

## Talks with Pakistan

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Track-2 conferences and newspaper campaigns in India are urging that Delhi should resume its composite dialogue with Pakistan. Most of the Pakistani leaders make the point that India's refusal to resume the dialogue strengthens the hands of the terrorists and resumption of dialogue will help to consolidate the democratic government in Pakistan. While this campaign is on, a suicide attack is launched on a hotel in Lal Chawk in Srinagar and the Indian security authorities are able to monitor the conversations between the terrorists in operation and their handlers in Pakistan. Increased attempts to infiltrate across the line of control are being foiled by the Indian security forces. More evidence has emerged about the links between David Coleman Headley and Lashkar-e-Toiba(LET) in Pakistan. The cases against the Lashkar men, charged with the conspiracy and participation in the 26/11 attack are getting conveniently adjourned. More terrorist outrages take place in Pakistan, causing more civilian casualties. Pakistanis are no doubt victims of terrorism. But this terrorism is the result of the Pakistani Army and the Interservices Intelligence having nurtured those very terrorists as instrumentalities of foreign policy. Today not only India but also US which has been targeted by LET are asking for action by Pakistan against the various terrorist organizations. As of now the Pakistani response has not been clear cut - except in the case of one out of five terrorist groups - the Pakistani Taliban.

Meanwhile the Indian Government has shown its goodwill by quietly reducing the forces in Jammu & Kashmir and announcing its intention to review it further in the light of developments. Till a few days back there was a lot of uncertainty about the continuance of President Zardari in his office. While a dialogue between any two states having problems is always to be welcomed, there should be some attention to be paid to such a resumption of dialogue being exhibited as a triumph of intransigence and persistence in using terrorism as a state policy. Dr.Manmohan Singh has repeatedly assured that he will resume the dialogue once Pakistan gives up terrorism as state policy. It is well understood that Pakistan is not in a position to make a public declaration to that

effect. But there should be some demonstration of their bonafides. For instance it is claimed that the 26/11 trial is not making speedy progress in Pakistan because of their independent judiciary. But delaying a case through inadequate and deliberate bad preparation is one of the oldest tricks of corrupt police officers as is well known in India. While Pakistani law provides for speedy trial and execution in terrorist cases, the alleged and convicted killer of Daniel Pearl, Omar Sheikh is still hale and hearty in Pakistan eight years after a death sentence was passed. Here is a Government which having demanded and obtained a UN probe on the assassination of Benazir Bhutto now refuses to give access to the UN enquiry panel to ISI and other intelligence officials. What is the credibility of such a Government about fighting terrorism?

Since the ultimate decision maker in Pakistan is still the Army in spite of there being an elected civilian government, it is necessary to assess the army's stand on the anti-terror operations. On this issue things are likely to come to a head in the next three months as the US surge in Afghanistan gets under way. It would appear US proposes to use drones in large numbers for intelligence collection and strikes. As US surge operations get intensified, it is bound to involve operations against the Afghan and Pakistani Talibans and Haqqani network and that will be the moment of truth for Pakistani Army. At that stage it will have to be seen whether Pakistan Army joins the US in fighting these terrorist forces. If the superior US firepower pushes the Afghan Taliban back into Pakistan and US continues its drone attacks in Pakistani soil, these jihadi groups may turn against Pakistan Army for permitting US to operate in Pakistani territory. At present while subjecting the US personnel in Pakistan to harassment and not responding positively to US pressure to take action against Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network, the Pakistani Army's strategy appears to be to buy time That raises concerns in the Indian national security establishment.. Would there be an attempt to create a major terrorist outrage in India to get attention deflected away from its western front.? The Pakistan Army appears to be persuaded that it has to only buy time up to July 2011 when the Obama Administration will start its withdrawal and things will turn in its favor in Afghanistan. If the US were to threaten to cut off its aid there will be hints that unless Pakistan is continued to be funded unconditionally, nuclear weapon technology may be sold to nuclear aspirant countries or nuclear weapons will be under risk of falling into the

hands of jihadis..Already such hints have been passed on to various think tanks in the west. The most potent role of Pakistani nuclear weapons is to blackmail the international community for unconditional aid.

There is an asymmetry not only in the war that is being waged by Pakistan against India through the use of terrorism as state policy but also in the Indo-Pakistan dialogue structure. While the Prime Minister of India is the ultimate decision maker of India, neither the Pakistani President nor the Prime minister has the last word on Pakistani decision making. That role belongs to the Army Chief. The US legislature has asked for half yearly certification on the effective exercise of civilian control over the Army in Pakistan. The refusal of access to the Army and ISI officers to UN probe panel on Benazir's assassination proves the pitiable role of the Pakistan's elected government. This crucial point has been missed out by all those good hearted people who are urging the Indian Government to enter into composite dialogue with Pakistan .Their appeal should be to the Pakistani National Assembly, Pakistani civil society and Pakistani Army to restore the credibility of the Pakistani Government by allowing the UN panel access to the Pakistani Army and Intelligence officials in Benazir murder enquiry. A president and a Prime Minister who after going to the UN and getting the investigating panel established do not have the authority to get their officials to be witnesses before the UN panel cannot be expected to be taken seriously as international negotiators. The Indian Prime Minister should not be humiliated by being required to indulge in a sham negotiation with people who do not wield any real power in their country. Let us allow Pakistani Government a little more time to prove its credibility. Let us watch the Pakistani Army in the next few months for it to make up its mind on fighting all the five terrorist groups listed by US. Surely it strains one's credibility to accept the proposition that the aam Pakistani is more interested in getting the Kashmiri his self-determination than saving his own cities from terrorism.

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