

US no longer a 'world power', move towards Russia, China: Nawaz Sharif's Special Kashmir Envoy

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Washington: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Special Kashmir Envoys have said that since America is no longer a "world power", Islamabad should start moving "close" towards China and Russia.

File pic of Pak PM Nawaz Sharif

"(The) US is no longer a world power. It is a declining power. Forget about it," Special Kashmir Envoy of Sharif, Mushahid Hussain Syed was heard as saying yesterday after the conclusion of an interaction at the Atlantic Council, one of the top American think-tanks.

Syed, along with Shazra Mansab, another Kashmir Envoy, are in the US as part of the Pakistan's effort to apprise the global community of the current situation in Kashmir.

Syed has gone to the extent to warn US that Pakistan would move towards China and Russia if its views on Kashmir and India are not considered.

He was apparently responding to a question from a member in the audience after the conclusion of the 90-minute interaction during which he expressed his frustration over the lack of response to his point of view on Kashmir and India.

The remarks of Syed were not recorded on camera, but were heard prominently by those inside the room.

Thereafter, he was quick to point out China and newly perceived relationship with Russia, which he had mentioned during his interaction at the Atlantic Council.

Syed submitted a dossier of alleged human rights violation in Kashmir to Special US Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Olson.

With no takers for Pakistan's Kashmir policy, Syed said China is now an important factor in South Asia and described Beijing as part of what he termed as Greater South Asia.

"There has been slow and steady building of relationship between Moscow and Islamabad," he said, referring to the joint military exercise between Pakistan and Russia.

Syed said the Putin government has for the first time agreed to sell arms to Pakistan and the US should take note of this changing regional alignment.

"Unfortunately under the Obama administration, there was a drift in American foreign policy towards our region, towards Afghanistan. There was confusion and there was a lot of flip-flops. I think, the Obama administration could not figure out this region Afghanistan and Pakistan and as a consequence this region suffered," he said.

"With policies one step back and one step (forward), announcing surge, announcing a cut off time for exit. Asking sometime Pakistan that please we want to talk to the Taliban and then saying that we want to take on the Taliban and finally they said there would be no American troops and then they end up having 8,500 troops stationed in Afghanistan. It leaves this to the next administration," he added.

Syed said Pakistan feels that the US should look at the region as a whole.

"Whether it is Pakistan, India, China, Afghanistan and there is plus also, the Iran nuclear deal... because all these countries can contribute to the stability and security of the region. And what Pakistan would like to have from the US, I am talking about the incoming administration, because Mr Obama is a guest for the next few months as January 20, 2017 there will be a new administration, that they have to see the region, where they have a more comprehensive perspective, and do not try to compartmentalised peace and security, because that is not possible," he said.

"When you talk of peace in Kabul, you have to ensure that Kashmir is not burning. The US has a long-term interest in Kashmir. They are a party to the UN resolutions. The US has played a very legitimate role in supporting oppressed people, oppressed Muslims (in) Bosnia, Kosovo and even the Kurds. So Kashmiris today should not suffer, just because

Kashmir has no oil or Kashmir is not part of Europe or Kashmiris belong to a certain religious denomination, because we cannot have double standards on those issues," Syed said.

He said Pakistan has a long standing relationship with the US and "we would like that (to continue). But of course, we have options also. With the greater Russian involvement in the region, they are also interested coming into CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor). Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia has also expressed interest in joining CPEC".

He also called for dialogue between India and Pakistan.

"Issues cannot be brushed under the carpet. People thought Kashmir issue is suppressed and buried. It has come back with a bang. It is more significant as (former) president (Bill) Clinton called as a potential nuclear flash point. The two nuclear neighbours should learn to talk to each other. We feel that the way forward is that the region calls for statesmanship and what I call a Nixonian transformation of Mr (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi. If he can have that outreach and develop that statesmanship which Richard Nixon demonstrated in 1971 courtesy Pakistan. I think, the options are there, opportunities are there. The ball is in Modi's court, can he rise to the occasion as a leader of 1.2 billion people to build a better and peaceful tomorrow," Syed said.

Alleging that US has done a U-turn of its policies on India, which started from the civic nuclear deal, he said the US is losing sight of the other interests in the region.

"The most important interest of the US is stability of Afghanistan and counter terrorism. And for that they like it not they need Pakistan's cooperation, which they have been getting and we have been providing and we are also suffering in the process. We see the shift (of US policy from Pakistan to India). And that shift would be detrimental to America's own security and interest in South Asia," Syed added.

- With PTI Inputs