

# Post-Indian Elections Scenario: Challenges and Options for Pakistan

A Talk by Dr. Moonis Ahmar

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**SOCIETY FOR  
GLOBAL MODERATION**

Strengthening Tolerance, Interfaith Harmony and Democracy



*Founded in 2003 under section 42 of the Companies Ordinance, 1984 as a 'not for profit' organization*

## Chairman's Note

The idea to form a think tank came to me in the aftermath of 9/11 when there was a pressing need to promote tolerance, interfaith harmony and democracy. I consulted a few like-minded individuals and they also agreed that there should be a body that should counter the narrative of extremism and intolerance being spread by the West.



*Syed Jawaid Iqbal  
Founding Chairman*

The Society for Global Moderation (previously known as The Moderates) was established in 2003 to promote Pakistani society – and other people in the world – as largely peace-loving and tolerant. SGM is not against any religion, custom or creed. It supports a society based on moderation and temperance and works to change attitudes and enhance values.

To further its viewpoint, SGM has been inviting prominent scholars and thinkers from around the world to speak on subjects that are in conformity with its ideals.

Among these are: **Walter Russell Mead**, US foreign policy expert, who has served as the Henry A. Kissinger Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations. Subject: *'India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.'* **Marguerite H. Sullivan**, US Public Affairs and Communications Specialist and Director of the Center on International Media Assistance. Subject: *'Media Freedom and Sustainable Democracy'.* **Jacqueline Novogratz**, founder and CEO of Acumen Fund. Subject: *'Philanthropy and Leadership'.* **Vishakha Desai**, President Asia Society. Subject: *'Pakistan's Perception among the U.S. Populace.'* **Dr. Zaheerul Islam**, Islamic scholar. Subject: *'Islam in a Modern State.'*

**Najmuddin Shaikh**, Pakistan foreign secretary. Subject: *'Foreign Policy Challenges and the New Government'*, **Senator Raza Rabbani**, former Chairman, Pakistan Senate. Subject: *'18th Amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan, and Sen (r) Javed Jabbar*, former minister. Subject: *'Pakistan-India Relations – Future, Known and Unknown'*

Since the Indian general elections are in the offing, the SGM board of directors considered it appropriate to invite **Dr. Moonis Ahmar**, former Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Karachi University, to present a talk on 'Post-Indian Elections Scenario: Challenges and Options for Pakistan.' In his Talk, Dr Ahmar shared his views regarding India's expected role in the region after the elections.

Selected portions from the Talk and the audience's questions, answers and comments are contained herein.

## Speaker's Profile

**D**r. Moonis Ahmar is a Meritorious Professor of International Relations and former Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Karachi. He is also Director of the Programme on "Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution." His field of specialization is conflict and security studies that focuses on the South and the Central Asian regions. He has over 36 years of academic experience in Pakistan and in different foreign universities and research think tanks.



*Dr. Moonis Ahmar*

Dr. Moonis has authored three books and four monographs and has also edited 15 books on different themes of international relations. He has worked on several research projects related to terrorism, conflict and security studies and has published his research works in various reputed international journals, magazines and periodicals, such as Asian Survey, Contemporary South Asia, EurAsian Studies, Foreign Policy Research Journal, Journal of European Studies, Journal of Political Studies, Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Margalla Papers, National Development and Security, NDC Journal, Pakistan Horizon, Pakistan Journal of American Studies, Pakistan Perspectives, Pakistan Vision, Regional Studies, Strategic Studies, Strategic Analysis, SouthAsia Magazine, South Asian Studies, World Affairs, etc.

Dr. Ahmar has received research grants from the Ford Foundation, Higher Education Commission, Research Facility Centre, U.S. Institute of Peace, Asia Fellows Program and the Regional Centre of Strategic Studies, Colombo. He has been a recipient of the Best Teacher Award from the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and has also been awarded by the UNESCO, UN Commission for Human Development and the Federal Ministry of Education, Pakistan.

Dr. Ahmar has held positions at leading foreign universities and research centres, such as the Arms Control Program, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Middle East Institute, Washington DC, Centre for International and Strategic Studies, Washington DC, Asia Fellow, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka and the London School of Economic and Political Science.

From April 2010 to February 2012, Dr. Ahmar pursued his research work in Germany on Conflict Studies and Management Program as a German Academic Exchange Visiting Fellow. His book, 'Conflict Management and Vision for a Secular Pakistan: A Comparative Study' was published by the Oxford University Press and was awarded at the Karachi Literature Festival. Currently, he is working on his research project, "Cultural Enlightenment and Conflict Transformation in Pakistan: Lessons from Europe."

## ‘The rise of Modi reflects the surge of populism in India.’

Sayed Jawaid Iqbal, Chairman SGM, thanked Dr. Moonis Ahmar for accepting the invitation to address the members of the Society for Global Moder-ation (SGM) and other distinguished guests on the topic of “Post-Indian Election Scenario: Challenges and Options for Pakistan.”



Jawaid Iqbal said the re-election of Narendra Modi as Indian prime minister was a major political development in the subcontinent and its long-term effects needed to be discussed. He said the matter was more crucial because Modi was expected to expedite his efforts in his second and, perhaps the last term as Indian PM to accomplish his long-term Hindutva-based agenda at the cost

of interfaith harmony in India as well as regional peace and order.

In his Talk, Dr. Moonis Ahmar said Pakistan should brace to confront the myriad of challenges during the second term of Narendra Modi as Indian prime minister. Despite his seemingly fascist approach and vendetta-based politics, the rise of Modi reflects the surge of populism in India and that too at the expense of defying the country's secular ethos as envisioned by the founders of today's India. The fact that the BJP has secured 303 seats out of 545 and the Congress has only 52 seats, corroborates the immense acceptance the BJP enjoys as well as the rise of the Modi wave despite calculations that BJP may not win a comfortable majority in the elections.

He said back in 1984 when elections were held after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the BJP won only two seats. Five years later, in 1989, the BJP won 85 seats and Shiv Sena, BJP's ally, won one seat. In 1991, the BJP won 120 seats and the Shiv Sena secured four seats. By 1996, BJP had 161 seats and Shiv Sena had eight. By 2004, BJP seemed to have lost momentum and the same happened in 2009. However, by 2014, things were looking up again as the BJP secured more than 280 seats and now, in 2019, the BJP secured more than 300 seats. This truly reflects the

***Among the key challenges facing Pakistan are India's sustained aggressive and chauvinistic approach under the Modi regime.***

surge of the Modi wave.

With respect to the future of Pakistan-India relations during Modi's second term as India's prime minister, the appointment of Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, a career diplomat and son of Indian's renowned strategic thinker Dr. K. Subrahmanyam, will have an impact on New Delhi's relations with Pakistan. Pakistan needs to be alert for challenges on the horizon and be proactive in addressing them through sustained diplomatic efforts. Many people think Modi is not a well-read person. Dr. Ahmar expressed the view that Modi is a person who may not have read history but he is making history. He may not have read history like former Indian premiers Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, I.K. Gujral and Manmohan Singh, but he is making history through his objective-based politics. Whether that history will hurt us or benefit India remains to be seen.

According to Dr. Ahmar, among the key challenges facing Pakistan are: India's sustained aggressive and chauvinistic approach under the Modi re-gime; his drive to talk to Pakistan on India's terms and conditions forcing Pakistan to abandon its age-old stance on Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), accept the Line of Control (LoC) as an International border and accept New Delhi's pre-eminent and authoritative role in the region; absorbing Indi-an Occupied Kashmir (IOK) in the Indian Union by revoking Article 370 and 35-A; depriving Pakistan of its share of waters as determined under the Indus Water Treaty; dragging Pakistan in a vicious arms race merely to cause enormous burden on its fragile economy; sustaining its policy of iso-lating Pakistan in the region and beyond; and patronizing elements in Balochistan, former FATA and Sindh.

Dr. Ahmar said Pakistan needed to be tactful and mindful in dealing with the situation that has come up after the Indian elections. He said Modi knows very well that this is his last time in power, therefore as far as his foreign and domestic policy is concerned, he will not expect major changes but people around him want to transform India as a great power though this will not be possible. Pakistan needs to focus on its domestic issues, particularly those related to the economy, politics and governance and it must avoid unilateral gestures of friendship and peace which are termed as a sign of weakness by the other side. To dispel the Indian policy of isolating Pakistan, this country should focus on seeking regional connectivity and according zero tolerance to cross-border infiltration and terrorism by rejecting Jihadi culture.

He said a strategic response is needed to thwart India's attempt to change the status of occupied J&K and it must be diplomatically pressurized to resume the Comprehensive Dialogue along with dropping its stance of not participating in the 19th SAARC summit. Pak-Indian relations could be enhanced, he said, by offering the the status of "Most Favoured Nation" as well as allowing the country to connect to Afghanistan and Central Asia via Pakistan.

***A strategic response is needed to thwart India's attempt to change the status of occupied J&K.***



# The event



# in pictures





## Q&A and Comments



*Lt. Gen.(r)  
Tanveer Naqvi*

**Lt. Gen.(R) Tanveer Naqvi:** Because of Modi's absolute victory in recent elections, has India reached the point that it could move to absolute authoritarianism?

**Answer:** I don't think that such a diverse country like India is going to be an authoritarian state. If it is done, it will be at the expense of the integrity of the country and India will disintegrate. One cannot expect a country with 900 million voters speaking with one voice. Unfortunately, the majority of Indian voters who voted for Modi were least concerned about economic issues and the failure of BJP to ameliorate the socio-economic conditions of the people but only responded to Modi's so-called slogans of patriotism and threats to national security. When an ordinary Indian is unable to draw a link between regional peace and development, one cannot blame the BJP of imposing its communal ideology by marginalizing religious minorities; brutal suppression of Kashmiri Muslims and fanning tensions with Pakistan. When one talks about the road to greater India under Modi's second term, it seems to be elusive and a utopia because greatness of a country is not judged on the basis of transforming India as a Hindu state or benefiting the privileged class, but it is achieved by pursuing a policy of 'inclusiveness' of India and not excluding non-Hindu communities.



*Air Marshal  
(r) Riazuddin  
Shaikh*

**Air Marshal (r) Riazuddin Shaikh:** For the last 30 years, the BJP has not had a single Muslim member in the Lok Sabha. The party has infused the RSS in its rank and file and even the Indian Supreme Court comprises judges who openly subscribe to the RSS ideology. The BJP has successfully erected an enduring political structure capable of standing on its own feet. The Congress, on the other hand, seems to be structurally fragile and rudderless.

Do you think that the BJP entered the political scene through evolution and will stay there for long?

**Answer:** The transformation of secular India as a Hindu state has been going on for long. Even Congress governments, which were termed as secular, failed to prevent communal riots in post-partition India and gave space to the right wing Hindu nationalist groups such as Jan Sangh, RSS, Shiv Sena, Sangpariwar and Bajrang Dal. The failure of the Congress government of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to prevent demolition of the 16th century Babri Mosque on December 6, 1992 by fanatic Hindu groups led by BJP leader L. K. Advani gave a major blow to Indian secularism. Consequently, it is correct to state that the process of 'Hinduization' of India began during the era of Congress and reached its peak when the former Chief Minister of Gujarat Narendra Modi, responsible for bloodbath of the Muslims in the communal riots of February 2002, became



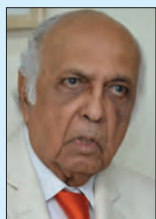
the Prime Minister of India. The damage done during the Modi regime to Indian democracy and secularism is almost irreparable. Even if the BJP is defeated in the next general elections, the new government will have to take damage control measures in order to rehabilitate the image of India as a functional secular democracy.



*Sharjeel*

**Sharjeel:** Do you think that Modi is just the face of Hindutva that has found its feet under BJP's leadership?

**Answer:** I think the rise of Hindutva is not an accidental matter. In fact, it was a long overdue phenomenon that has now emerged as a force to be reckoned with. I believe the surge in Hindu extremism and BJP's policy of transforming India as a Hindu state will lead to more and more schisms in Indian society which will destabilize the world's second populous country and the largest democracy in the world. Not only violence and communal politics will divide India in the days to come, this will also negatively impact its image at the international level. An image of communal violence unleashed by Hindu fanatic groups having the support of the Indian state tends to deepen insecurity as far as religious minorities are concerned.



*Kamal Azfar*

**Kamal Azfar:** We must admit the fact that we are a state, not a nation. Perhaps we started as a nation in 1947, but what were the factors that severely affected the nation-building process?

**Answer:** We have not been able to emerge as a nation-state because religion has been amalgamated with politics. In fact, we created a country but we failed to create a Pakistani man or woman boasting of a truly national identity. Owing to many internal contradictions with the state by itself, Pakistan still tends to be a feudal and tribal state. The creation of Pakistan was termed as a miracle by those who thought it as an unnatural and unsustainable state because of geographical asymmetry between its western and eastern parts with religion as the only common bond. When Jinnah died a year after the creation of the country and Pakistan's first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated on October 16, 1951, it became clear that the nexus of the bureaucracy and military along with the clergy and feudal oligarchy, led to the deepening of an authoritarian political culture and the subsequent imposition of martial law. The nation-building process went off track when the leadership of the nascent state deviated from the path and plunged the country into a perpetual state of chaos and disorder. To make things worse, Pakistan's first constitution which was promulgated nine years after the creation of the country was abrogated in October 1958 when martial law was imposed and the country drifted to a dictatorial system which was followed by another martial law in March 1969 abrogating the constitution of 1962. The break-up of Pakistan in 1971 was the first example of the disintegration of a post-colonial state.



*Mehmood Nanji*

**Mehmood Nanji:** Is there any possibility than Pakistan would join the Russian camp?

**Answer:** I It is true that a paradigm shift has taken place as far as Russian and Pakistan are concerned because Russia is upset with India over its increasingly closer association with the US and is coming closer to Pakistan.



*Faisal Siddiqi*

**Faisal Siddiqi:** How can we say that Modi will not contest for the third term as Indian PM?

**Answer:** I think the BJP will look for new leadership after the completion of a second consecutive term of Narendra Modi. This is mainly because those leaders e.g. Amit Shah, Bhupender Yadav, Om Mathur and others who are supposed to replace Modi who are waiting for their turn, will not allow him to contest for the third term. In addition, Modi by himself would not be interested in the third term as he would have played his inning and would leave it to the new generation to carry the BJP's political agenda forward.



*Lt. Gen.(r)  
Tanveer Naqvi*

**Comment by Lt. Gen.(r) Tanveer Naqvi:** The prevailing situation in the indo-Pak region demands immediate solutions. The history of the Asian continent suggests that the nations under authoritarian rule make consistent progress, such as China, South Korea, Soviet Union, Arab countries and even Malaysia. I am yet to see a prime minister who can stay for 20 years without having done something authoritarian in the system to prolong his stay. Mahathir Mohamad did the same and Malaysia achieved phenomenal progress. After his departure, the country could not sustain things for another decade and he had to return to lead the country again at the age of 93. There is a lesson for us that he did not institutionalize the authoritarian system. I am not in favour of having a military rule, but I must say that there should be governance based on authoritarianism to the extent that it is sustainable, pro-state and pro-people and is able to continue with proper checks and balances.



*Ashraf Agha*

**Comment by Ashraf Agha:** I am sorry to say that in terms of socio-economic development, we are even behind Bangladesh, let alone India. Is there any particular reason? I think they have separated the judicial and governance systems from religion. Our basic problem is that we tend to mingle Islam with everything else.





**“ A people that  
elect corrupt  
politicians,  
imposters, thieves  
and traitors are  
not victims... but  
accomplices ”**

*– George Orwell*



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