

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN,**  
**MR. SHAUKAT AZIZ**  
**AT THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**  
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**PAKISTAN'S VISION FOR THE ASIAN CENTUARY:**  
**PROMOTING COOPERATION FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT**

- Mr. Lawrence Lau, Vice Chancellor, Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- Distinguished members of the faculty
- Dear students
- Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to be invited by the Chinese University of Hong Kong to speak before such a distinguished audience. This University is an internationally renowned center of quality education, knowledge, creativity and research. It has contributed to the pursuit of excellence in all disciplines, be it Business or Biotechnology.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be in Hong Kong again. Hong Kong represents the best in entrepreneurial expertise, genius and dynamism of the Chinese people. This great vibrant city is a unique fusion of the East and the West and has established itself as one of the most important business and financial centers of the world. In many ways, Hong Kong testifies to the special strengths of Asia that portend a great future for our vast continent.

We in Pakistan are proud of our traditional friendship and cooperation with China which has remained consistent despite regional and international changes over the years. Pakistan-China relations have been and remain a model for mutually beneficial good neighbourly relations between states.

My visit to Hong Kong is aimed at enhancing our contacts at the official level as well as to ensure even greater levels of economic and commercial cooperation between the two sides. During my stay, I shall be meeting with some of the most important business leaders in the world apart from interacting with the media to promote a greater understanding of the developments in Pakistan, especially our robust economic performance which offers highly profitable business opportunities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I shall be presenting before you today my vision for the Asian Century and how Pakistan can help to promote cooperation for peace and development in Asia.

Our continent has been the cradle of civilization through the centuries. Asian culture, heritage and traditions represent a rich mosaic cohesively interwoven by the unique genius, talent, knowledge and spirituality of our people. Asia has significantly contributed to the advancement of human civilization.

Today Asia is home to nearly two-thirds of humanity. It is abundant in natural resources. Asia accounts for over a third of global trade and is the largest recipient of global FDI flows. Between China and the ASEAN countries alone, there are formidable macro-economic aggregates in terms of growth, trade, manufacturing and high technology. Asia has already become a powerhouse for the global economy.

Together with its human and material resources, its unique civilizational values as well as its contemporary achievements, Asia is poised to shape the Asian miracle. The great transformation of China to modernization has shown the way. This momentous development may have brought the world to a watershed in human history. The advent of an Asian century holds the promise of a world of shared prosperity and durable peace.

It is, therefore, fair to say that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the Asian Century. I am confident that Asia would become the driving force for political and economic change towards a more peaceful, equitable and just international order. An order which would foster peace and prosperity instead of conflict and inequity.

However, we must also be realistic and recognize that our great continent is still not free from grave problems. Conflicts, disputes, poverty, hunger and disease continue to undermine our efforts towards peace and prosperity. We are also confronted by the scourge of terrorism and the specter of nuclear annihilation. In order to achieve the Asian miracle, we would have to overcome these dangers and challenges. We must do so by cooperating amongst ourselves for the promotion of peace and development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to assure you of Pakistan's commitment to contribute towards these goals. We are convinced that Pakistan's interests and the wellbeing of our people shall be better served through the emergence of the new Asian order. I would now like to share with you the efforts that we have undertaken in Pakistan to make this possible.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First I will turn to domestic challenges and our response. The Pakistan of today and tomorrow is not the Pakistan of yesterday. Before our government assumed power six years ago, Pakistan was beset with a dysfunctional government, a collapsing economy, social unrest and external threats to its security. In response to these challenges, our government led by President Musharraf, provided responsible and transparent governance, devolved power to the grass roots level, implemented reforms to restructure and revive the economy and introduced measures for gender mainstreaming and protection of minorities as well as improving the deliver of social sector services.

As a result of these measures Pakistan is today a stable, secure and vibrant nation of 150 million people with abundant human and material resources. Our economy is now on a high growth trajectory with a growth rate of 8.4% this year, amongst the three highest in Asia. Our agricultural, industrial and services sectors are growing rapidly while liberalization, privatization and deregulation of the economy are attracting large domestic and foreign investments. Exports are steadily increasing and diversifying into new areas. Pakistan is now in a position to contribute effectively towards the promotion of economic and trade linkages in our region and beyond.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan can now better leverage its strategic location at the cross roads of South, Central and West Asia to promote multi-dimensional linkages between all three regions. Owing to this pivotal position, Pakistan can become the hub of economic activity providing communication and energy corridors to the adjoining regions. Pakistan provides the shortest route to the sea for the landlocked countries of Central Asia as well as western China. We have started construction of a third sea port at Gwadar and are establishing a vast network of road and rail connections to cater to the growing demands for transportation and communication links in the region. Another example of such trans-regional cooperation are projects to set-up gas pipelines from Iran, Qatar and Turkmenistan to Pakistan and on to India.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan's unique position in the region is underscored by the fact that we are members of both the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, or SAARC, and the Economic Cooperation Organisation, known as ECO, which joins Pakistan alongwith Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey with the Central Asian States. Recently, Pakistan has also been admitted as an Observer in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Meanwhile, we are pursuing a "Vision East Asia" policy to expand our relations with the ASEAN countries. We are already members of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD). With

these critical links with our Asian neighbours, we are moving towards our goal of achieving full dialogue partnership with ASEAN. I am sure that Pakistan's participation in these sub-regional organizations of Asia shall enable us to contribute towards greater levels of mutually beneficial cooperation at the inter-regional and intra-regional levels. Taken together these linkages will contribute towards fostering peace and development in Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have also been engaged in efforts to resolve regional disputes and security issues in order to facilitate greater cooperation with neighbouring states. With India we have embarked on a peace process to resolve all issues, especially the central dispute over Jammu and Kashmir. Several confidence building measures have been agreed upon giving rise to a greater sense of security and improved political environment apart from enabling more people to people contacts, especially among the Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control.

This peace process should be irreversible and every effort must be made to find a just and durable resolution of the Kashmir dispute. We recognize that such a solution must be acceptable to all three stakeholders, Pakistan, India and the Kashmiri people. To achieve this we must demonstrate courage, determination and flexibility. I am sure that with such an approach it is not beyond the genius of our people to resolve this longstanding dispute.

This would be all the more beneficial for the future of both Pakistan and India as peace between us would enable the two countries to divert their resources from defence to developmental purposes. At the regional level, Pakistan-India friendship would open up vast possibilities for greater cooperation within the SAARC community, thereby benefiting all the countries of South Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For nearly two decades the instability in Afghanistan confronted Pakistan with multiple threats to its security. We were faced with the influx of nearly four million refugees fleeing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and later as a result of the Afghan civil war. The war in the neighbourhood also gave rise to extremism and terrorism. While the international community, especially, the West abandoned Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal, as a neighbour we continue to suffer the consequences. Ravaged by a civil war, Afghanistan became a haven for terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda. It was only after the shock of 9/11 that the World refocused attention on Afghanistan.

Since then Pakistan has firmly supported the Bonn Process and the Government of President Karzai. We have contributed significantly towards the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. A politically stable and economically vibrant Afghanistan is in our vital interest. With some return to

normalcy in Afghanistan, our bilateral trade has exceeded 1 billion dollars. During my recent visit to that country, I pledged an additional assistance of a hundred million dollars for Afghan reconstruction.

We are also actively supporting the Afghan and coalition forces against the Al-Qaeda and Taliban. More than 80,000 Pakistani troops are deployed in our border areas with Afghanistan. Through their efforts over 700 Al-Qaeda terrorists have been apprehended. We have broken the back of Al-Qaeda destroying its lateral and vertical organizational linkages.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Terrorism has become a universal threat. It knows no borders and has no nationality nor religion. We are all victims of terrorism and must, therefore, unite to fight it jointly rather than seek scapegoats and blame each other.

Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism for over two decades and has been engaged in counter-terrorism cooperation with the international community much before 9/11. Despite having paid a heavy price for our participation in the international war on terrorism, including attacks on President Musharraf and myself, we remain steadfast in our commitment to combat this menace.

However, there is need for a holistic approach to deal with this problem. It is not enough to use force alone but to address and resolve the root causes of terrorism. These roots exist in the sense of deprivation, frustration and anger especially due to the unresolved Palestinian problem, the situation in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq. To deal with these problems, the use of force shall not suffice. It will be equally important to resolve the underlying issues and to win hearts and minds.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

An unfortunate consequence of the war on terrorism and a parallel danger lies in the insidious thesis of a clash between Islam and Western civilization and attempts to malign this great religion by associating it with terrorism. These fallacious theories and calumnies must be rejected as these will only deepen prejudice and hatred. Islam is a religion of peace and abhors violence. It preaches tolerance and harmony between different faiths. It is in keeping with this true spirit of Islam that President Musharraf has advocated the concept of "enlightened moderation". This approach advocates interfaith harmony and inter-civilizational dialogue. Enlightened moderation calls upon Muslim societies to reform and modernize while at the same time it exhorts Western countries to help resolve issues which have caused desperation and anger in the Muslim world.

In the Asian context, our history has countless examples of tolerance and harmony between different faiths and value systems. Our civilizations have not

only co-existed in peace but have learnt from each other. We must, therefore, recommit ourselves to follow our time-honoured traditions. There must be no inter-civilisational divide amongst us in Asia. Instead we must remain focused on promoting universal understanding and our higher goals of a just and equitable order through ensuring mutual accommodation and tolerance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the context of the nuclear proliferation issue, I would like to tell you about the conditions that compelled Pakistan to become a nuclear power and assure you of our commitment to act as a responsible nuclear state that is strongly opposed to WMD proliferation.

The Indian nuclear test of 1974 compounded Pakistan's security concerns as it confronted us with a new threat and obliged us to develop our own nuclear deterrent capability for our own defence. Again when India conducted its nuclear tests again in 1998, Pakistan had to respond to establish the credibility of its nuclear deterrence. Any ambiguity in this regard could have been dangerous as it could have led to grave miscalculations.

Pakistan is a responsible nuclear power, we are opposed to an arms race and will maintain deterrence at the minimum credible level. We have taken wide ranging measures to ensure the safety and security of our nuclear assets which are the responsibility of our National Command and Control Authority. We have also enacted legislation as well as engaged with the International Export Control regime to ensure against nuclear proliferation. We have also offered to set up a Strategic Restraint Regime with India aimed to avoid a nuclear and conventional arms race. On our part, we would not encourage in an arms race with India and maintain deterrence at the minimum credible level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A most important factor for peace and development in Asia, in my view, is the relationship between Pakistan and China. Our two countries have a longstanding tradition of friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation. China has been a major partner in our socio-economic development as well as a source of financial and technological assistance. Our views converge on all regional and international issues. The strategic partnership between the two countries, articulated in the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, makes a significant contribution to peace and stability as well as development in the region.

I am certain that as Asia moves towards its destiny in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a critical and positive role will be played towards this end by Pakistan and China. Our cooperation shall be of immense importance to provide the impetus for the Asian continent to attain the goals of peace and development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that we Asians have the capacity to change the political and economic landscape of Asia. Our peoples have the ingenuity and the determination to transform our challenges into opportunities. We must help each other to help ourselves and we must learn from each other's best practices. Pakistan is committed to play its part and serve as the bridge that would link the natural complementarities between the various sub-regions of Asia. Together we can create a new era of Asian renaissance and bring about the Asian miracle.

Thank you.