricity export to Pakistan. Leaving all the grumbles and grouses aside, leadership on both sides have decided to make efforts to look ahead for the sake of economic stability.

Pakistan and Iran agreed to promote barter trade at the concluding session of the eighth Iran-Pakistan Trade Committee under the delegation led by Adviser to the Prime Minister for Commerce Abdul Razzak Dawood while the Iranian side was led by Industries Minister Reza Rahmani. Barter trade can help Pakistan to enhance the export of wheat, sugar, rice and fruit to Iran. The entire banking sector is under sanctions, it is not possible to open branches of Iranian banks in Pakistan for which the establishing a mechanism for barter trade will help do the business. Pakistan proposed the removal of various taxation measures such as road and freight taxes on vehicles/trucks crossing the borders to facilitate trade by establishing an exclusive desk at the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan in Islamabad, whereas, Iran showed interest in importing 500,000 tons of rice from Pakistan and to remove potential bottlenecks so that the trade volume can be enhanced.

Pakistan and Iran talked about opening a "Free Economic Zone" under Iranian Consul General Muhammad Rafiei at Mir Jawa to sell fuel to Pakistan on relatively lower prices. Both the countries have cultural, social and political relations for years and opening a tax-free border markets in Pakistan and Iran will boost political and economic ties. In today's world, trade is the most pivotal in strengthening and boosting the

bilateral relations. Pakistan and Iran agreed to resolve issues including removing barriers which have made Pak-Iran Preferential Trade Agreement (2006) ineffective. States that have rivalry with another also shares a common interest as well. Pakistan and Iran have realized that economic ties and developments will bring prosperity to their own countries and this interest should be harbored to its best. To convert the negative public sentiment towards each other, trade can be the most appropriate way ahead and it will also overcome the communication barrier.