

Khan Efforts to Support Modi Undermines Pakistan's Strength

News:

On Pakistan's National Day, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent the Pakistani people greetings and good wishes. In response, Imran Khan hurriedly overlooked the suffering of the Kashmiri people and praised Modi's message. Khan said, "I welcome PM Modi's message to our people. As we celebrate Pakistan Day I believe it is time to begin a comprehensive dialogue with India to address and resolve all issues, especially the central issue of Kashmir." [1]

Comment:

Earlier, Khan rewarded India's malicious air forays into Pakistan with the return of the captured Indian pilot Abhinandan. The Indian media immediately latched onto Khan's gesture and portrayed Pakistan as a weak country that easily capitulated to Indian demands. The incident also boosted Modi's chances of winning the general election who up to this point was faltering against Gandhi. [2]

Handing over Abhinandan without— at the very least—obtaining written assurances about respecting Pakistan's territorial integrity (land, airspace and waterways) and protecting the rights of the Kashmiri people was a huge blunder. And now welcoming Modi's message is worse than rubbing salt in an open wound. Neither Pakistan is safe nor the Kashmiris. By doing so, Khan demonstrates pitiable judgement underpinned by poor political calculus. Here is why.

It well known that Modi's re-election campaign was floundering on two of his strongest pillars: economy and security. After five years of Modi's reign, India's economy is in the doldrums and numerous attempts to revive it have failed. Equally, his record on security is just as bad. The Pulwama attack— a product of indigenous Kashmiri struggle and dubious Indian security—was preceded by several other attacks, which Indian forces failed to prevent. Elsewhere in India, fanatic Hindu nationalists have run amok against Muslims and Christian communities thereby accelerating the demise of domestic law and order. Because of these two factors, Modi's traditional base became easy prey for the Congress Party, and BJP's popularity waned.

As for the Indian military, it is in dismal shape and not fit to wage war against Pakistan. The Indian military suffers from high suicide rates [3], ammunition shortages [4], and constant wage disputes [5]. Additionally, sexual predatory practices by senior officers against the wives' of junior officers have created trust deficits amongst rank and file. [6] All of this has contributed to an all-time low morale. [7]

Based on the foregoing, Khan should have known that Modi was in no position to negotiate a settlement on Kashmir, as Modi's rule is precarious and he has no mandate to find a solution to Kashmir. Hence, it is the height of political naivety to ask Modi repeatedly for dialogue over Kashmir. Second, Khan should have never surrendered Abhinandan to the Indian authorities without extracting concessions favorable to Pakistan and Kashmiris.

Khan could have easily exploited the poor morale of the Indian army under the shadow of Pakistan's nukes to demand ironclad guarantees from India. Such as permanent ceasefire across the LoC, withdrawal of Indian soldiers from Kashmir, return of Pakistanis languishing in Indian jails, end to Indian support for the Baluch insurgency and so forth.

Instead, he surrendered the advantage and propelled Modi to a possible election victory. The irony here is that Khan's actions will further undermine Pakistan's integrity, oppress Kashmiris and stoke the flames of Hindu-Muslim violence, especially if Modi wins another term.

In sum, Khan like Sharif before him has betrayed Pakistan by turning strategic advantages into self-inflicted wounds. In 1999, Sharif ceded gains made at Kargil to India and BJP won the election. Today, Khan has miscalculated Pakistan's strength in the aftermath of Pulwama attacks, and has handed BJP a superb chance to get re-elected and continue with their greater India mantra.

PTI supporters and ordinary Pakistanis should not be deceived by Khan's speeches and gestures of peace. They must reflect on the words of Allah. **﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ﴾** "There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life May dazzle thee, and he calls Allah to witness about what is in his heart; yet is he the most contentious of enemies." [TMQ Al-Baqara: 204]

﴿أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

"Is it then the judgment of (the times of) ignorance that they desire? And who is better than Allah to judge for a people who are sure?"

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Abdul Majeed Bhatti