

## Ensuring National Security through Reconciliation and Sustainable Development a Regional Perspective

*Lt Gen Nasseer Junjua – President, NDU Islamabad, Pakistan*

I would like to thank Vice Chancellor on two counts, firstly, for providing me an opportunity to come to Sri Lanka, a friendly country which we in Pakistan hold in very high regard and secondly, for enabling me to participate in this esteemed annual symposium and address this august gathering on a very important topic of Reconciliation and Sustainable Development as an instrument for ensuring National Security.



*Lt Gen Nasseer Junjua – President, NDU Islamabad, Pakistan*

I am very pleased that today in the national history of Sri Lanka you have arrived at a stage that the topics of national debate have shifted from conflict, violence, internal fighting, division and hatred to the topics of peace, reconciliation and development.

It is indeed a remarkable accomplishment, secured at a great price for which the people of Sri Lanka should stand tall, as all the credit goes to them. I bring good wishes from people of Pakistan and pray that the goals and objectives which you deduce from this symposium are fully realised. I am confident that reconciliation and sustainable development will go a long way in enhancing national security of Sri Lanka.

While I wish you all the success, my heart still remains heavy as, elsewhere in the region countries,

peoples and societies are still engaged in diverse conflicts, underscored by violence and infighting sowing seeds of hatred and division. It looks, for them reconciliation is still some distance away in future.

With this premise, may I say that security through reconciliation is an incidental and natural outcome – the best outcome, so is the development; an enduring companion of the reconciliation, peace and stability.

### Reconciliation

Mr Chairman, let me open my talk by making an outright declaration, gained through personal experience and from being a student of history that ‘Reconciliation lives in the heart of peace and stability’.

Reconciliation is a rare awakening of sanity within those who become wiser to rid themselves of belligerence to attain peace.

Reconciliation is a dawn of realisation for those who realise that there are many more ways to live than to fight and kill only. It is for those that come to understand that life could have a different meaning if only animosity, jealousies and competitions could be taken out of it.

Reconciliation is an attribute of the stronger who know how to give, who can share, who can smile seeing others happy. In other words it is not the sphere of means and menials.

Reconciliation is a service to humanity. It is a growth of sympathy in the heart and respect for others. It is a resolution, an answer and a collective solution. In short it’s a way forward from the loathing quagmire to the height for those who want to seek it. It is indeed a game changer.

Irrational decisions in power politics, clash of wills and use of force to demean others are some of its worst enemies.

In essence, reconciliation to me is a value laden term, it as a concept connotes mutual recognition and acceptance, investment in joint interests and goals for developing peaceful relations, building mutual trust, developing positive attitudes, as well as sensitivity and consideration for the other party’s needs and interests.

We understand that reconciliation is both a process and an end state, reconciliation is about building relationships, a process through which a society moves from a divided past towards a shared future. It is a long term and deep process which extracts heavy price as it demands changes and adjustments in our aspirations, our emotions and feelings and perhaps even in our beliefs. It is a top down as well as a bottom up process which when initiated at both levels simultaneously results in synergy and accrues desired results in a quicker time frame.

Reconciliation is first and last about the people and their relationships both at social and political level. In its essence it is about constructing a lasting and peaceful relationship. In my view the value of reconciliation as a concept, process and outcome, resides in accepting **truth**, in **forgiveness** and

in justice. For instance in South Africa, the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' had Forgiveness and Justice as its core values, Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu wrote on **Forgiveness** in his key volume, *No Future Without Forgiveness*'. Similarly in Rwanda the Gachacha Courts are striving for reconciliation through social justice and forgiveness.

Through reconciliation we aim to transform the perceived unjust relationships into just ones, with a view to creating a unified community, which lives in peace and harmony. Undeniably, once reconciled development automatically becomes a sustainable and enduring process. In short reconciliation after a violent conflict or even during the conflict remains the core objective, which merits attainment through the process of dialogue.

However, when conflicts become ingrained and deeply entrenched in the systems and values, we instead of relying on conflict resolution and reconciliation tend to gravitate towards violence and use of force to create conditions favourable for us, thus creating a paradigm of continued violence extending over long periods of time. Resultantly sometimes zero sum game emerges as the only option. On other occasions it may lead to a stalemate with either side unwilling to stand down.

In such circumstances options like peaceful coexistence starts making headlines, this term in my understanding is valueless, and value to it is added by conflicting parties in accordance with their own narrative and interpretation. Yet co-existence cannot be accepted as an alternative to reconciliation. It is negative in nature and underscores the idea of accommodation, living with the enemy etc, unless it is accompanied by a simultaneous process of dialogue for conflict resolution. On its own, it fails to remove the distrust and lays foundation for positive movement forward. It can be helpful as an intermediate stage between conflict and ultimate reconciliation but certainly not as an end state itself. This term and its diverse implications should be seen as a challenge to the process of reconciliation, which should persist as the ultimate noble objective.

With this thesis at the forefront, let me just very briefly apply it first diametrically at home. A state must act fast to identify the grievances of people and segment of society and address it squarely without hedging about it. An endeavour must be made that no disenchanting sentiment is allowed to grow into 'cause' or 'dispute' or a 'failure'. May I highlight that missing of such opportunities always costs heavily. Reconciliation must be launched at a base broader than individuals endeavouring to win people and their support. Use of force within own state for domestic reasons is only a state, governance or administrative failure. However, force when used / applied must be minimum and must always have a good moral face. No sooner use of force creates a breathing space, reconciliation must take over to usher an era of peace and stability by addressing the root causes and eliminate the disputes.

Reconciliation at regional level however presents bigger challenges, it involves power politics, power projections, natural ambitions, clash of ideologies, clash of wills, undermining competitions, clash of nation hoods, domination, intimidations, coercion, arm twisting with direct / indirect linkages and inferences of the outside world. Unfortunately, in doing so we in the name of nationhood forget a basic question i.e. what is bad for you; how it can be good for others?

It is for this reason that nations start to suffer and as a natural outcome world also suffers. It somehow

doesn't end here; we are so deeply engrossed in our animosities that the sentiment of 'reconciliation' suffers of irrelevance and finds no fertile land to grow. It suffers from dormancy and hibernation in our minds to be talked about only as a fashion from the so called torch bearers of peace.

### **National Security**

Comprehensive national security imposes the need for us to take a fresh look at the approaches we adopt for ensuring security and resolving violent conflicts both at the domestic and regional level. To attain comprehensive security one has to now identify and evaluate the incumbent threats emanating from varied external and internal sources. Among the external threats, besides traditional threat to physical boundaries, injection of subversive ideas and insurgency movements, deprivation of essential goods upon which a nation is heavily dependent through blockade or sanctions appear to be prominent threats, similarly the internal threats may emanate from economic, political, social, ethnic and military sources and can be best addressed through reconciliation of the differences at appropriate level and towards this end democratic dispensation, effective governance, independent and effective judiciary are essential tools aiming to garner internal cohesion national unity.

South Asia has been a theatre of major security concerns. Compared to traditional security concerns, the non traditional concerns are far more diverse. These range from seeking a viable political system to improving the quality of life for the South Asians. Human security implies that the people are the real source of wealth and stress extensive use of human capabilities. Linked with the human security is the concept of human development which is defined as a process of enlarging people's choices. Among them most critical choices include the choice to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living, political freedom, guaranteed human rights and personal self respect.

### **Regional Peace**

The tyranny of geography sometimes also manifests in a rather strange way. South Asia is an Indo-centric region underscoring India's pre-eminence. Almost all states of South Asia are geographically neighbours to India. However Indian objectives since independence have been to strengthen itself militarily in order to assert her dominant position and to prevent outsiders from encouraging the regional powers to challenge India's authority and to limit foreign powers' involvement in the region.

Threat perceptions of nations surrounding India are therefore grounded in this geo-strategic environment of the area and their physical location. Threat perceptions are always relational and emanate from the capabilities and threaten behaviour of a real or perceived adversary. If the threats (real or perceived) originate outside the region, it could have, in most cases, unifying impact on the regional states in order to make collective efforts to deal with the outsider. On the other hand if the threat emanates within the region, then it tends to breed disunity among the regional states. India it appears is now pursuing a double edged policy. On the one hand she wants to impose her hegemony, while on the other, she has encouraged intrusion of United States in the regional politics thus exacerbating the regional security environment and undermining efforts for peaceful conflict resolution.

The desired regional peace in South Asia could not be attained primarily because of the adverse

relationship between India and Pakistan. However it has now been further complicated by the ongoing insurgency in Afghanistan against the occupation forces and Indian involvement in Afghanistan and Baluchistan. Yet the main source of conflicting relationship between India and Pakistan remains the unresolved Kashmir dispute.

The issue originated at the time of partition when the departing British did not devote serious consideration to resolve the dispute. Since then Pakistan's case rests on UN resolutions of August 13 1948 and 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1949 which were accepted by both India and Pakistan. These resolutions called for a plebiscite in order to attain the wishes of the People of Kashmir and ascertain the future status of the state. Pakistan believes that India has not fulfilled its commitment to agree to hold plebiscite by advancing one excuse after another.

Compared to Pakistan, the Indian case on Kashmir has been changing with the change in circumstances. Perhaps that is why Pakistan's case on Kashmir is often referred as consistent and principled whereas Indian interpretations frequently changed. Despite having accepted the UN Security Council's resolutions dealing with the fate of Kashmir and the promised plebiscite, India has never facilitated the process of plebiscite.

The passage of time has made the conflict over Kashmir rather complex. Given the developments that have taken place during the last 65 years including the water related issues, it is not easy to find an acceptable solution. In this process it is the people of the occupied Kashmir who have suffered the most and continue to do so. Despite the adversity it now appears that there is greater recognition for the need to foster regional peace. The silver lining on a dark horizon is that the two countries are engaging with greater focus, they have recommenced the strategic dialogue and are pursuing policies for normalisation of the relations. It is hoped that the soft approach will create conducive environment so that people of India, inspired by the high ideals of justice, recognition of the truth and forgiveness can reconcile with people of Kashmir and usher in the region an era of sustainable development for all.

The second problematic area is the ongoing war against terrorists and consequent developments in Afghanistan. Pakistan's dilemma is how to maintain friendly ties with the Afghans and make substantive inputs towards the strengthening of the incumbent regime and simultaneously resist rapidly increasing influence of other countries over regime in Kabul. Although historically, Kabul has never been friendly to Pakistan, yet Pakistan accords high priority to security and stability of Afghanistan due to intrinsic friendly and brotherly relations the people of the two countries enjoy with each other.

Consequently Pakistan considers that outside interference in Afghanistan impacts negatively not only on the security of Afghanistan but also of the region. Therefore our policies in this regard have been consistent. During the period of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Pakistan resisted the occupation, albeit at a great cost to the people of Pakistan. After Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and her subsequent disintegration, it was left to Pakistan to bring about peace and reconciliation in that immensely war torn society. On Pakistan's initiative a number of peace agreements were concluded by the different afghan factions and some even in Holy City yet it appeared that their hearts were not reconciled. Therefore the agreements could not hold long enough to bring in peace and sustainable development.

Today the situation is no different, while we still continue to host around three million Afghan Refugees as our guests. Initiatives for reconciling the major warring Afghan groups through dialogue and peace agreement are not accruing favourable results. Outside interference and competing major power interests are major road blocks. However Pakistan considers that stability and security of Afghanistan is in vital interest of the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan and therefore it will continue to work for finding an amicable solution so that the people of Afghanistan can reap the benefits of peace, reconciliation and development.

Lastly, it is important to mention that Pakistan places high priority to combating extremism and terrorism in all their forms and we have been engaged in a national struggle against these destabilising forces since last decade. The continued instability, infighting and armed resistance against foreign presence in Afghanistan and its spill over into Pakistan creates serious internal security challenges for us, which the people of Pakistan for greater good have up till now and will continue to combat even if it is at great cost to our lives, security, peace and prosperity. We do so with a firm resolve and faith that a force of good will eventually prevail and the people of Afghanistan will be able to reconcile and reintegrate under a just, balanced and progressive political dispensation. They will, in time be able to play the rightful role in the comity of nations and contribute effectively towards regional peace effectively.

Yet another phenomenon which plagues our region is nuclear nepotism introduced through Indo-US strategic collaboration which has spiked up the environment and has re-introduced the phenomenon of strategic inequality undermining possibilities of peaceful co-existence.

Further complicating the security situation of our region is the US – Iran standoff which is fast acquiring conflictual status and has all the seeds to destabilize the region at large. This coupled with situation in Syria is also ripe with wider regional and global implications.

Regional situation is hence volatile, unpredictable and complex with wide ranging security and adverse economic implications for all regional countries. Smaller states though willing to contribute positively and play their role for greater reconciliation within the region leading towards peaceful coexistence and greater prosperity of the people still look towards India the larger and dominant for blazing the way in this context. If India also endeavours to lead in this regard then perhaps a larger and positive shift in regional dynamics is possible. Ironically, India will also be main gainer from such a change.

### **The Way forward – Embarking the Journey of Regional Reconciliation**

Mr Chairman before concluding I want to leave some ideas with the audience which may help our nations to rise above their existing animosities and if I may say our myopic and pessimist outlook and make the move towards larger regional reconciliation and a better national security equation for all. I may also add that this is neither difficult nor complex; rather it only lacks resolve, commitment and a new outlook which has not been forthcoming in the past by all and especially on part of the biggest regional player.

Today, the foremost need is for identification of disputes as these are the reasons to go to war. We

should eliminate the very reasons to go to war. Also within the existing power dynamics of the region there is certainly no space for war; thinking otherwise is surely an insanity which must be corrected.

The next important step could be to reduce aggression and abandon hostility as a military thought; this will surely address the phenomenon of useless power projections which ignite temperaments.

Thereafter it is very important to develop multi sphere interdependence through people to people contact; it will itself act as a bulwark against aggression / disruption of regional peace.

Most important here is to see security in its larger perspective; that is adopting a people centric approach; this could become the vehicle for change for millions of impoverished citizens of this region.

Also important is to exploit concurrence; this is a convenient and available platform for building reconciliation and building bridges across seas of animosity and misperceptions which inundate us today. This will also allow us to rise above the prevalent phenomena of power politics and power projections and respect mutual interests.

Lastly, if all else is not possible and we cannot be friends; lets at least not be enemies. This is the minimum which we all owe future generations.

The way forward should hence look for a solution to all regional realities, allow smaller states to breathe etc.

Mr Chairman I will conclude by saying that like Sri Lanka, other countries in the region have to look deep into the approaches we have pursued until now for ensuring our own national security but this has been at the cost of regional peace and stability. In view of the rapidly evolving international security environment and transforming concept of comprehensive national security there is a need for greater cooperation and dialogue at the regional level.