

‘Internal Implosion in Pakistan: Regional Security Implications’ - June 24th

The Council for Strategic Affairs, Washington DC hosted Amb. G Parthasarathy for a dialogue on the topic ‘Internal Implosion in Pakistan: Regional Security Implications’ on 24th June, 2023. Amb. G Parthasarathy is a retired Indian Foreign Service Officer, who served in key positions like High Commissioner of India to Pakistan, Deputy Secretary to Ministry of External Affairs, Spokesperson of MEA and PMO during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi prior to his retirement in 2000.

The session started with a brief introduction about the speaker and the topic by Dr. A. Adityanjee, President, Council for Strategic Affairs.

Amb. G Parthasarathy, started off by highlighting some internal aspects of Pakistan. Amb. said that Pakistan is made up of several nationalities like Punjabi, Baloch, and many others. He further raised the point as to how Pakistan is a state where religion is of paramount importance, and the growing importance is evident from the tenure of several regimes. He also highlighted the dominance of the Pakistan Army in the day to day affairs, and governance of Pakistan. To put it straight, he said that every nation has an army, but in the case of Pakistan, an army has a nation to itself. Moreover, he also highlighted the demographic aspects of the Pakistan Army citing how it is a Punjabi community dominated force. The constant conflict between government and the army in Pakistan is a serious matter, in fact he said Pakistan has witnessed coup followed by coup. Amb. Further highlighted how the economy of Pakistan is in shambles with a consumerist society without savings, with a stagnant and dipping per capita income, with a predicted growth of mere 2 percent, Pakistan is already in shambles. He also highlighted how Pakistan has historically dependent on foreign aid, and how recent reversal of US policies has affected it severely, and now it is dependent on China.

Despite such a severe economic situation of despair, Pakistan continues to be ruled by the Army.

In his concluding remarks, he talked about the fact how Pakistan has realized how terrorism can be two ended sword and they have their own problems, and India must wait to know whether Pakistan wants good relations, though their foreign minister Bhutto has always been rhetorical.

Key Q&A’s

1. China’s involvement in Pakistan is not just economical but beyond, reducing Pakistan to what one may call a Chinese colony with PLA forces scattered around Pakistan’s territory, what is your view of the possibility of Pakistan and China becoming one country against India?

Ans- There is no such thing called the Pakistan Nuclear Program, they have been given the entire design of nuclear arsenal by China, at present they have over 170 nuclear weapons. Moreover China has spent billions in infrastructure development in Pakistan, and this has led to Pakistan in a debt trap. The Chinese have given some relief at present, but the reality remains that China uses Pakistan as an instrument to target India, and Pakistan operates through terrorism behind an umbrella of nuclear protection. India’s relation with China were good until Xi Jinping who has come across as mildly hostile with grave border situations in Ladhak and Arunachal Pradesh region. China is another issue which has led to growing military cooperation between

India and US, with the latter needing the former. India has responded by providing Brahmos medium range missile to Vietnam and Philippeans both having disputes with China. He concluded by saying Pakistan is a nuisance than a threat but China is different and must be handled differently. The US and India must be natural partners.

2. As India-US warm their multidimensional cooperation, Russia has played Pakistan cover, there is possibility of RCP access evolving. Even before Russia-Ukraine war, Russia was boosting Pakistan and has its interests like North South Corridor and Pipeline project. Do you envisage trilateral of Pakistan, China, and Russia becoming anti-Indian bloc?

Ans- No, there will be no such formal setup, they will however work together on many aspects. For instance Russia was furious when Pakistan provided weapons to Ukraine, Russia knows that we bear them no enmity or ill will. In the past, when India was in trouble, for instance during Bangladesh conflict when US, Pakistan, and China were against India, Russia stood by. There is no such possibility of Russia joining an anti-Indian bloc.

3. Why cannot India felicitate balkanization of Pakistan?

Ans- Right now we are not into changing geography, it will not be useful, and moreover India's neighbors will not favor India taking military action. Pakistan may fall apart by its own. He concluded by citing the change in US policy against Pakistan and cited the British saying 'There are no permanent friends or enemies, there are just permanent interests.

4. Is there chance of Russia becoming a client state of China, and is it viable to call it a reliable security partner or ally?

Ans: Russia's natural resources are vast, it may face setback but claims that it will fall apart and people will go hungry are too far fetched claims. India keeps away from interfering into issues of other countries, historically. We have our own people, who are our priority, and not interfering into matters of other countries.

5. Does India envisage taking back Gilgit Baltistan and POK?

Ans- Formally, we are committed to respecting territories. We have our own share of problems, and taking more territory will not be a good move, he cited former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in this regard. India must not invite problems by adding more territory, India is already the fastest growing economy, and Indians want economic growth so that must the point of focus. He also highlighted difficulties of terrain and geography.

6. Can Pakistan resort to nuclear tactics?

Ans- No such possibility is seen, though Pakistan will resort to little petty games like terrorism, which India can manage.

The seminar came to an end with Dr. A Adityanjee, thanking Amb. Parthasarathy for taking out his time and highlighting key issues on the topic.

