

VIMARSH : EMERGING TRENDS IN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

Vimarsh, the monthly discussion series was held on 29th March at 5.30 pm in the premises of [Vivekananda Kendra International](#) [1], Chanakyapuri. The topic was '*Emerging trends in Pakistan and Afghanistan and its implications for India*'. It was conducted in the form of a panel discussion which was presided by Sri Vijay Kapoor, former Lieutenant Governor of Delhi & vice chairman VKI. Sri Satish Chandra- the former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Sri Ajit Doval, Former Director IB & honorary director of VKI, Lieutenant General Shontanu Choudhry, Former vice chief of Army staff and Air Chief Marshal (Retd) Krishnaswamy shared the panel. Sri Vijai Kapoor initiated the Vimarsh by giving a brief description of the speakers and the topic. He explained how the scenario in Pakistan was heading towards a catastrophe, which could have alarming consequences for the whole world.

Sri Ajit Doval in his brilliant oration explained that the future of India was inextricably associated with that of Pakistan and Afghanistan, due to which we can not remain apathetic towards the trends emerging there. He expounded on how from very ancient times, this area [Pakistan and Afghanistan] has shown an affinity for nurturing barbaric invasions directed towards India. Pakistan and Afghanistan, which he deprecated as recently created political units without any real history, are still continuing with those atrocious activities. The Taliban and the jihadis were created by Pakistan and were used as irregular soldiers in their subversive acts against India. He also mentioned that according to an crisis management agency based in Belgium, the number of Pakistani terrorists entered in India across Pakistan border is 11500. They think all are killed in India either in suicide attacks or encounters.

He described Afghanistan as a nation which was devoid of a national identity and which is fragmented into numerous tribal fiefdoms, constantly clashing with each other. He described the misery prevailing in Pakistan occurring as a result of various problems such as a very low rate of industrial growth, abnormally high disparity in distribution of wealth, the dominating influence of the army etc and how America was using Pakistan as a base for furthering its strategic interests.

Sri Satish Chandra in his remarkably logical style analyzed the cause of the Pakistan sponsored cross border terrorism. He said it is more to be credited to the hesitation of on the part of Indian government to retaliate against Pakistan even when it was sparing no efforts to make India bleed to the maximum possible extent. He informed the audience that we should not delude ourselves by hoping for an improvement of our relations with them as an average Pakistani's mindset was full of hatred towards India. Especially those of the armed forces personnel who dreams of subjugating India desperately. He explained that army was the only power centre in Pakistan and all other so-called power centers like the politicians, judiciary, and the civil society were really powerless. America and the mullahs are relatively more effective power centers. But Army is the REAL power centre. He explained that the terrorism emanating from Pakistan was neither recent phenomenon culminating in gruesome incidents like the attack on the parliament or the 26/11 terrorist attack on Mumbai, but is a continuous process right from the time of its inception in 1947.

He expatiated at the present juncture, America is forcing Pakistan to concentrate its forces in the FATA to eliminate Al-Qaida, while Pakistan is making excuses about its inability to do so as some part of its forces are deployed on the border with Kashmir. Hence there is a possibility of American pressure getting imposed on us for resolving the

Kashmir dispute with Pakistan. He also added on how America which once upon a time had thrown a gauntlet at the problem of global terrorism, has now started following the exit policy from Afghanistan as their armed forces were completely demoralized. They regard only those insurgent groups as terrorists which are detrimental to the interests of the west. Due to this they are trying to placate Taliban by inventing terms like good Taliban and bad Taliban. It may bargain by giving financial aid to Pakistan in lieu of safety of western targets. Thus leaving all the Jihadi's to target India.

Lieutenant General Shontanu Choudhry explained to the audience that the present Chief of Pakistan's army, General Kayani comes from a very humble background; he has been the director of ISI for 2 years and is very susceptible to the influence of the Islamic fundamentalists. Lieutenant General Shontanu Choudhry exhorted the audience that we should muster courage to counter Pakistan's hostile intentions and not get cowed down by their blackmail of using nuclear weapons in the event of the war. Even if Pakistan uses a nuclear weapon against us, we need not be bothered about it as we have much more nuclear weapons to destroy them completely. He also warned us that the government of Pakistan, being effete, may collapse any moment and the nuclear weapons there may fall in the hands of the jihadis. He reminded us that whenever the political power in India has weakened, foreign invaders like Iltutmish, Allaudin Khilji, Nadir Shah, Abdalli, have plundered this country. He expressed his worry that if the present general elections result in formation of a weak government at the centre it will be very dangerous to the national interest in the present scenario.

Air Chief Marshal Krishnaswamy admonished that India in spite of being a victim of Pakistan sponsored terrorism, had virtually taken no action against Pakistan. Due to this we have gained an image of a weak nation in the international arena. He added that we should not remain apathetic towards Afghanistan. He called upon the audience not to view the things from distance. He said nobody should think as mere spectators but should play an active role in imposing our pressure on the government, the media for protecting our interests. We should make our presence felt for which a strong national will is imperative.

The talks were followed by interaction between the members of the panel and the audience. Gp Captain Jairath, Shri Manmohan, Shri Rajendra Gupta participated. Sri Vijay Kapoor, the chairman of the panel discussion concluded that, while America has some policy about Afghanistan, even if it is faulty, we do not have any clear policy on Afghanistan. He said that we need not be self deprecating. We are a strong nation with cultural roots and we need to deal from our points of strength. He reminded '*While Americans have the option of an exit policy on Afghanistan, we don't have that choice*' After presentation of vote of thanks the Vimarsh concluded with the chanting of the Shanti Mantra.

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