

India's Pakistan Foreign Policy Conundrum 2016

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India's foreign policy on Pakistan in 2016 stands bedevilled by the conundrum arising from "Legacy Policy Issues" of "Pakistan-Appeasement" and "Peace with Pakistan at any Cost" cumulatively piled on in the 21st Century commencing from six years of BJP's first Prime Minister Vajpayee and markedly compounded by ten years of Congress PM Dr Manmohan Singh abject Pakistan policy leaving PM Narendra Modi now to bear the cross of dealing with an emboldened and militaristic Pakistan.

Earlier Indian Prime Ministers too were equally guilty of the two Pakistan -policy syndromes stated above, more notably the infamous and much media hyped Gujral Doctrine. PM Indira Gandhi should not have signed away India's Bangladesh Liberation War victorious gains without obtaining written guarantees from the slippery Pakistani PM Bhutto at the Simla Agreement. PM Gandhi returned 90,000 Pakistan Army soldiers at Simla without any quid pro quo.

India's Pakistan policy formulations are a long saga of capitulations to a weaker state like Pakistan and missed opportunities of India securing her national security interests sacrificed under external pressures which wanted to keep the Pakistan Army in good humour by pandering to their strategic sensitivities. Even India's redoubtable PM Lal Bahadur Shastri paid with his life at Tashkent under external pressures to sign away the gains of the 1965 War.

India's current PM Narendra Modi with his characteristic audaciousness in foreign policy domain could have brushed away the "Legacy Policy Issues" like he did in 2014 but thereafter he too was perceptively overwhelmed by his foreign policy advisers, as were earlier Prime Ministers, that the Nobel Peace Prize awaited them, should they be able to normalise relations with Pakistan.

India's conundrum in the formulation of its foreign policy on Pakistan arises not only from the philosophical inclinations of its Prime Ministers but also from a large tribe of Special Envoys, Track II interlocutors, woolly-headed academics and arm-chair strategists specialising on Pakistan and the sizeable 'bleeding hearts fraternity' that abounds in Lutyen's Delhi. All of them have a vested interest that preaches that India-Pakistan Dialogues should "neither be interrupted nor be interruptible". The results that the advocacies of this tribe are all negative and hindered the formulation of a robust India foreign policy on Pakistan.

In 2016, PM Narendra Modi's audaciousness and decisiveness must be brought into proactive and assertive play and the first steps should incorporate dispensing with the existing templates of Pakistan policy formulation where it gets dominated by Indian diplomats, serving and retired, and Special Envoys and Track II to IV interlocutors. None of them have served India well or justified the political trust reposed in their intellect and experience. Their overall performance is one of resorting to temporising in short time tactical gains and there too they have miserably failed.

It is for the current Indian Prime Minister's consideration to fathom that if in Pakistan and China, it is their military hierarchies which formulate their foreign policies towards India, why then the PM cannot give a larger voice to the Indian military hierarchy in formulation of India's foreign policy on Pakistan and China, as both these adversarial neighbours pose major military threats to India's security. Is it not a fact that while Indian political leaders and their chosen civilian policy advisers on Pakistan only give broad-brush treatment to the Pakistan Threat and that it is ultimately the Indian military hierarchy which conceptualises and operationalises plans to deal with the Pakistan Threat? Why not bring them early on into the conceptualisation and formulation of India's Pakistan policy without bureaucratic filters?

While the above maybe a far cry to expect from even a bold Prime Minister like Modi, but whichever template the Indian Prime Minister now adopts in 2016 after the recent, but really old and habitual Pakistani rebuffs to his political outreach initiatives to Pakistan, PM Modi must look deep into the history and pattern of India-Pakistan relations of the last six to seven decades.

Major deductions that would arise from such a study would indicate that (1) Pakistan under the Pakistan Army yoke cannot strategically afford any normalised or peaceful relations with India (2) Pakistan's Islamic Republic citizenry has not shown any inclinations to shake off the Pakistan Army yoke and transform Pakistan into a moderate and democratic Islamic State (3) Pakistan Army earlier under United States misperceived policies was encouraged to 'box much above its strategic weight' (4) China has now assumed that mantle and with China also a markedly adversarial neighbour against India, the two nations together as the China-Pakistan Axis will pose increasing and coordinated strategic and military challenges to India's sovereignty and national security.

So what is the major lesson in 2016 for PM Narendra Modi and his foreign policy advisers on Pakistan? The crucial and significant reality that stares India in the face is that Pakistan is "Not a Normal State" and impervious to any positive and meaningful political dialogues and political outreaches. Pakistan can be expected to emerge as a more confrontationist state with India under China's influence. This is visible

in that Pakistan Army's military adventurism has become more pronounced after Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Islamabad last April and the announcement of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Pakistan can be additionally expected to indulge in pronounced military adventurism against India smarting under the reality that today India counts powerfully more in the American strategic calculus. This is abundantly clear from the statements of the US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and noted US academics and strategic analysts specialising on the Indian Subcontinent's strategic affairs.

So what are the options left with PM Modi in 2016 in terms of India's Pakistan foreign policy and the conundrum it poses? Objectively, PM Modi has only three options open to him to deal with Pakistan Army- dominated hapless Pakistan. These three options are (1) Maintain the status- quo format of attempting revivals of Indo-Pak Peace Dialogues (2)'Isolate and Ignore' Pakistan. Maintain only the minimum of diplomatic protocols and rebuff Pakistan's efforts in the future to engage India in a dialogue. (3) Cut down Pakistan Army to size in the coming decade and run it out of its military adventurism by inflicting an arms race on Pakistan which even China cannot subsidise.

Maintaining the status-quo format in Pakistan-engagement in India's Pakistan policy needs to be dispensed with much further ado. Maintaining this course has already cost PM Modi heavily in terms of domestic political criticism and placing the Prime Minister in a state of "Severe Disconnect" with Indian public opinion, very much like the ten years of Congress Government preceding this Government.

'Isolate and Ignore Pakistan' has been a precept advocated in my writings of more than a decade. It is a low-cost high-yield Indian option in which in time will make the Pakistan citizenry ponder as to where the Pakistan Army has pushed Pakistan into and whether the Pakistan Army can be entrusted to dominate Pakistan's India-policy.

Pakistan Army was cut down to size in 1971 by the Indian Armed Forces. India needs to seriously cut down to size the Pakistan Army in the decade that follows with a host of instruments of power, both military and non-military, Northern Areas, Balochistan and Sindh are virtually ripe for a repeat of the Bangladesh Liberation War. India does not have to be apologetic about these issues and would be ideal Indian ripostes for Pakistan's adventurism in Kashmir.

India must inflict an arms race on Pakistan to cut down Pakistan Army to size much in the same way as the United States inflicted on the Former Soviet Union contributing to its disintegration. This would be entirely feasible as China, the new strategic patron of Pakistan would be unable to subsidise Pakistan Army's corresponding military build-up. Such a fast-track Indian military build-up would serve India in not only taming the Pakistan Army but also in taking on the combined military onslaught of the China-Pakistan Axis.

India has a host of other pressure-points against Pakistan to bring it to heel with topping the list is following the Indus Water Treaty strictly to the letter, enhancing military capacity-building of Afghanistan. The list is endless and cannot be covered in detail within the confines of this Paper, and attempting the weaning away of Pakistan Army's traditional supporters in the Middle East.

It is recommended that PM Narendra Modi directs his policy establishment to flesh out the details of a combination of Courses 2&3 and put this into immediate effect. Such a combination of courses would send the appropriate signals to the Pakistan Army' patrons that the India of 2016 means business and will not shirk from adopting a robust and muscular policy towards Pakistan.

Concluding, PM Modi needs to realise that Pakistan is a "Bully State" and bullies need to be stood upto and not appeased as it only emboldens the Pakistan Army to box much above its true strategic weight. One noted American strategic analyst has labelled Pakistan as an international insurgent. The best legacy that PM Modi can leave for India's future would be a "Tamed Pakistan" in its existing form or in a fragmented mode.

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[Indian Foreign Policy](#) [2]

Category:

[Papers](#) [3]

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[Strategic Affairs & Security](#) [6]

[Political](#) [7]

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