

THE WEDNESDAY INTERVIEW | GAUTAM BAMBAWALE

# 'India must work slowly on China so that it aligns itself with us on terror'

The former diplomat on India's next steps with Pakistan, the China-Pakistan relationship, and India's evolving ties with China

SUHASINI HAIDAR

As the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) deadline for allowing the listing of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) chief Masood Azhar expires today, Gautam Bambawale, former Indian envoy to Pakistan and China, says it is important for India to keep focus on fighting terror from Pakistan, while keeping communication with China open. Excerpts:

In the immediate aftermath of the Pulwama terrorist attack and then the Indian Air Force strike in Balakot, the government has been garnering international support for its case against Pakistan and the need to take direct action against groups there. In the long run, what are the next steps for Indian diplomacy?

cross-border terror. We cannot afford to lose focus on that.

In the past week, Pakistan has announced some measures against the JeM and the Jamaat-ud-Dawa. How do you suggest India ensures real action?

I think the focus lies in keeping the pressure going on Pakistan. In the next few months, we must ensure that pressure does not lessen. We should work to ensure that Masood Azhar is listed as a terrorist by the UNSC. We need to ensure that whatever steps Pakistan takes as a result of the pressure are real, not hogwash meant just to please public opinion. And we need to work with the Financial Action Task Force [FATF] to keep the lens on terror financing and choking off support that groups like the JeM and Lashkar-e-Taiba [LeT] receive in Pakistan.

Look, there is no alternative but to keep working on Pakistan through the international community. Let us remember that after the Pulwama attack, almost all major nations recognised India's right to protect itself and take action to prevent terror attacks on our soil wherever it is needed. In addition, it is the three Security Council members led by France that have taken up the listing of Azhar at the UNSC 1267 Committee again, and the case on terror funding at the FATF. This is the way forward.

Do you think India often loses its focus on terror? Between the Uri and Pulwama attacks, for example, efforts to raise the Azhar issue waned. India didn't raise it with China after the Wuhan summit.

Why is listing Azhar so important? LeT chief Hafiz Saeed was listed by the UNSC more than a decade ago and that has hampered neither his movements nor the LeT's ability to carry out attacks in India.

No, I don't think that is the case. Even after the Wuhan summit, we have repeatedly raised the Azhar issue with the Chinese government. At the end of the day, the UNSC listing of Azhar is just a facet of the many ways we must work to ensure our core focus: that of Pakistan ending

It is important. Once a group or a leader is listed, the entire world treats them as terrorists, regardless of what Pakistan does.

What is China's interest in ensuring that Azhar is not listed, and how can India get around it?

Yes, China has said in the past that it doesn't have enough information to list



Azhar, despite the fact that on each occasion we have provided more information of his links to terror attacks. I think we must keep trying as we have, and this time we are very close to having Azhar on the list. The truth is, China does take Pakistan's interests into account, and that is the reason it has been hesitant to allow the listing. But this time the momentum is with us. I would also like to say that we must learn to be transactional with China, and see what it is that Beijing would like in return for support at the UN.

It is for Pakistan to understand that it cannot keep lighting fires in its neighbour's territory and not be burnt by them itself.

So, do you think it is possible for China to effect the desired outcome from Pakistan?

Yes.

How do you think the government should approach the China-Pakistan relationship?

India has always said that international mediation is not acceptable. Do you think India should ask China to intercede on its behalf with Pakistan?

How do you think the government should approach the China-Pakistan relationship?

Well, that is the long-standing policy of India. But the fact is, just as we have received support from countries like the U.S., Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and they have conveyed to Pakistan that it needs to crack down on terror groups there, we must also hope that China will do the same. China does not wish to be isolated from the rest of the world, especially on the issue of terror.

Look, China has a very strong relationship with Pakistan, as it has had for decades: on strategic issues, their military relationship, and on economic issues. Even so, where terror is concerned, China is very clear about where its interests lie, and particularly given concerns over groups in Xinjiang, an area that connects it to Pakistan. So India's approach must be to work slowly on China to align itself on terror with our concerns, and then for it to move Pakistan in the direction we want

What kind of role have the U.S., Saudi Arabia and the UAE played in this?

A positive one. Clearly, after the strike on Balakot, and then the attempt by Pakistan to retaliate, they were con-

cerned about the action-reaction process leading to escalation. I think they all must have brought a lot of pressure on Pakistan to bring down the tensions, and to return the IAF pilot. But in the long run, it is for Pakistan to understand that it cannot keep lighting fires in its neighbour's territory and not be burnt by them itself. Even with these groups [JeM and LeT], it is only a matter of time before they turn on Pakistan and carry out attacks there.

You mentioned the concerns over escalation. Is one of India's biggest challenges in fighting cross-border terror the fact that ultimately the international community's focus shifts to reducing India-Pakistan tensions?

Yes, this is a constant challenge. But the fact remains that the international community has affirmed India's right to protect its citizens from attacks planned across its borders. That is a net gain.

Do you think the support will continue should India react the same way in the event of another attack?

I think as long as India carries out non-military strikes that don't target military personnel and don't cause any civilian casualties, India will receive that support.

Since the 2016 Uri attack, the Modi government has also pursued a policy of 'isolating Pakistan'. How realistic is this idea?

We must understand that what the government means by isolating Pakistan is to isolate it on the issue of terrorism. This is not to say that countries should stop dialogue with Pakistan.

Is there any space for direct

dialogue between India and Pakistan at present?

It is for the government to decide if it wishes to open a dialogue with Pakistan. At present, the government has taken the view that talks and terror don't go together, and that is its prerogative. I can tell you this: the people of India are fully fed up with this issue. As we have shown in 2016 and 2019, we are willing to take action against those terror groups directly if Pakistan refuses to. So, Pakistan is left with only one choice if it wishes to avoid more such action: to stop the terrorist groups there.

When it comes to China, however, despite all that has happened, including the Doklam crisis, the government opted for talks. You were the Ambassador to Beijing last year. How did the Wuhan summit come about?

I think the important take-away from the Wuhan summit was that two ancient civilisations in a relationship with major potential decided that it was important to find a way to talk to each other rather than past each other. With the Wuhan summit, the idea was to allow the two leaders [Prime Minister Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping] to talk for as long as possible on any number of issues between the two countries. And the main outcome of the summit was that they would increase ways of communicating with each other.

Does that mean that the kind of conflict we saw at Doklam will not recur? I ask especially since before your postings in Pakistan and China, you were India's Ambassador to Bhutan.

Look, I don't want to speak about the China-Bhutan

boundary as that is not our issue. We must see the Doklam conflict in terms of the India-China boundary issue, where boundary lines have not been delimited yet. Add to that, Indian and Chinese military patrols are coming closer and closer to each other in terms of physical proximity, and all the boundary conflicts in previous years have been a result of this. If we want to avoid these kinds of incidents, we need more confidence-building measures, more SOPs [standard operating procedures]. Our ties with China have potential beyond these conflicts and we must seize this.

Why do you think it is possible to envisage this forward-looking relationship with China, while with Pakistan it is impossible to move beyond its sponsorship of terror?

I think we must realise the multi-faceted relationship that we have with China. We have problems, but we have also been able to make great strides in ties, particularly when we take our emotions out of the relationship and focus on our interests. With Pakistan, it is difficult to take the emotions out after we are hit with one terror attack after another. Still, I must say here that I believe it is necessary to separate some things. For example, I would advocate that we don't boycott the ICC World Cup simply because we don't want to play Pakistan, given that we have a good chance of winning. In such issues, it is best not to mix emotions and policy. We must find a way to tackle terrorism, to tackle our problems, but without mixing emotions in them. It is only when we think through the situation in a cool-headed manner that our responses will be most effective with Pakistan.

SINGLE FILE

## Pulwama and after

India lost the battle of perceptions, but it won the war of interests

MICHAEL KUGELMAN



Something curious happened during the recent India-Pakistan crisis: India may have lost the battle of perceptions, but it still won the war of interests. Consider New Delhi's performance. Its rhetoric was bombastic and at times sarcastic. It struggled to bring clarity to the conflicting details surrounding its retaliatory strike on Pakistan. And Prime Minister Narendra Modi never addressed the nation during India's worst security crisis in years.

Now consider Islamabad's performance. After India's strike on Balakot (in picture), Pakistan responded swiftly with its own strike that generated little confusion. Soon thereafter, Prime Minister Imran Khan, who was front and centre during the entire crisis, called on Mr. Modi to "give peace a chance" and announced the release of the Indian pilot captured by Pakistan. Unsurprisingly, international media coverage described Mr. Khan as "deft and steely" and spoke of "clumsy Indian information management".

Yet, for India, its interests have been ably served. The strike on Balakot was widely supported by the international community. Few countries expressed public opposition. Many governments are now calling on Pakistan to act more robustly against terrorist groups, and Islamabad has pledged to do so. While this promise, made many times before, will understandably be treated with scepticism in New Delhi, fresh global pressure may give India some new hope.

Meanwhile, except for a strongly worded statement from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, few countries, as Pakistan would have liked them to do, have pushed for a greater focus on Kashmir and how India's brutal tactics there stir unrest, spark bilateral tensions, and help produce extremists. One possible factor behind this broad international support is the strong resonance of the Islamist terror threat around the world. In recent years, al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and their affiliates have wreaked havoc globally. While both groups are now weakened, they remain potent — and the world doesn't want to let down its guard, particularly with entities like the Jaish-e-Mohammad enjoying a resurgence. A second factor is Pakistan's image problem. Though Islamabad has sought for years to get Kashmir on the agendas of nation states and international fora, it has had limited success, particularly in the West, outside of discussions at the UN and EU. India, meanwhile, has had no trouble getting countries and global groupings to amplify the problem of Pakistan-based terrorism.

In effect, Pakistan isn't isolated, and it has powerful friends, but India has been more successful in getting the international community to support its interests. This, in part, can be attributed to India's reputation overseas as a more responsible and credible global player than Pakistan.

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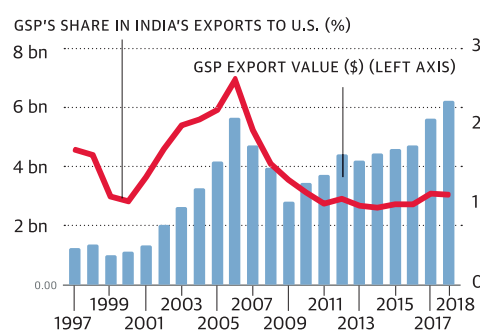


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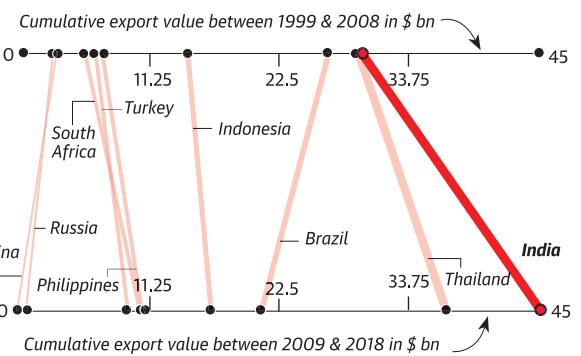
### Withdrawal symptoms

The U.S. government has decided to withdraw trade concessions granted to India under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). Vignesh Radhakrishnan takes a look at what and how much India exported in the last two decades under the programme, which allows duty-free entry for certain products into the U.S. market

**Programme history** | India exported goods worth \$6.2 bn in 2018 under the GSP, the highest since 1997. However, the GSP's share in India's total exports to the U.S. has come down recently after peaking in the mid-2000s



**Flourishing business** | No other country's export value under the GSP exceeded India's in the last two decades cumulatively. The graph shows the export value for the top nine countries under the GSP between 1999 and 2008, and 2009 and 2018



**Sectors at stake** | Though India has played down the GSP benefits, some sectors such as 'gem and jewellery' and 'apparel' are bound to take a hit. The tree map shows the top 25 sectors based on the cumulative export value of goods in the last 20 years under the GSP programme

1. Pearls, precious and semiprecious stones: \$100.44 bn	3. Petroleum oils (other than crude): \$31.4 bn	7	8	9
2. Medicaments: \$49.45 bn	4. Jewellery, goldsmiths' & silversmiths' wares: \$30.3 bn	10	11	12
	5. Textile materials: \$28.4 bn	14	17	18
	6. Women's apparel (woven): \$19.84 bn	15	21	22
		16	23	24
				25

- 7. Apparel, textile fabrics: \$16.42 bn
- 8. Crustaceans molluscs: \$13.37 bn
- 9. Crude vegetable materials: \$13.23 bn
- 10. Floor coverings: \$11.77 bn
- 11. Organo-inorganic compounds: \$10.75 bn
- 12. Parts for tractors, motor cars: \$10.3 bn
- 13. Men's apparel (woven): \$9.9 bn
- 14. Iron and steel tubes, pipes: \$9.5 bn
- 15. Men's apparel (knitted): \$6.49 bn
- 16. Manufactures of base metal: \$6.25 bn
- 17. Furniture and parts thereof: \$5.86 bn
- 18. Lime, cement, construction materials: \$5.08 bn
- 19. Special commodities: \$4.67 bn
- 20. Footwear: \$4.63 bn
- 21. Fruit and nuts: \$4.44 bn
- 22. Taps, cocks, valves: \$4.42 bn
- 23. Household equipment: \$4.41 bn
- 24. Nitrogen-function compounds: \$4.37 bn
- 25. Women's apparel (knitted): \$4.12 bn

FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 13, 1969

### D.P. Mishra's election held void

The political future of Madhya Pradesh Congress Legislature Party Leader D.P. Mishra came under a cloud to-day [March 12] with the Slate High Court declaring void his May 1963 election to the Assembly on grounds of corrupt practice. As a result of the judgment, Mr. Mishra, who had advanced the Congress claim to be invited to form a Ministry in the wake of S.V D. Chief Minister G. N. Singh's resignation yesterday [March 11], faces the risk of losing the seat he won in the last General Election. The Representation of the People Act disqualifies a person found guilty of corrupt practice from seeking re-election for six years. The Division Bench, consisting of Mr. Justice Shiv Dayal and Mr. Justice S.P. Bhargava, said the election of Mr. Mishra, was void under Section 100 (1) (3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Their Lordships said that it had been proved that Mr. Mishra had incurred or authorised expenditure in contravention of Section 77 of the Act and thus was guilty of a corrupt practice as defined in Section 123 (b) of the Act.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 13, 1919.

### Tramway Strike. Another Mass Meeting.

There was another mass meeting yesterday evening [March 12] when a few of the men of the Traffic Department, addressed their brethren. They depicted a vivid and horrible picture of their hard lot, and dilated upon the righteousness of their cause. One of the speakers, in exonerating the leaders whom the Tramway authorities considered as irresponsible advisers and but for whom the men would have no grievances to put forward, recounted the story of a deputation which was asked to wait upon the Joint Managers, and how that deputation was prevented by a high placed official of the Company from having an interview; so much so that the Tramway authorities' statement that no representatives responded to their invitation was falsified. In the end the men were advised to keep up their "esprit de corps" and never get disbanded even at the slightest temptation.

POLL CALL

### Proportional representation

This refers to an electoral system in which the distribution of seats corresponds closely with the proportion of the total votes cast for each party. This is a more complicated but representative system than the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system, which is used in India. If a party gets 40% of the total votes, for example, a perfectly proportional system would allow it to get 40% of the seats. Some countries use a combination of the proportional representation system and the FPTP system.

MORE ON THE WEB

N. Ram on the Bofors scandal

<http://bit.ly/RamBofors>