

Building Stability in India-Pakistan Relations: THE CHAOPHRAYA DIALOGUE

The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), New Delhi organized a track-II dialogue between India and Pakistan during February in Bangkok, in which senior former officials (including Ambassadors, Foreign Secretaries, Intelligence Chiefs and top-ranking members of the Armed Forces), academics, journalists and political leaders from India and Pakistan discussed on a range of issues impacting on the relationship. Terrorism, Jammu and Kashmir, Hydro-Resources, Afghanistan and Nuclear Stability were some of the issues discussed.

Welcoming the decision by the two governments to resume the official bilateral dialogue at the foreign secretary level, the participants of the dialogue agreed to the following:

" Peace between and stability in India-Pakistan relations is essential for the well being of South Asia. After nearly 63 years of hostility between India and Pakistan, it is critical that all stakeholders work for sustainable peace between the two countries. Civil societies in India and Pakistan, by and large, support the goal of peace and reconciliation; peace constituencies in both countries must, therefore, be further strengthened by providing them greater space and support. It is essential that the trust deficit and the burden of history not be allowed to impact on the task of moving relations forward.

" Trust can be best built through multiple uninterrupted dialogues, positive incremental steps, Confidence and Trust Building Measures, and - most critically - through acts of statesmanship by the leaders of the two countries.

" A grand reconciliation can only be ensured, in the long-term, through engagement at every level: civil society meetings, official dialogues, engagement of political leaders, cooperation between business and corporate leaders, visits of artists, sportsmen, media, talks between the armed forces, Track II engagements, etc.

" Temporary setback in inter-governmental relations should not be allowed to impinge on people-to-people cooperation. Attempts should be made to create a visa-free regime for important stakeholders: including academics, journalists, businessmen, students, artists and former senior officials.

"Progress made in previous rounds of talks should be carried forward in the official dialogue.

"Terrorism is of deep concern to India and Pakistan and the memory of the Mumbai attacks is still alive and continues to inform public opinion in India. Today, terrorism and extremism pose an existential threat to Pakistan. Indian concerns about terrorism and the terrorist threats to India are as much of a serious concern for Pakistan. Terrorism and extremism need to be comprehensively and permanently defeated.

"India and Pakistan should seriously consider initiating an institutionalized, regular but discreet dialogue between the intelligence chiefs' (the heads of R&AW, IB and ISI and IB Pakistan) of both countries.

"The back channel on Jammu and Kashmir must be resumed at an early date keeping in view the fact that all stake-holders particularly the people of J&K will have to be consulted at some stage. If Jammu and Kashmir is considered as a piece of real estate there is little hope of a way ahead. Therefore, the welfare of the people of Jammu and Kashmir must be considered to be of paramount concern. In this context, all agreed CBMs must be more robustly implemented

" The media is playing a critical role in shaping popular perceptions. They have thus a great responsibility to help strengthen the constituency for peace. A continuing dialogue between journalists, editors and proprietors of media houses is needed.

" A sustained dialogue on ensuring strategic stability in South Asia must be an essential part of the bilateral dialogue. There is also need for discussion amongst experts on critical doctrinal issues and the need to work towards creating a Nuclear Safety, Assistance and Collaboration Regime in the region within the framework of minimum deterrence. In this context, a trilateral nuclear dialogue which includes China must also be pursued.

" The problem of water is becoming a matter of great concern and there is a need to address misperceptions in this regard. The Indus Water Treaty has withstood the test of time and has a well established dispute-settlement mechanism. Any concern about hydro-resources of the Indus river system should be taken up through the Permanent Indus Water Commission. Within the framework of the treaty, the two countries must also share best practices on water management with each other. Environmental and other experts with domain knowledge, from both countries, must be encouraged to provide concrete recommendations for better and optimal management of hydro resources given the huge challenge that the scarcity of water will pose for the region in the future.

" A stable, prosperous, sovereign and independent Afghanistan is in the interest of India and Pakistan and both countries must work for this goal and hold talks to allay each others apprehensions.

" Track-II dialogues are designed to move beyond official stated positions, find a way forward, and can provide alternative approaches to the governments of Pakistan and India as well as other important stakeholders. It is vital that Track -II dialogues be encouraged by both New Delhi and Islamabad.

DELEGATION LIST

Pakistani Participants

1. Ms. Samina Ahmed , South Asia Project Director at the International Crisis Group
2. Gen. (Retd.) Ehsan ul Haq, former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
3. Amb. Aziz Ahmad Khan, former High Commissioner of Pakistan to India
4. Gen. (Retd.) Aziz Mohammad Khan, former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
5. Amb. Humayun Khan, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan
6. Amb. Riaz Khokhar, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan
7. Amb. Rustam Shah Mohmand, former Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan
8. Ms. Sherry Rehman, Member of Parliament

Indian Participants

1. Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Dipankar Banerjee, Director, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies
2. Mr. AS Dulat, former Director, Research and Analysis Wing
3. Ms. Sagarika Ghose, senior editor and prime time anchor, CNN-IBN
4. Mr. Happymon Jacob, Assistant Professor, Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, Jawaharlal Nehru University
5. Prof. Amitabh Mattoo, Professor, Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, Jawaharlal Nehru University
6. Rear Adml. (Retd.) Raja Menon, Chairman, Task Force on Net Assessment and Simulation, National Security Council
7. Amb. G Parthasarathy, former High Commissioner of India to Pakistan
8. Mr. Vikram Sood, former Director, Research and Analysis Wing
9. Mr. Siddharth Varadarajan, Strategic Affairs Editor and Chief of National Bureau, The Hindu