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## **Kashmir and Pakistan**

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Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has been quoted to have repeated the oft-cited Reagan formula 'trust but verify' while referring to the ongoing efforts to engage Pakistan in a dialogue. It looks as though we did not have to wait for long to carry out the verification. After the CCS meeting on June 30, 2010, Mr. Chidambaram said the anti-national forces were clearly linked to the Lashkar-e-Taiba which was active in the Sopore area of the Valley and that the two militants killed on June 25 also had links with the outfit. The disturbances in Kashmir on the eve of the Amarnath Yatra also revive the memories of events two years ago. Kashmiri politicians and political parties by and large are notorious for doing business in conflict zones and agitating for perpetual grievances without offering their own solutions or talking to each other. The only factor that unites most of them is finding fault with Delhi for not addressing the fundamental problem whatever it is. While the separatists are blatantly pro-Pakistani, in the case of other parties their parochial politics provide fertile ground to the Pakistani Inter-Services Wing to play its game of keeping the valley disturbed. So long as the Indian Parliamentarians will not agree on what constitutes violence within the Chambers of the two Houses and on the streets, they provide justification for 'nonviolent stone throwing' and 'pacific bus -burning'. Why should the oil-tank owners ply their vehicles running the risk of their tankers getting destroyed and their crew getting killed and hurt if the politicians imbued with concern for 'aam aadmi' considers stone throwing and bus-burning as part of 'nonviolent protest?' Every Indian political party which resorts to violence within the Parliament and on the streets adversely affects our national security and plays into the hands of our adversaries. In that sense the solution to the

Kashmir problem is partly in Delhi. Let us find out what are the punishments for stone throwing and bus-burning in the penal codes of mature democracies and incorporate them in our laws. There will be visible improvement in the law and order situation in the country as a whole and in Kashmir.

Having provided a fertile field for Pakistan to disturb Kashmir what should we expect them to do? They are under tremendous pressure from US to initiate action against the Afghan Taliban in North Waziristan and to keep control over anti-US and anti-India terrorism. As days go by, the Pakistani Army is increasingly persuaded that US would not have the staying power to continue in Afghanistan after 2011. It would appear even President Karzai is of the same view in spite categorical assurances to the contrary from President Obama. There are reports not controverted by Pakistan that the Pakistan Army is attempting to promote a settlement between Karzai and the Afghan Taliban, especially the Haqqani faction which is the most virulent and best organized anti-US faction among the Afghan Taliban. This in turn has caused worries to the Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara minorities in Afghanistan. There are fears that if the Pakhtuns of Afghanistan unite and Taliban gains in power and influence that may result in a virtual divide of Afghanistan as there was in the pre 9/11 period. Furthermore the Pakhtuns on both sides of the Durand line may unite endangering the unity of Pakistan itself. Therefore many observers are suggesting a regional approach in which all stakeholding nations in Afghan unity can guarantee the unity of Afghanistan. Will that be acceptable to Pakistan Army which is aiming at domination over Pakhtun Afghanistan similar to the one it exercised in pre9/11 period?

At present the Pakistani Army may feel that things are moving in their favour especially after the Kayani-Karzai meeting in Kabul. They cannot be faulted if the Chinese stand vis-à-vis Pakistan would give them an impression that they can count on their backing. The signals from US to Pakistan are mixed. While the President and the circle immediately around him give an impression of a tough stand on the Af-Pak war issue at the military level in US, Pakistani Army appears to be confident of greater support for their aims of promoting a Karzai-Haqqani settlement. Unlike the US-Soviet confrontation where the 'trust but verify' formula was being tested for the first time by President Reagan during the post-Brezhnev period, in the case of Pakistan Army we have had 'four wars on the basis of one assumption' as the eminent Pakistani journalist Altaf Gauhar wrote in the wake of Kargil war. He said, "Ayub Khan genuinely believed that as a general rule Hindu morale would not stand more than a couple of hard blows at the right time and place." (Ayub Khan: Pakistan's First Military Ruler, page 328). That same assumption swayed General Yahya Khan in 1971 and General Musharraf in 1999. During all the wars the Pakistani Army expected the external powers to favour

them against India. The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence has an exaggerated view of its own smartness and its ability to run rings around the Americans.

Therefore even while waiting to verify the Pakistani bonafides there has to be careful assessment about what adverse developments may happen in Kashmir if the Pakistani Army were to decide that it would be more to their advantage to have the valley unsettled and subject to pressure. The long Manipur blockade, the repeated Chattisgarh massacres of CRPF personnel by the Maoists and the present Kashmir valley happenings, taken together may mislead Pakistan as the anti-Hindi riots of 1965 and Hazaratbal disturbances of 1964 did to initiate 'Operation Gibraltar'. Again their own role in bringing about the Sino-US détente made them over-reach themselves in East Bengal crisis in 1971.

Developments in Kashmir are always intimately linked up with Pakistani calculations of international resonance to the events. At present Pakistani strategy towards Afghanistan and towards Kashmir are likely to be closely interlinked. The Pakistani Army is playing for high stakes both in respect of strategic depth in Afghanistan and making Pakistan the leading Sunni nuclear power on the one hand and bleeding and fragmenting India through a thousand cuts on the other. Unlike in the US-Soviet confrontation where the two leaderships dealt with each other in Indo-Pakistan context India is not dealing with the real leadership of Pakistan - the Army. For instance both the Army and present Pakistani political leadership have disowned the results of back-channel diplomacy achieved while General Musharraf was in power. There is a good case to develop a fresh assessment of the present Army leadership's aims and goals both in Afghanistan and India, particularly in Kashmir in the light of their expectations with respect to ongoing developments.

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