



## Pakistan-Afghanistan-Turkey Summit

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Pakistan, Turkey and Afghanistan are very important members of the region as well as the Islamic Ummah. They share common goals and aspirations regarding progress, peace and prosperity of their people. They have common cultural bonds, faith and religious values and economic targets. Although these countries had been interacting with each other on a bilateral basis and there have been discussions between them about mutual matters concerning them bilaterally, yet the three did not interact on a trilateral basis in the past.

This first trilateral meeting between the top leadership of the three countries took place during the visit of the Prime Minister of Pakistan Yousuf Raza Gilani to Turkey from 27-31 October 2008. It was a coincidence that the President of Afghanistan and the Prime Minister of Pakistan were visiting Turkey during the same period and the President of Turkey took the special initiative to arrange a meeting between these two leaders so as to bring about an understanding on a regional basis to combat common problems.

Much to the pleasant surprise of everyone, this initiative yielded excellent results in forging a better understanding of the common problems as well as the strong possibility of fighting these problems with a joint strategy in a successful manner. It became clear that all the three countries were facing the same type of enemies, in terms of poverty, terrorism, peace and progress and above all the scourge of religious extremism and fanaticism. The special role of Turkey in this effort is of great significance because it is not so acutely involved as Pakistan and Afghanistan in the fight against terrorism and is also not severely affected by the acts of killing, devastation and sabotage by the terrorists. Pakistan and Afghanistan are experiencing these barbaric acts on almost a daily basis and badly need to be engaged in serious dialogue as well as military and diplomatic activity to defuse the situation and find a satisfactory way out of the difficult situation. Turkey being a strong regional power and a brotherly country can play a very constructive role in getting these countries to talk seriously and find common ground without getting emotionally involved.

The present tripartite summit is taking place at the invitation of President Abdullah Gul, as a follow-up of the fine results of this interaction between the three countries at Istanbul in October 2008. During the first interaction between the three countries the Pakistani proposal of including the development dimension in these talks as well as joint economic projects, regional and trans-regional trade and economic cooperation, were accepted by Turkey and formally included in the agenda. As a result a declaration ie the Ankara Declaration' was issued which lay the foundation of serious and continued discussions amongst the three countries regarding common concerns and problems as well as search for pragmatic solutions to these problems. Now delegations of the Chambers of Commerce and Industries of the three countries are also participating in talks on the sidelines of the summit at the initiative of the Union of Chambers and Commodities Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB). A joint working group was formed as a result of the meetings held in Ankara to continue working on the directions indicated by the three leaders during their talks. This working group, constituted of relevant senior officials of the three countries held a one-day meeting with the delegations of the Chambers of Commerce and Industries of the participating countries one day prior to the summit in order to make necessary preparations for final consideration by the three Presidents in their meetings on the 5th and the 6th of December 2008. At the suggestion of Pakistan, a joint statement was issued including and emphasizing the following aspects: Affirmation to respect and protect the independence, integrity and sovereignty of Afghanistan by all states as well as non-intervention and non interference in the affairs of other states.

Support for the process of National Reconciliation in Afghanistan on a 'Broad Based' and all inclusive basis. Support for the process of constructive and comprehensive engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This should include trade and economic cooperation, on a 'regional' and 'trans-regional basis', as well as joint projects between the countries, especially Pakistan and Afghanistan, in the sectors of energy, minerals, agriculture, manufacturing and physical connectivity via rail and road links.

Affirmation that the tripartite process would result in promotion of trade, and economic cooperation between Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan and bring about promotion of development cooperation involving the public private partnership mode. Special emphasis has been placed during these talks, both in October and December 2008 on the process of peace making efforts through the Jirgaic system which has yielded good results during the recent past. As explained by Pakistan and endorsed by the Afghan side also, the Jirgaic system has not only been successful in the internal peace making effort inside the Tribal Areas of Pakistan, but the joint Jirga convened between Pakistan and Afghanistan has also been beneficial and yielded positive results in the peace making directions between the people living on either side of the borders as well as inside Afghanistan between the warring factions. This initiative has gained further momentum because of the realization in the USA that other avenues like peace talks and engagement on a bilateral basis with the Taliban as well as enhanced development efforts are needed alongside military intervention to solve the problem in Afghanistan. The other important aspects of the meetings in Turkey are the separate bilateral meetings which were also held between President of Pakistan Mr. Asif Ali Zardari and President Abdullah Gul of Turkey and President Hamid Ali Karzai of Afghanistan.

During these meetings the leaders talked about common concerns of the two interacting countries and the methods to bring about better coordination in finding solutions for these issues as well as pursuing a process of mutual actions to achieve symbiotic success in these efforts. The results of these bilateral and trilateral talks will have far-reaching effects on the entire region and will help to forge harmony and coherence in the efforts of these countries in fighting terrorism, extremism and sabotage while at the same time finding a way out for removing poverty, eliminating narcotics, improving the standard of living of the common man who needs respite from the devastation of the scourge of international terrorism. So also it will bring about a spirit of understanding between the countries and create respect for the integrity, solidarity, security, sovereignty and independence of all the countries in the region. The joint press conference addressed by the three Presidents on the conclusion of the talks during the summit in Turkey and the body language of all the three leaders amply indicates the spirit and amicable nature of the discussions as well as the success of the discussions between the participants. Of special significance is the fact that all the three countries have decided to continue the process in 2009 and to vigorously follow up by implementation of the decisions in the right spirit to be able to achieve tangible and fruitful results for mutual benefits.

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It may be mentioned that Pakistan has always been advocating long term and meaningful regional cooperation in the area especially between Pakistan and Afghanistan who are jointly faced with a common enemy that seeks to destroy the very fiber of their society and culture. Pakistan has been actively involved in providing meaningful moral, material and monetary support to their Western neighbours i.e Afghanistan ever since it was forced to become a victim of the international terrorism and its fallouts have been deadly not only for the country but also its very social and societal fabric of its neighbours and the entire region .Despite the constraints on our own economy the economic support to the reconstruction process by Pakistan has gone up to a figure of US\$320 million from the initial figure of US\$170 million .Although we are ourselves faced with shortage of food grain continue to provide support to our Afghan brothers by exporting 50,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan at concessional rates. We are committed to holding the 3rd Regional Cooperation Conference (RECCA) in Islamabad on 19-20 January 2009 which became possible after the fruitful conference on the subject held in Kabul on 25-26 November 2008.

The joining in of Turkey in this process has opened new avenues and created new dimensions to the cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan .The active involvement of Turkey will not only help in reducing the burden but also in providing fiscal and financial benefits which will reduce costs and increase benefits of common development projects .

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