

विदेश में भारत: हमारी विविधता और हमारे पड़ोसी
India Abroad: Our Diversity and Our Neighbours

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Our Diversity and Our Neighbours

I express my sincere thanks to Seva Mandir, Vidya Bhawan and Mohan Singh Mehta Memorial Trust for inviting me to present the Mohan Singh Mehta Memorial Lecture 2018. On this occasion I am feeling personally honoured and somewhat overwhelmed. I welcome this opportunity to deliver the lecture before you in my own mother tongue, although I am not much habitual of speaking in mother tongue on foreign policy. Therefore, I apologize in advance for the possible mistakes and errors during this lecture. One of the pictures mounted outside the Indian High Commission in Islamabad is of Mr. Mohan Singh ji Mehta. He graced the post of Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan from 1951 to 1954. Prior to that, he was the Indian Ambassador to Netherlands. After Pakistan, for almost three years, he worked as the Indian Ambassador to Switzerland. Diplomacy, administration, social service and education all these define vivid aspects of his life and work, but in all those what empowered his efforts was his deep sense of public service and that has been his heritage to us and perhaps that is the main reason why we all gather over here every year on 20th April to commemorate the life and work of Mr. Mohan Singh ji Mehta and inspire ourselves.

I recall what Mr. Jagat Singh ji Mehta had written about Mr. Mohan Singh ji Mehta. He wrote it in English but I would like to read out a short Hindi translation of it before you which goes like this, “Vyakti ki saadgi aur balidan ka udahran sthapit karne ki ichchha ve Seva Mandir gaye aur wahan ek kamre ke apartment mein 18 varsh bitaye.” (Determined to set an example of simplicity and sacrifice he went to Seva Mandir and there he spent 18 years in a single room apartment).

I am sure those who lectured over here in the past have definitely elaborated on those different aspects. As aware citizens we all have one common concern that the gap between the government policies and their implementation is increasing, not reducing. Is it possible to reduce this gap through the citizens’, social and non-government organizations? This question obviously comes to my mind but my today’s topic is somewhat different from such questions and issues.

I wish to connect my discussion to that phase of life of Dr. Mohan Singh ji Mehta which he had spent in Pakistan and along with that I wish to put before you some thoughts of mine on the foreign policy and the policy towards the neighbours. The letters and comments Mr.

Mohan Singh ji Mehta wrote from Pakistan gave me opportunity to know or identify myself. Many of his letters are safe in the archives of the Ministry of External Affairs in which he has described about his talks with Pakistan government and Indian External Affairs Ministry on many issues including Indo-Pak relations.

It is not really surprising that even today also to a great extent we are struggling with those very questions and issues regarding Indo-Pak relations which were pervading at that time : distribution of river water, the Kashmir issue, violation of ceasefire on the line of control, barred connections and contacts between the citizens of the two countries, ill and false reporting about each other in media in both countries were in the center of disputes at that time. These neither are new issues nor are they resolved or concluded so far. The only different situation has been that the leaders and civil servants of both sides have been personally knowing each other very well. It is unfortunate that in spite of such closeness and friendship the bilateral relations continued to remain very weak and fragile. Of course the direction or face of some of the issues has changed such as the East Pakistan is now Bangladesh, some new very serious issues have emerged such as the question of terrorism and also that both the countries are now nuclear powers. China has established itself as a major power in this region, due to technological development both countries know more or better informed about each other and such information rapidly spreads up on both sides but together with this the fact is that the favouritism or partiality and prejudice have not yet reduced.

There used to be close relations between the diplomats and political leaders of both countries. I would like to share an incidence with you which will clearly show that closeness. Mr. Jagat Singh ji Mehta has mentioned this in his book and with your permission I would read it out to you in English :

“When I was posted in Berne, Begum Liyaqat Ali Khan, the widow of the first Prime Minister of Pakistan (who later, in her own right, served as an Ambassador for Pakistan), telephoned and expressed a wish that she, along with her two sons, Akbar and Akhtar, and Kay Miles, her companion secretary, visit and stay with us. I was only a First Secretary and had a modest flat with three bedrooms, and one-and-half bathrooms just sufficient for ourselves, our own two small children and a German nurse. Rama’s (my wife) father had known Nawabzaada Liyaquat Ali Sahib in UP before independence, and I had got to know Begum Saahib’s sister, Mira Sawhney in Delhi. In 1952, there was no Pakistan mission in

Switzerland and the British Embassy was looking after Pakistan interests. Sir Patrick Scrivener, the British Ambassador, had offered Begum Sahiba the hospitality and luxury of his residence, but was surprised – indeed even thought it could cast a slur on his assigned representational responsibility of looking after Pakistan interests when Begam Saahiba insisted on staying in the flat, with no spare rooms, of a lowly officer of the Indian mission. Begam Liyaquat at once started helping in the cooking and even bathing our children.”

So in nutshell, when Jagat Mehta sahab, as stated, was posted as a junior diplomat in Switzerland, the wife of the first Prime Minister of Pakistan Beghum Liyaquat Ali Khan expressed her wish to stay along with her small kids nowhere else but at the small residence of Jagat Mehta sahab when she toured Switzerland. More such examples are also available. Similarly, many marriage relations have taken place in Nepal and between the royal family of Nepal and the Indian states. Undoubtedly such kind of personal relations are not there with Pakistan alone and the relations which were through marriages were also the means of communication and influence, which is definitely missing today.

What I meant to say was that one of the central questions of our public life is that of our relations with neighbours. During past few months this question has arose about Maldives and Nepal, few years before similar question was focused on Sri Lanka. With Pakistan our relations are at different level. I will not go into minute details of these issues in today’s discussion but I would like to put before you my thoughts on some basic or fundamental principles of our policy towards neighbours.

My question is that whether our values and principles of constitution and it’s ideology can work as a guide to our foreign policy? In my opinion in last 30-35 years we do not get any direct answer to this question. It’s answer depends upon so many factors such as provincial, regional and international balance of power and together with that upon the ideologies of other powers of the world. In fact, Mr. Mohan Singh ji Mehta’s tenure in Pakistan also throws light upon such issues. Partition of India has been an extremely important event in the history of the South Asia. But it is also a reality that partition of India was an administrative measure and even today general public is not properly aware of it’s all or different aspects. Often we make the mistake of treating the partition of 1947 merely as a division. In fact, it was a combination of 4 or 5 procedures/partitions. For example – first partition was that of Punjab, second partition was that of Bengal, third partition was that of Kashmir through illegal occupation and the fourth partition was that of Muslim community of India. Along

with it one more partition took place in 1947 and that was the partition Pathans between Pakistan and Afghanistan through the Durand Line. All these different partitions created some strange peculiarities to Indo-Pak relations which exist even today. Mostly now the partition of Punjab has been permanently accepted by the people of both sides. The original form of the partition of Bengal was changed in 1971 but it is useful to remember that the complications of the Redcliff Line in the past have been finally resolved in the form of India-Bangladesh Land Agreement in 2015. You are very well aware of how the issues of Jammu and Kashmir and the Durand Line affect the Indo-Pak and Pak-Afghan relations.

One more important fact is our diversity but this diversity looks to be something extraordinary, especially when we look at those circumstances under which the South Asia had got rid of slavery. At that time the international templates were in favour of ethnic or homogeneous states in racial sense. What I mean to say is that the international atmosphere was in favour of establishing an ethnic or homogeneous state. Europe had the similar kind of experience. In 1945 the prevailing opinion was that that the racial diversity among the nations was the main reason behind the two world wars in the 20th century.

According to this opinion it was believed that the non-German speaking population outside Germany which was an important reason behind the Second World War. After the defeat of Germany the allied nations felt the need of bringing about change in the policies. Accordingly new policies were framed or adopted in which complete overlapping between the two factors was done – the national borders and the racial or language related aspect. As a result of this process the German speaking citizens and population of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland were driven away towards the west. Yugoslavia, Romania, Italy also witnessed the similar kind of process, possibly 12 to 15 million people of other minorities were uprooted from their traditional homes. According to a historian:

“Although in 1919, there was a general desire to see in the successors state of central and eastern Europe, an overall reduction in the number of minorities compared to the multinational states they replaced, ethnic homogeneity took second or even third place behind strategic and economic concerns. By 1945 however, ethnic homogeneity was the geostrategic concern. Ethnic homogeneity had become the sine-qua-non of political stability and nation state viability in eastern Europe owing to the failure of the post 1919 settlement and the part, the so called minorities problem had placed in its undoing.”

In brief, after the First World War less importance was given to achieving racial homogeneity in comparison to fulfilling the political, strategic and economic targets. This thinking changed in 1945 after the Second World War was over. Now the racial homogeneity itself was a geo-political concern and it had become a geo-strategic aim. The then strategists believed that in the entire Europe it was not possible to bring stability without racial homogeneity. That was the main reason why about 12-14 million people, mostly consisting of Germans, were driven away from the Eastern Europe and forcibly rehabilitated in a limited Germany in the west. For Europe it was a kind of population related earthquake. This whole turmoil can be compared with Eastern and Western Punjab of 1947 where within few months almost 15 million people were expelled from both sides, many kind of atrocities took place and about 12-15 lakhs of people lost their lives. In Europe such incidences took place in the form of wars, massacre and destruction. India had somewhat similar scenario – famine, revolts by public and military and the end of the British rule. But it is important to note that the Indian and Pakistan governments did not see the experience of ethnic cleansing of Punjab as a way out for the future. A conscious effort was made in 1950 in the form of Nehru-Liyaqat pact to avoid repeating Punjab's experience in Bengal. It should not happen like that again. However, it is a different issue that the minorities in Pakistan and then to some extent in Bangladesh had to continuously face the pressure, but in India in 1950 the racial or religious homogeneity was not seen as a solution to the communal situation.

Some other thoughts also come to mind in connection to the colonial independence and partition. Undoubtedly the British rule in India came to end in 1947, but along with that began the process of the end of the British rule in the West Asia, South East Asia and over the Indian Ocean region. The influence which India had over the Indian Ocean region through the British navy was not available to us now. One more thought comes to mind that simultaneously with the partition of India one more process took place and that was the unification of China. Exactly when partition of India was taking place the unification of China was also taking place. These are the issues which should be kept in mind during any kind of discussion about India and it's neighbours.

When we talk about India and it's neighbours this question also arises whether there is any such unity in the South Asia which is more powerful and aggressive than the political partition and the partition of map? This kind of unity is clearly seen in different values. I remember one of the acquaintances in Lahore whose wife spent 6-8 months in Chennai with her son. It was in 2004. Son was fond of tennis and to begin his journey as a professional

tennis player he used to go to play in a renowned tennis academy in Chennai. They stayed in a rented house. Son was busy with his tennis practice but his mother was not acquainted with anyone in Chennai. She had no friend, she could communicate little in English and mostly she used to speak in Punjabi. When I asked her she admitted that it was very difficult in the beginning but after 2-3 weeks she started realizing that there was not much difference between Lahore and Chennai. Often we hear about friendship between people living in different countries in the subcontinent, especially when these people live in the third countries. Do such examples prove that there is a kind of unity in the South Asia which is greater than the political or map related factors or these are examples of cultural and social contact only which may be valuable in themselves but can't be given much importance at political level?

I feel we should be careful in valuation of these factors. Ultimately when we talk about unity of South Asia do we think about the whole area which was governed from India as a part of the British Empire? During some phases of history the Bay of Arabian Sea and some parts of Malay Peninsula and Burma and Sri Lanka were also under the British India. Or we only refer to the British India and the subordinate states, which were partitioned into two countries in 1947 which further emerged as three countries in 1971. In brief I would say that cultural and social links are important in themselves but it is not easy to find their link with political and diplomatic aspects.

Today I am focusing on a different aspect and that aspect is diversity in India on the basis of castes, languages and religions as well as it's impact on our policy towards neighbours. As you are aware, the footprints of this diversity are evident in our every neighbouring South Asian country like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and even Myanmar. Religions, castes and languages cut across the maps and in fact the history of South Asia is the history of immigration as well as linguistic and cultural expansion and victory.

Regarding relations between India and neighbouring countries, it should be noted that in the past many issues pertaining to Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh have been associated with castes, languages and expansion of religion and so is the situation now also. Apart from English there are at least five more languages in the eighth schedule of our constitution which have an international form and apart from India those are spoken in at least one of our neighbouring countries. I think that is the reason (language, religion, and caste) why our policy towards neighbours is so complicated, so important and so challenging

for India. Many times such a situation occurs that there remains hardly any difference between our domestic policy and our foreign policy towards neighbours.

After 1947 this complication has rapidly grown up. As India kept on growing as a democracy and our constitution inspired us for intense social and political changes, our policy towards these countries also got influenced by our constitution. We have been naturally attracted to connect this framework with foreign policy. There are many examples of this, but three of them are very important – policy to improve conditions in Sri Lanka in 1980s, our policy towards Nepal in 2016 and 2017 and to some extent the issue of Maldives which is still going on. We clearly see influence of our constitutional values in our policy towards Maldives. Now only historians can assess how much effective and influential this policy has been. But we have a big question before us today whether such policy is possible in future also and is it permanent?

The whole South Asia is now wide open before the world than ever before. Although this process has been going on for quite some time but growing influence of China has now made it very clear. We can't fully separate ourselves as well as our relations with neighbour from this vast change. China's influence will definitely remain in our region. For very long it has been a focal policy principle for us to keep outside powers away from South Asia. But the political situation that has emerged now is totally different, and the power which is projected before us has not emerged from outside but from within our own region.

The influence of China in north in Nepal and Bhutan, in west in Pakistan, in east in Bangladesh and in south in Sri Lanka to whole Indian Ocean is evident before us and will remain so in future. This is a new situation for us. Old solutions will not work in such situation. In my opinion we need to see and assess our neighbouring countries from new viewpoint. The first step to do so will be to re-study our history and identify that the projection of power in South Asia is a part of the bigger structure of global power projection and politics.

Through this kind of analysis we will be able to understand that it is not sufficient now to see and assess the neighbours from the viewpoint of religion, language and ethnicity. There are many examples of projection of power by global powers in South Asia. I have already mentioned about partition of India and unification of China. Indo-China war in 1962 took place amidst the Cuban missile issue and when at the same time the America-Russia relations were at a critical stage. So were the America-Russia relations in 1971 when the event of birth

of Bangladesh took place. In 1979 the Soviet interference in Afghanistan created huge crisis in South Asia results of which are still apparent to us. The retreat of Soviet military from Afghanistan in 1989 also posed many new challenges before us and that directly affected the Kashmir Valley. Sense of being a victor arose in Pakistani military and they started thinking that if a superpower could be defeated through Jihad then this formula could be successfully applied in Kashmir against India also.

These are all examples of how outside superpowers enter our subcontinent. Lastly, I would like to say that we are standing at such a juncture of the history where we need to re-adapt our thinking. In the time to come we can't see our neighbours only from our viewpoint or perspective and this is so because the political situation of them is now completely changing. Our diversity, our constitutional values and our thinking about India were able to serve and guide us as a template in the past but now the realities of power around us have changed and we have to take cognizance of these changing situations and incorporate them in our foreign policy.

I could not imagine any better place than Seva Mandir to express these thoughts because I feel that the souls of Mr. Mohan Singh ji Mehta and Mr. Jagat Singh ji Mehta are present over here as guides and encouraging us to think in a new way. I wished if time permitted I would say few words in English also, repeat my lecture in short before you and conclude as brief comment on our relation with Pakistan.

I will make a very brief summary of my main thesis that I sought to explain earlier. My starting point, when we talk about diversity is that there are only 4 or 5 states and union territories in India, which do not have an international border or an international coast line. So our diversity is really represented by the fact that most of India has a very strong international aspect or international outlook. We cannot therefore think of foreign policy being made from New Delhi alone. The perspective which Rajasthan has towards Sindh or towards Pakistan will always be far more advanced than a policy made from Delhi alone. Similarly, the perspective which East Punjab has towards West Punjab or Pakistan will always be more nuanced than a policy made from Delhi and the same can be said about the policy and the perspective that people in Tamil Nadu have towards Sri Lanka or those in Calcutta or West Bengal have towards Bangladesh.

These more nuanced views, therefore, have always been a factor which we have to consider when we talk about our foreign policy towards our neighbours. To my mind, our diversity

and the constitutional safeguards and the constitutional features, which we have adopted, have been a factor of great attraction when we talk about having an appropriate foreign policy vis-a-vis our neighbours. In a sense the idea of India and those features of our constitution promoting pluralism and diversity provided us with a template or a model for our neighbourhood. Whatever may have been the merit of such a policy in the past, in my view, the world around us is changing too rapidly for us to stick to this policy for the future. The rise of China has transformed a very large part of the world, but a very significant impact of this is felt in Asia and the Asia-Pacific in particular. In every foreign office in the Asia Pacific, the questions being discussed that how do we deal with China. In India similarly, we have to constantly discuss, in the context of our neighbourhood, as to how do we deal with the rise of China and how will this impact relations with each of our South Asian neighbours? We cannot continue as if nothing has changed. In brief, the older perspective of seeing developments internal to our neighbours through our own constitutional framework may not now suffice and the mindset that sustained older policies now needs to be altered.

With regard to Pakistan in particular, where Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta spent four very distinguished years as Indian high-commissioner, our policy of course has evolved a great deal since 1947. In my view, our policy has very strong elements of continuity regardless of the ideological colour of the government in power at any point of time. When we look at the situation today and with all its difficulties and all its challenges, the fact is that it cannot be seen in isolation from the situation in Pakistan itself. In very brief, there is a perception in India that it is the army which is the main cause of all our problems with regard to dealing with Pakistan. I think we have to nuance this view, although in large part it may be correct, but there are also certain aspects which have to be kept in mind. Some of the important steps forward we have taken in the past with regard to Pakistan have been at those times when it has been run by a military dictator. We signed the Indus water treaty, when General Ayub Khan was the president of Pakistan. We had 6 or 7 years of stability when another dictator, General Zia-Ul-Haq was the president and this was amidst very troubled times with what was happening in Afghanistan, what was happening with assistance to terrorists in Punjab etc. We have to remember that Zia-Ul-Haq made 5 visits to India during the course of his tenure as President, without ever receiving an Indian Prime Minister in Pakistan in return. Finally we made progress of a kind when General Musharraf was the President and also the military dictator of Pakistan. So, while the Pakistan army has a certain view and a certain

perspective on relations with India which is well-known, the contradiction is that we have often made progress at precisely those times when the army is in charge.

So, what is the lesson from this? Does it mean that we can only make progress when the military is in charge? No, I don't think so. I think the real issue is not who is in charge in Pakistan, but what is the state of the civil-military relationship in Pakistan itself. And frankly, when we look at the events of the past 2 and 3 years, what to a great extent explains them is the state of that civil-military equation.

I would like to thank you all for having invited me to talk to you about our neighbourhood. As I said in the beginning, I felt somewhat overwhelmed and inadequate for this task. Both Mohan Singh Mehta and Jagat Singh Mehta were towering figures of our foreign policy thinking. Mohan Singh Mehta was there in the early years and Jagat Singh Mehta in 1970s, when foreign policy in India was being crystallised. I had the opportunity of knowing Jagat Singh Mehta ji very well and he acted as a very wise counsel and as a great source of support to me throughout my career. I am very grateful to Vidya Bhawan, to the Mohan Singh Mehta Memorial trust, to Seva Mandir and to Shri Ajay Singh Mehta for having invited me here and giving me this chance to talk to you today. Thank you.

Question and Answer Session

Question – Mr. Raghavan, with your great experience with Pakistan, I want to ask you our present policy of government towards Pakistan, how much you favour with this or you have got any suggestions by which we can do better with Pakistan? As you have seen from the last 60 years, the situation remains the same, particularly with reference to Kashmir, so, what are your specific suggestions which you want to give? How can we do better with Pakistan?

Answer: As I said, there is much greater policy continuity on Pakistan in India than is often conceded. If you look at the last 20-25 years, regardless of which political party has been in power, the policy towards Pakistan has been more or less the same. It may look different, it may sound different, but in substance there is not that much difference. Now, if you see the present government and the very great efforts made by the Prime Minister in 2014 and 2015 beginning with the invitation to PM Nawaz Sharif for the swearing in, then at the end of 2015, going to Lahore on a personal visit. It was something quite unprecedented. But making policies is one thing, implementing them is another. Because what is happening inside Pakistan will also have a major bearing on how our policy will turn out. The government may thus receive a great deal of advice on what they can do or should not do and we all constantly advice the government as to what is the right policy on Pakistan. But Pakistan is a country of 200 million people. In the end what they decide is really up to them. So, our policy is only one half of the equation and Pakistan's response is the other half. How India-Pakistan relations will fare, will thus depend on both halves and not just on our policy.

Question: In your view we should not prescribe solutions for our neighbours based on our experience.

Answer – My argument today was that India's diversity is something unique but we cannot make it a model for how we want to see the rest of South Asia. This was a policy which we may have attempted in the 60s, 70s and 80s that our constitution provides a model for how our South Asian neighbourhood can also manage their own internal affairs. But I believe that phase of our foreign policy is now over. And it is over primarily because the complexities and the power realities of South Asia have changed with the rise of China.

The Indian experiment is unique and it is unique because when first constructed it was also quite different from what was happening in the rest of the world at that time. But as I said, that situation is now over. And while our constitution and our idea of India was something very attractive for our diplomats and foreign policy makers when they dealt with South Asia, to my mind, that phase of our history is now a past. This was my argument.

Question – Just a follow up question, based on the anecdotes you have mentioned, you read out about Jagat Singh Mehta’s hosting of Begam Liyaqat Khan and you said in the first 2-3 decades, the relations that existed between bureaucrats, diplomats, politicians across the two countries are no longer there. Do you think there are also things that we can recover or is it a different world where those kind of deep cultural personal connections cannot be relied upon now?

Answer – No, the kind of close relations which existed in the past are not possible now, because these were people who had studied together, who had joined service together, families who knew each other over generations. But that was a long time ago and by the end of the 1970s, that phase was over with Pakistan. With Nepal and with others, this may persist for some time and in fact are continuing even now, but with Pakistan that phase is over. I do not think there is any chance of our going back to where we were. I agree that such personal relations were important, but one also has to see their limitations. Despite such close relations, it is not as if in foreign policy or in diplomatic terms, personal relations made such a big difference.

Question – Sir, I would like to ask about the relationship between myths and the history that we see with respect to Pakistan? Sometimes, we observe that myths and the history, they are aligned, but they are not, and when they are not, which one is relevant? Which one is true and which one is more effective?

Answer – The question about history and mythology or history and myth– in my view, history to a great extent is at the heart of India-Pakistan relations. You cannot fully understand India-Pakistan relations without seeing as to how both sides have a totally different historical understanding of each other. On many aspects, the Pakistani view of history is totally opposed to the Indian view of history. Take a any other question also, be it related to Kashmir, Hyderabad, Junagarh, the partition, 19971, all the important events of Indo—Pak relations in which we would find that the thinking of Pakistan to has been opposite to that of our’s. Their historical understanding of most of the events is opposite to our understanding of those events. And the interesting thing is that both views are internally consistent. You can’t find say that the opinion of one of them is right and that of the other one is not right. They are both internally consistent. So, this is what makes for the difficulties in India-Pakistan relations.

These kinds of situations are not just in India and Pakistan alone. If you look at Israel and Palestine, they have different views of history in much the same way as India and Pakistan do. So, the only way forward in time to reconcile different views of history is to expect that there can never be a common view. Let us look what happened in Junagarh in 1947 or what happened in Hyderabad in 1948 or what led to the partition of India in 1947. We have to accept the fact that their view of history is going to be different from our view of history. You cannot reconcile the two easily.

Question – Sir you have a very clear understanding about Pakistan. That is quite evident from this lecture and your articles published from a time to time. Pakistan goes through so much turmoil which has already resulted in its partition in 1971. Do you foresee any further partition of it or it will be able to remain as a country?

Second thing, who is the bigger threat to us from among China and Pakistan? And the third thing, can we see unification of India and Pakistan in future like the unification of Germany took place? And my last question is how far our foreign policy formulation is influenced by the public sentiment/feelings?

Answer:– You asked 3-4 questions about Pakistan. One of them was if the unification is possible. I recall an example. One JNU professor once came to Lahore for a lecture. After the lecture he was asked what did he feel about 1947. He replied, “I feel a great sense of loss.” He said, “I have lost a lot due to the partition in 1947.” On this the person who asked that question said, “But this is where the difference began because I feel a great sense of liberation. You feel that you lost something but I feel I found something.” I don’t think we can talk about unification because when we talk about it the people of Pakistan look at it with completely different viewpoint. Therefore, the example of unification of West Germany and East Germany can’t be applied over here. It doesn’t apply over here.

The second question was about dismemberment. Can Pakistan break up again? My answer is ‘No’. Now Pakistan is a nuclear power with a population of 20 crore people. And the people of Pakistan are also very strongly nationalistic, just like the people in India. So, regardless of the news we may hear about Balochistan or about Sindh, the fact is that the forces of nationalism in Pakistan are stronger than the opposing forces. And while there are many

genuine grievances which the Baloch have against the rest of Pakistan, I do not think they are strong enough in political terms to bring about a division of the country.

You can't keep China and Pakistan at the same level. China is our biggest business partner. China is raising similar questions about India and about the whole world as well because a new power is emerging. But it doesn't mean that China is our enemy. Of course, the emergence of this new power greatly influence us, but you can't see it essentially as an enemy. Pakistan is at another level. Because of promoting terrorism and it's thinking towards India it is beyond comparison with the Indo-China relations. It cannot be compared with the Indo-China relations in the same way.

Question – Sir, in the past, China and Russia had a border dispute which they resolved and in the past their relationship was not that friendly. But, despite that, that they resolved their border dispute. We also have a border dispute with China and sir, will we be able to resolve it despite of our economic rivalry with China?

Answer–The question was about the border dispute with China. The issue is very complicated because there are different layers and different views. For many in India and China, this dispute is a carryover from history and it cannot be reconciled so easily and therefore we should try to improve the rest of our relationship and when relations improve then we will also be able to address this question. I think there is some merit in this view. We will not be able to reconcile the differing positions on the border very quickly. So it is better to concentrate on improving the rest of the relationship first and not let the border issue hold up to the rest of the relationship.

Question– Namaste Sir. My question is regarding violation of ceasefire. Whenever there is violation of ceasefire between India and Pakistan, the Indian media says that it was violated by Pakistan and the Pakistani media says that it was violated by India. We know that India didn't do so and India directly addresses the issue with proper reply to the allegation. Actually the whole misunderstanding is created by the Pakistani media among the Pakistani public. In a panel discussion I heard about a system which could alarm before the actual violation of ceasefire. It could also report which country violated it. Sir, what was that system? If it could be known that Pakistan violated the ceasefire then the public in Pakistan would become aware of it and they will develop a thinking that India is not their enemy. Sir, is it possible to develop any such system to find out the erring country and is it was possible now?

Answer– It is very difficult to say why the ceasefire is violated or who violates it first. As far as I know there was never any such system or model which could inform why the ceasefire was violated or who violated it first. But one thing is sure that between 2004 and 2008 the incidences of violation of ceasefire were reduced to a great extent. This can be definitely analyzed why it was so and why that situation changed. One thing is clear that whenever the relations are not harmonious the ceasefire violation incidences increase to a great extent.

To my mind, it will never be possible to clearly identify, why a particular ceasefire violation takes place. And we will also not be able to devise a system which could do so, because you see the line of control follows its own logic. Pakistan will say that there is a UN observer group, let them decide who is behind the ceasefire violations. We do not except a role for the UN in this. So, you will never be able to find any concrete reason as to why the violation of ceasefire is taking place. One thing is sure that the violation of ceasefire increases when relations are not good and when relations improve the violation of ceasefire automatically decreases.

What happens on the LOC and in the Kashmir valley can't be witnessed in complete isolation from the violation of ceasefire. These are required to be seen together in relation with each other. If civic unrest continues in the Kashmir valley, if there is a sense of alienation among many people over there, you can be sure that the Pakistani military will try to take advantage of it and that will always be a factor leading to infringements on the agreement on a ceasefire. Or ceasefire violations will always follow from that consequence.

Question – Good evening, Honorable Ambassador Sir. Sir, my question pertains to the complex relationship between the democratically elected civilian government and the military in Pakistan. Sir, is there a way out? And also sir, regarding the Indus water treaty, if India can utilize the legally sanctioned amount of water of the western rivers? Is there a way that the pressure lobbies in Pakistan exert certain amount of pressure on the civilian government and also on the military? So, is there a way to correct this complex relationship?

Answer– The question on the Indus water treaty, that can we use the western rivers or our rights within the treaty to exploit the waters of the Western rivers of the Indus system to a greater extent? And why do not we do so? It is very difficult, because if you go to Jammu and Kashmir and you see the nature of the rivers, you will find that to put up hydroelectric projects is very difficult, because it is a terrain that does not give itself to construction of hydroelectric projects easily, land acquisition is very difficult and in engineering terms these

are difficult projects to do. So, you cannot say that we can multiply hydroelectric projects on the Western rivers; it may not be that easy.

Many people in Pakistan believe that the Indians are building hundreds of projects. This is a Pakistani fear. It is not based on reality. What we are actually doing is something quite modest, which is provided for within the treaty and is something that we have to be careful about. If you have a dispute with your neighbour, even when you are living in a city or in a village and if you cut off his water, you can be sure that your relations will never improve. You cannot force someone to do something by cutting off his or her water; it does not happen like that in real life. And you are dealing with a country, which has nuclear weapons, which has 200 million people, so it is not easy. The fact is that the Indus water treaty has on the whole worked quite well. And while media attention and the Pakistani criticism of it and allegations that India is not observing its conditions or its provisions, these are all there, but on the ground it has worked well. And both sides have a good understanding of it. So, I do not see any possibilities of a major change in how we approach the Indus water issue.

Question – Good evening Sir. Lastly you spoke about the civil-military relations. I wish to come to that issue and to present some relevant background pertaining to the recent circumstances of Pakistan. Fundamentalist parties like Muslim League of Hafiz Saeed show a trend that religious parties are getting place in political mainstream and the democratic liberal forces are being terribly suppressed. I have many journalist friends in Pakistan who inform that they are being kidnapped from their residences. This situation seems to be very difficult one. The military is destroying the civil institutions and at the same time the fundamentalist and extremist forces with attitude of the hatred of towards India are entering the political mainstream. What will happen in such situation? What will be the fate of this kind of civil-military relation?

Answer– The question of civil-military relations and the role of the military in domestic politics in Pakistan, I think it is very important to understand that the military is not a foreign institution in Pakistan. The military is something which the Pakistani people admire, regard as the ultimate protector and defer to. The military is held in very high public esteem and many things which it does, it does with public support. Now coming to the present situation, why has it arisen? In the last one year, one and a half years, why has there been such a crisis in the civil-military relations in Pakistan with Nawaz Sharif being dismissed by the military acting in the way, as you said, etc. The fact is that since 2015, the public esteem of the

military in Pakistan has risen tremendously. People have come out very strongly in support of the Pakistan military and the army in particular, because they saw it as taking firm action against terrorists. They felt that the political class and the civilian administration had failed in tackling domestic terrorists, while the military succeeded and that is why the stock of the military went up and the stock of the civilian parties came down. I do not think, what we are seeing now is the end of the process. I think a great deal more is going to happen. What is being witnessed right now is a real civil-military tussle. It is not as if the political parties are, especially Nawaz Sharif's party, just sitting back and not doing anything about that. It is fighting back. And this is something new for Pakistan.

In the old days, 10-15-20 years ago a coup would have taken place by now, when you see the kind of political activity, the kind of slogans, and the kind of resistance which is being put up by many politicians to the military. The fact that it has not happened shows that Pakistan has changed a great deal. And people are much more aware of the drawbacks of the direct military rule. The military itself is not willing to get involved too much in political or civilian affairs. This also shows a greater degree of politicization in Pakistani society and, for the long term, it is a good thing. The negative factors which you mentioned about mainstreaming of terrorist parties, those are there, but there are also some positive factors including a greater degree of politicization and more participation in the elections.

Question – My question Raghavan ji is about diversity, the idea of diversity itself. Do you think that the idea of diversity is a static concept? So, as a nation, we can narrow the idea of diversity and we can broaden it so that will change your relation with your neighbor? Like, the idea of Nepal has become more secular, it has become more egalitarian and there is a shift of Nepal from India to China? We have narrowed our idea of diversity. So, my question is do you think that diversity is determined by geography and material conditions and this shift is temporary? Or do you think the idea of diversity itself will change and that will affect the relationship with our neighbors and the societies in the neighborhood?

Answer – Do we view diversity as static? One has to think about it. If we view diversity in dynamic terms and make the principles underwriting diversity in India stronger, will it help us engage with our neighbors better? In my view, I think we have to see what is happening in India and our own experiments with diversity and with federalism as an internal exercise in India. And we cannot use it as a template for our neighborhood. That in brief is what I feel. I do not think that if we become more genuinely diverse or if we strengthen our approach

towards diversity, if we strengthen our federal features that will necessarily help us in dealing with our neighbors. I think our starting point is to recognize that our neighbours are sovereign and they are going to do what is in their interest. And we can interface with them on up to a point on this, but only up to a point. So, I think the stage when the idea of India informed our views about our ideas of our neighbors, I believe is over and we have to see them as sovereign entities which will develop their own ideas and perhaps not be influenced by what is happening in India in the way that they were in the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. This has a lot to do with the forces of globalization.

Question– Sir, my question is with respect to Nepal, do you think India handled its relationship with Nepal well? How well it handled by interfering in their constitution framing exercise? And that sort of turned the relationship in the corner and sort of pushed Nepal closer to China and especially with the Maoist regime there. So do you think that was not a good policy decision to have entered in their constitution making exercise?

Answer–This brings me to the question about Nepal—did our position on the new constitution in Nepal trigger a chain of events which has pushed Nepal towards China. Possibly, but I also think that you have to see it on a wider canvas and the wider canvas is that the Chinese have risen as an irresistible force for all our neighbors. When we have engaged so much with China in the space of 10-15 years, it has become our largest trading partner, a major source for capital goods, a major source for technology and investment. We cannot expect that our neighborhood will not have the same kind of impulses when it comes to dealing with China. So, while there are these tactical factors about the position we took on the Nepal constitution, but there are more general forces that play here. This is really my point that our neighbors are going to engage with China more and more in future and that is something which we have to take into account quite seriously.

Question – There are not two concerns in my mind. Whenever we are having good understanding with our neighbor, especially regarding cinema and cricket, we come closer. On the other hand there are many contradictions too. What do you feel as a diplomat?

Answer – Indeed I do agree with you on the issue of films and cricket. Often it refers to the Bollywood when we talk about the soft power. And Bollywood is a major factor in our soft power projection, but we also have to recognize its limits. Just because people see Indian films, it does not mean that they accept all your foreign policy approaches. Pakistani people don't agree with your opinion after viewing your movies. They view your movies because

they like them or because culturally we share the same kind of legacy. But it does not have that much of an impact to make us think that because people are watching Indian film, they are pro-Indians. No, I think it's much more complex.

Question– Sir, I wanted to ask you, a civilian perspective is largely formed by a state's narrative of its enemy or its neighbour. In that context, in recent years, whatever security issues we had between India and Pakistan, that really dominated our frame of mind towards our neighbour. So, given that, we are a civil society organization and we are talking about diversity and how we could enrich and benefit each other, as someone who has been to the other side of the threshold, what roles of non-state actors, specifically non-militant actors do you see in the future between India-Pakistan relations?

Answer –The question on how can states play a greater role in foreign policy and how do they nuance foreign policy and there is a related question of what is the role civil society organizations? I think, you know that, according to our constitutional structure the roles that states can have in foreign policy is limited. This is something which is very clearly in the union list. Nevertheless on economic side, many state governments are very proactive in dealing with foreign investors, in dealing with foreign corporations. So on the economic aspect, the states will have their own dynamic. In political terms, I do not see a major change. But, I agree with you that states can play a greater role in nuancing policy and that nuancing can only come about by having more active participation of civil society in the formulation of foreign policy.

If you look at our policy on Pakistan for instance, and I lecture a lot all over India and I'm always struck by the different views you get in Punjab and in J&K on Pakistan as compared to the views you get for instance in Karnataka or in Maharashtra. So, the states like Rajasthan, because Rajasthan is a immediate neighbour of Pakistan, the views in these states are, will be more nuanced, more developed and have a different perspective than what you will get from somebody who is a thousand kilometres further to the south. More active engagement will come about through greater participation by civil society organizations and there I feel that we are only at the beginning of a process.