

Speech by Leader of Opposition - Benazir Bhutto
Chairperson, Pakistan Peoples Party
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Fellow Parliamentarians,

We meet at a time of hope, but also a time of despair. A time of opportunity, but also a time of peril. A time of change, but still a time of intractability.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

South Asia has been far too long a region teetering on the edge of catastrophe.

For fifty years, we have been at each other's throats. We have fought four wars, and the last war dismembered my nation. Our troops, as we speak, fire at each other in the frozen wasteland called Siachen, which has become a metaphor for the senselessness that we have allowed to continue for half a century.

With the newly awakened nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan, and what appears to be a deployment race well underway, we can ill-afford the luxury of ignoring the roots of our deep distrust towards each other.

It is conventional wisdom that the roots of the Indo-Pak conflict, or more specifically, the enmity Muslims and Hindus are centuries old.

That is a strange notion.

For as many years that India and Pakistan have been at war, for many more centuries our cultures have lived in peaceful co-existence.

Our cultures were, and still are, necessary threads weaving the unique and vibrant cloth called South Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

National and world politics in the first half of the 20th Century was driven by geo-strategic considerations, military-territorial considerations. The great empires of the Romans, Arabs, and the British rose on territorial conquest fueled by military strength. Fantastic economical-rewards awaited victorious conquerors in the form of booty, cheap labour and captive markets. The European Colonialism was rooted in this psychology spread over thousands of years. It concluded when the Yalta Agreement was signed between the Big Three. The Cold War era then dawned. However the collapse of the Soviet Union, brought a fundamentally new global system.

It is exciting living at a time of dramatic change in history where military-territorial supremacy dissipates as the era of economic-technological supremacy dawns.

New World Order

History springs from one side of the pendulum to another. With the end of the Cold War, we are back to the world where global politics was driven by economic considerations, where markets are the yardstick by which the power, size and influence of Nations will be judged.

Will we, the people of South Asia, be prisoners of the past or will we be able to rise to a magnificent future?

The collapse of military-territorial superpower, the Soviet Union the rise of Germany, Japan, (South Korea Taiwan, Singapore) sent a powerful message to our generation. Brute military/territorial strength alone (like the Soviet Union) could not save it from disintegration and economic collapse. Germany, Japan and the NIC's rose without military-territorial strength to become economic superpowers. We are eye-witnesses to a New World Order based upon free commerce and trade. A nation's success is measured by its ability to develop products, ideas to sell in the global marketplace, which is open to all. It is based on the quality of goods and services and global demand-supply factors. Suddenly it is possible for tiny Singapore, with a tiny territorial and population base, a quarter of Karachi or Bombay, and a virtually non-existent military base, to become an economic giant, equal to the First World Countries in the quality of life it affords to its citizens.

Rules of the Game

The new rules of the game are that a nation upholds the principles of democracy, the rule of law, guarantees basic freedom and liberties to its citizens, allows free trade and a market driven economy with minimal state intervention, with a policy of non-intervention and mutual respect in inter-state relations. The concern of the state in inter-state relations is also driven by considerations of trade and commerce (again following the Japanese model), rather than by military - territorial considerations.

A nation which lives in the past, bases its thinking on the old paradigm of military-territorial strength, perishes in the New World Order and is treated as a pariah state (e.g. Russia, Yugoslavia, and most recently Iraq).

The success of a Nation, as we head towards a new century, a new millenium, is based upon the level of exports, hard currency reserves, its per capita GNP, and certainly not its territory, military strength, or population base. The pace in the race for economic success has become so competitive, that even First World former superpower nations such as Britain, France and Germany, felt unable to compete individually with today's economic giants, the U.S. and Japan.

The GNP of America is (US\$ 8 trillion) and of Japan (US\$ 5 trillion). Only after combining the 10 'First World' European economies, the combined EC GNP can compete (at US\$ 7 trillion).

The desire for the creation of 'super-economic zones' like the EC, was driven by Britain, France and Germany seeking to effectively compete economically with the economic superpowers namely the United States and Japan. The US, in turn rushed to form NAFTA and APEC as an economic reply to the EC.

All this is accomplished, without a single bullet being fired, with no military adventures or conquests, and yet huge territories, nations and populations peacefully agreed to redefine their economic borders, and to co-exist with each other in the better interests of their future well being. The EC's formation is truly a model case of the new paradigm, where economically we enter an

increasingly Borderless World while maintaining our national 'sovereignty'. The EC members states 'pooled' their economic sovereignty in creating a free trade zone and a common currency, thus submerging their narrow national interests for the greater good of the whole European Community. Meanwhile, at the other extreme, a closed nation, closed by sanctions or voluntarily, such as Libya, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan suffered economically even when they had huge oil reserves and a tiny population.

Ladies and Gentlemen - If we close our borders and live in the past, our region risks suffering a similar fate to the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and other such countries.

The Population Bomb

Our two nations are now home to nearly one-fifth of the total human population. The United Nations currently estimates the entire human population to be just shy of six billion people.

Given current rates of population growth, by the year 2015, our two nations combined population will surpass the population of China.

As our populations grow, so too must our capacity to manage precious natural resources.

The path to resolving our conflict lies within these unsettling figures and how we address the very real daily problems of population growth, economic opportunity, healthcare, education and stewardship of our environment.

South Asia - A House Divided

But our conflict also reflects dynamics akin to a large and unruly family. In the final analysis, South Asia is a house, but a house divided.

The history of humankind clearly shows that brothers can have the greatest love for each other, but are also capable of the most venomous hatred and spite.

So it is in the Middle East between the Jews and the Arabs.

So it is in Ireland between the Catholics and the Protestants.

So it is in the former Yugoslavia between the Muslims and the Serbs.

So it is in the horn of Africa between the Ethiopians and the Eritreans.

Within our South Asian house, we are no different. We are warring South Asian brothers and sisters.

Personally, both my grand parents lived in the area around present Mumbai (or Bombay). Our ancestral homes remain there today. In the registers of Ajmer Sharif and Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, you can see the signatures of my ancestors.

Indo-Pak enmity denied me the opportunity to see my grand parents home, to offer prayers at grandmother's grave, or my aunt Benazir after whom I am named or to take my children to a place that is a part of their history.

Will I be able to do so? Will our generation have the chance to build peace or will we become another Soviet Union, with the largest land mass territory in the world, encompassing two

continents, an advanced space programme, enough nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles to destroy the whole world, and a 'superpower' status, ultimately ending up having to beg for food from the EC to feed its population? Ultimately having to ask (relatively) 'tiny' Japan, with no military might, for economic aid?

Ladies and Gentlemen - This is a turning point in history, a different place from 50 years ago. We can strut around the stage pretending we are great powers in the world. Reality tells us that the Russian giant nation is considered an economic minnow today, with even tiny Singapore better off than Russia. 'Giant' India or Pakistan, with all our nuclear bravado, need to face the reality that we are economic pygmies on the world stage, and have a population base of 1.3 billion of the world's poorest people, with the worst standard of living.

Once we understand these objective facts, we can address the problem and find the solutions.

Foreign Policy

Ladies and Gentlemen - In this final year of the second millennium, it is time not only to take stock but to take action, not only to plan for dialogue but to engage in dialogue, not only to talk peace but to make peace?

Could there be any more fitting denouement to the second millennium than a peaceful resolution to the Indo-Pakistan dispute? I think not.

But if we are to proceed, it will take courage and leadership on behalf of our governments. For, in the words of the philosopher Spinoza, "peace is not mere absence of war, but is a virtue that springs from force of character."

The Nuclear Crisis

We are today in perhaps the most unsettling and dangerous situation since partition itself: a full-blown nuclear race.

I am convinced that none of us know the true horrors of these weapons, nor the devastation nuclear weapons can inflict upon our people when used.

None of us have truly comprehended the dire consequences of a nuclear and ballistic arms race in our land.

With our close knit ecological systems, weather patterns, and dense populations, one nuclear explosion on either side of the border would have the most tragic of consequences for all.

Entering the nuclear arena requires a wisdom and a patience from leaders that, to date, none of us have shown much of.

I admit, I too, in my two terms followed the path of hawkishness.

But that was before India and Pakistan shook the World with their nuclear blasts and brought forward many questions specifically on these weapons of mass destruction. I ask our current leaders:

Do we have adequate controls over these dangerous weapons?

Have we built clear-cut lines of communications between those who watch these weapons, and those who would decide for their use?

In this new nuclear era, we, Pakistan and India, no longer have the luxury to ignore our suspicions, our mistrust and our foreign policy misadventures.

Both of our nations must step forward cognizant of our political realities.

Both of our nations must step forward, understanding the threat to our people, our region, and the entire world, and declare South Asia a nuclear free and missile free zone.

Today I call upon India and Pakistan to jointly or singly:

1. adhere quickly to the CTBT Treaty
2. a moratorium on fissile material production
3. resist the development, flight testing and storage of ballistic weapons;
4. strengthen export control on nuclear technology

Ladies and Gentlemen -

We must step forth and together change the direction of history

On Kashmir

Ladies and Gentlemen

All of our problems, all of our disputes, all of our disagreements can be resolved quickly to mutual satisfaction if we address the question of Jammu and Kashmir.

Yes I know that some in India say this is an internal matter that Kashmir is as much a part of India as Texas is of the United States.

I have heard this before. In fact, I have heard it all my life. And I know better. The issue of Jammu and Kashmir is a problem that has brought us to war before and could very well bring us to war again, this time with the most catastrophic consequences.

In India, extremists say never, no compromise.

In Pakistan, extremists say never, no compromise.

The stakes, my friends, are much too high to let our policy be driven by our political margins. It is time that our policy be driven by reason, and by our commitment to our children's future.

There must be a resolution of the Jammu-Kashmir problem that accounts for the political sensitivities and political desires of the people of that princely state. It is not useful to hear about what a Maharaja did fifty years ago, or where an army attacked, or another army counterattacked. The fact remains that Jammu and Kashmir is a largely Muslim state, between two nations that were created in a religious partition.

The fact remains that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are politically alienated and disaffected.

The fact remains that an intifida has raged on the ground, and continues as we speak.

The fact remains that Jammu and Kashmir is the densest and largest militarily occupied territory on earth.

And the fact remains that over fifty thousand people have been killed, thousands of women raped, thousands of children kidnapped never to be seen again, scores of villages wiped from the face of the earth.

It is a record that cannot make you proud, and a record that causes us the greatest pain.

No process leading to the fair and equitable resolution of the fifty-year Kashmir conflict can move forward, however, without concrete steps by both Pakistan and India.

The Simla Agreement recognizes this.

On India's part, there are a number of confidence-building measures that could be taken immediately, including:

- A dramatic reduction of the nearly 600,000 troops now stationed in Kashmir.
- Ceasing all forms of torture, intimidation and extra-judicial killings.
- Opening Jammu-Kashmir to monitoring by international human rights groups.

Ultimately we would like to see India begin dialogue with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). Likewise, for my part, I will vigorously pursue the following initiatives in Pakistan:

1. Dialogue with India for open borders between Azad Kashmir and Jammu and Kashmir as a prelude to open borders between all of South Asia.
2. Talks for mutual Arms reduction and redeployment of Forces.

I recall that after the end of the Second World War, President Harry Truman faced a dilemma. Europe was in physical and economic shambles. The Soviet Union had engulfed eastern and central Europe and threatened Greece, Turkey, Italy, even France. Obviously, the burden was on the United States to lead in the economic reconstruction of Europe and the political and military containment of communism.

But the American people would have no part of it. Their sons and daughters had spent four years saving Europe, and the American people had had enough. They wanted to return home, build their houses, have their children, and raise their families. They wanted to turn inward.

But Harry Truman was a leader. Despite public opinion polls that showed only 15% support for a massive U.S. engagement in Europe, he created the Marshall Plan and the NATO alliance, and then went out to his people and day by day, month by month, sold the necessity to a skeptical electorate. He convinced them. He convinced a Congress controlled by the opposition, and he ultimately was re-elected. And the programs that he initiated structured foreign policy for forty years, ultimately resulting in the destruction of the Berlin Wall and the triumph of democracy and the free market.

Why do I relate these points of history, now fifty years later? Because, ladies and gentlemen, it is this kind of foresight and courage which is required now, by leaders in both Pakistan and India, to begin a process of constructive dialogue and conflict resolution and hopefully consensus building. Extremists on both sides of our border might resist, but the masses of our people are looking for compromise. Our people want peace even if they cheer and scream when they are egged on by demagogues with the rhetoric of war.

So let us begin.

I recall quite vividly that the problems of the Middle East were viewed as intractable, unsolvable by men and women of less than grand vision, until Anwar Sadaat broke open the debate by bold action, and began a process that is still unfolding. Like in the dispute between India and Pakistan, the dispute between the Israelis and the Arab nations was manageable and addressable when, and only when, the core issue - the issue of the political rights of the people of Palestine -- was successfully addressed. And President Sadaat and Prime Minister Begin won the Nobel Prize for Peace.

I recall vividly that the problems of Northern Ireland were viewed as intractable and irreconcilable by men and women of limited vision, until John Hume, David Trimble, Bill Clinton and George Mitchell restructured the debate, resulting in the extraordinary Good Friday peace treaty which we all pray, Inshallah, will lead to a final peace on that troubled, divided island. And the two men who risked the most, and fought the hardest -- Mr. Hume and Mr. Trimble -- won the Nobel Prize for Peace.

I recall vividly that few on earth ever thought we would live to see the day that South Africa would flourish under democracy, and the dreaded cancer of apartheid would be radiated from the body politic. But justice prevailed, and leaders with political vision and courage prevailed. And Nelson Mandela became the President of a United South Africa, a black and white South Africa. And the two leaders who made that possible, President Mandela and President DeKlerk, won the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Ladies and gentlemen, in Oslo, there is another set of Nobel Prizes that wait to be awarded to people of courage, to true leaders. They are reserved for leaders of peace in India and Pakistan.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and I took significant steps to promote peace between 1988-90:

1. We signed non-attack on each other's nuclear facilities
2. We had a defense Secretaries agreement for a settlement in Siachin
3. We expanded the trade list between our two countries.
4. We exchanged delegations on the Wullar Barrage issue.
5. We explored the Sir Creek matter.

But then he called for elections and death took him away before he could return to office.

It was at that time - December 1988 - that the other SAARC countries accepted the proposals of a world's youngest elected chief executive to:

- a). Declare 1989 the year of the Girl child;
- b). Allow Parliamentarians and Judges to visit SAARC countries on a SAARC Pass which required no visa;
- c). Allow for a common SAARC pre-stamped Mailing System so that families could remain easily in touch with each other.

It is time to pick up the threads again

A Shared Past to Build the Future

The South Asian region encompassing Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, has a common and shared history. We speak the same language. Our colour is the same. Our thinking, values, pre-47 history and culture is the same. We have a multi-religious society with Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Parsees, Buddhists, and others. Each in our countries believe in freedom of religion, in safety and security resisting outside coercion or intervention. In Dubai, Singapore, or London, a representative sample of the entire gamut of our population and religious spectrum has learnt to co-exist peacefully. The post nuclear era in the sub-continent calls upon us to define a new paradigm and a new set of rules for the game in South Asia.

New Rules for South Asia

The essence of the new paradigm for South Asia is to organize government and economic affairs in a manner which delivers the maximum progress to the regional population in the shortest period of time, with the least wastage in resources.

The fastest route to economic development and growth for our suffering people is the generation of critical economic mass through formation of larger 'economic free zones'. Unless South Asia pulls itself out of the quagmire of poverty, prejudice and the past to change, our people will remain slaves in the global economy carrying out menial low paying tasks for the rich citizens of the First World. Our nations are faced with the choice: either continue as warring sovereign states who continue to carry the "Third World" label for the next 100 years, or pool our resources to create an Asian economic powerhouse comparable to the EC. Should we embark upon the logical route (not necessarily a forgone conclusion given our history of taking the path of 'greatest' resistance), and decide on pooling economic sovereignty and creating an EC type South Asian economic free zone, then we need to ask: what obvious partners are available for India and Pakistan?

An Asian Free Zone

The disparities in per capita income between India and Asean are too great. China and India are different in per capita income, in GNP, and at different stages of their economic evolution cycles. There are differences too in the economic and legal systems (Capitalists/Communists). Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal are the obvious candidates for India as partners, for these countries:

- (1) have similar per capita income,
- (2) all are in similar stages of their economic development life cycles,
- (3) all share a common legal system based on English Law,
- (4) all have free market based economies,
- (5) all share English as a common language for Government and business,
- (6) all share a common history and culture.

From Pakistan's perspective, the Gulf Arab States (GCC) are a far cry as they yet have to partner with common Arab countries such as Egypt and Syria. ECO (and RCD before that) has yet to take off due to the different historical backgrounds, per capita incomes, and different stages of economic development (with Turkey wooing the EC). Afghanistan and CIS States, are behind Pakistan in their growth cycles, with a host of other problems such as language, legal systems, per capita income, and the fact that the CIS States are bound together under the Russian CIS confederation system. Pakistan cannot economically integrate with China for the same reasons as

India. Therefore for Pakistan too the logical choice for a long term EC style partnership, are the South Asian nations.

Had the South Asian nations been Muslim countries, our partnership would have taken place long ago. Yet, if religion was the criteria which bound States together, then Bangladesh would still be East Pakistan and Pakistan would be free of provincialism, sectarianism, and every other kind of 'ism'.

Based on this analysis my recommendation is that in Phase I, the South Asian nations agree to form a free economic zone. This zone could comprise all SAARC countries, plus Iran (or even all the ECO States if they are willing to join). Phase I can conclude in a decade allowing the founding members to reach a critical phase in their economic development and in their per capita income. In Phase II, China could be included in the Free Zone.

This is a vision of an Asian Free Zone which by 2010 can be in existence with 2.5 to 3 billion people, and with a GNP of US\$ 7 trillion (based upon 1998 'Purchasing Power Parity'). Of this GNP, roughly 2/3 would be China, and 1/3 SAARC States. Our Asian Free Zone could then be at the same level, in GNP terms, as EC, US or Japan.

With roughly 50% of the World's population located in the Asian Zone, this zone in terms of an economic market would have the greatest influence, voice and clout in the 21st Century.

As one of America's Senators, Barbara Mikulski, recently said, "demography is destiny." And if demography is destiny, the future belongs to Asia.

In terms of demographics, in terms of production, in terms of consumption, in terms of markets, in terms of an expanding capital intensive middle class, the Asian continent will set the tone, set the pace, and dominate the economic and geopolitical trends of the coming era.

The states of the 'Asian Free Zone' would be independent sovereign nations on the pattern of the EC sharing (1) a free economic trade zone (2) a common Central Bank with a common trading currency (3) a common security policy and ultimately (4) a common revolving Presidency and Parliament (like the EC Presidency and Parliament) Even the smallest member state, such as Sri Lanka through this cooperation could have a chance to be the President of the 'superpower' Asian Zone.

Principles of the Asian free Zone

Let's see what is considered "In" and what "Out" in the proposed Asian Free Zone:

IN	OUT
-Free trade	-Protected and closed markets
-Democratic systems down to province/state level with maximum provincial and local rights	-Centralized govt., with limited provincial rights
-Free movement of people	-Closed borders
-Rule of law, guarantee of civil liberties	-Authoritarianism
-Respect of all religions, castes, creeds	-Old religious hatreds
-State is servant and economic facilitator	-State has a 'raja' mentality
-State spends budget on health, education, etc	-State spends budget on defense
-Close cordial & friendly state relations	-Cold war in South Asia
-State creates environment for a new NIC	-State creates environment for a new Russia
-Ultimately aim for the European state model of a supra-structure of independent states	Aim for the Soviet State model domination and hegemony by the Centre

The Future

Ladies & Gentlemen - We are the ones who have to reach to transform our people's future in a single generation. South Asia combined with Iran and China can comprise the largest population concentration region in the World with 2.6 billion people, over 50% of the global population. We can choose to become a super economic zone, enjoying a life style similar to the European people or we can cling on to our Third World status and continue to blame "foreign powers" for our miseries.

The choice is in our hands.

Not in the hands of our fathers.

Not in the hands of Nehru, Bhutto, Bandaranaike or Mujeeb.

The choice is not in the hands of the coming generations.

Not in the hands of our children.

Our hands will shape the destiny of South Asia, that course, that history which will flow for the next hundred years.

We are gifted to be at this special time, at this special place, in this special representative capacity as one-century wanes and another dawns. Our thoughts, ideas, and deeds can make the difference.

Let me tell you about my country.

Pakistan has paid a very heavy price in the spin off from the Afghan War. This includes the Klashnikov culture in Karachi, the rapid and alarming rise in the number of drug addicts who are estimated at over four million, the spillover of militants from trainee camps across the border, which has exacerbated tensions with our neighbours and disturbed internal security. Many Pakistanis were amazed to learn when the US Cruise Missiles hit Khost that six of the dead were Pakistanis. According to the UN, when Bahmiyan in North Afghanistan fell, Pakistanis were amongst the prisoners taken. Threats of terrorism and militancy to Pakistan from across the border are real.

Drugs, terrorism, extremism and violence are dangers which call for Pakistanis to put greater attention to what is happening in Afghanistan and could happen in Pakistan.

Let me tell you about our polity.

In Pakistan there are different kinds of political parties.

Some proclaim an Islamic system to win power.

Some claim provincial autonomy/nationalism as the answer.

Others pursue the politics of sectarianism to achieve their goals.

Still others believe the politics of ethnicity will lead to deliverance.

A few without electoral support cling to the notion of climbing into power through a military backed interim government.

The Pakistan Peoples Party believes in the politics of the people. Our goal is the economic emancipation of our people. We want our peoples to have freedom to chose, to practice. They are free to follow any sect, speak any ethnic language, practice their beliefs as they interpret religion. It is not our job.

Our job is to provide freedom and economic emancipation.

Quaid-e-Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto saw socialism as the route to economic emancipation in the seventies.

His daughter led the drive for economic emancipation through decentralization, deregulation privatization and free market.

For the coming decade, given the global realities, the path to economic salvation, to economic emancipation, to opportunity, prosperity, dignity, hope and success lies in a free economic zone.

Fellow Parliamentarians - Will we be condemned to the miseries of an unfortunate past or will we demonstrate the courage and conviction to seize a fantastic future?

Will we allow the frenzied calls of fanatics to dictate the agenda or will we allow the cool logic of the information technology world to drive an agenda of change?

Will we choose the path of Satti and Karo Kari or will we break free of outmoded traditions?

Will we torture and suppress our people, in fear, or will we respect people's dignity and self determination, in confidence?

Will we blind ourselves to old battles or see the new ones, the real ones that need to be fought.

My father, whom I loved deeply, was born in the British Raj. He lived through an epoch period of the Second World War, the freedom struggle, the collapse of Colonialism.

As a young student I heard his brilliant address at the United Nations. I heard him say, "Mr. Secretary General, realities change. The reality was that German troops were at the gates of Stalingrad". Realities change. Indeed, realities change.

But I would say definitions change too.

The people of South Asia are an honourable people, a self respecting people. Honour and respect through the centuries have carried different definitions.

There was a time when we honoured the warriors who raped, looted and plundered calling them great Conquerors and Emperors.

Today we honour a Nelson Mandela who makes peace and are appalled by those who rape, plunder and pillage.

There was a time when we honoured a man who look revenge for the murder of his family or tribe. Today we are shocked and punish those who take the law into their own hands.

There was a time when honour demanded that we lock up our wives in women's quarters. Today we consider it barbaric.

Realities change and with them definitions. There is no honour when people commit suicide because they cannot afford to live.

There is no honour when a child is born burdened with its country's debt.

There is no honour when a sniper's bullet kills a father on his way to work destroying a family's joy.

Since the Berlin Wall fell, we have seen the First World move towards larger economic entities. We have seen that mighty armies could not save Communist or Third World Countries from disintegrating into Warlords who dishonored humanity with bloodshed and carnage.

- Warlords ruled and ruined Lebanon at a time
- Warlords ruled and ruined Somalia
- Warlords ruled and ruined Afghanistan
- Warlords ruled and ruined Chechnya, Bosnia, Sudan and parts of Central Asia.
- Armed Mafias rule and ruined parts of Russia.

Mighty armies watched helplessly as warlords or armed Mafias took over.

The IMF and World Bank are not charities to help South Asia survive. They can give us loans for a time to keep us afloat. But if we fail to learn to survive, who will take us to shore.

Ladies and Gentlemen - Honoured Parliamentarians,

Will we learn from the First World Countries with trillion dollars economies or will we condemn the coming generations to warlords and armed Mafias who will fight and kill.

The unipolar world has no reason to act as a police man unless its vital interests are involved. The carnage in Bosnia continued for years in the heart of Europe. The killing in Kosovo has yet to push the world into action.

You and I, we, the people, we the elected representatives have to police our own world by ensuring democracy, human rights, good governance and creating a macro-economic frame work where our people can compete successfully and where South Asia can go on to make its mark in a new century, a new millenium

Parliamentarians

In just over 300 days, we will witness, only for the third time in recorded history, the turning of the millenium.

Where, and what, will we be when the year 2000 lights up the night's sky?

Will we be liberated to the endless possibilities of a remarkable new future?

Ladies and Gentlemen

I see a 21st Century of miraculous opportunity.

I see a 21st Century where temples are not brunt nor mosques razed to the ground.

I see a 21st Century where Human Rights are universal and self-determination reigns supreme.

I see a 21st Century where civil dialogue replaces the rhetoric of war and consensus guides the South Asian debate.

I see a 21st Century where people's trust in government is restored, and government gets on with alleviating the miseries and hardships of the people.

I see a 21st Century where every child is planned , wanted, nurtured and supported.

I see a 21st Century of tolerance and pluralism, where religions respect other religions.

I see a 21st Century of equal rights for women and men.

I see a 21st Century where the birth of a girl is welcomed with the same joy as the birth of a boy.

This can be the moment of Change

This can be the moment of Hope

This can be the moment for Leadership

The stakes will never be more important.

The risks never more dangerous.

In the words of the UNESCO Constitution, "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of the men that defences of peace must be constructed."

Our ancestors watch.

Our children and grand children's future awaits.

And long after we are gone, and the pages of this keynote address has turned first to sepia, and then to dust, let the history books of India and Pakistan declare that, in the last year of second millenium, moderate and reasonable men and women seized the moment, seized the day, and through courage and conviction shaped a permanent peace for generations yet unknown.

That is the 21st Century I see, for my children and for yours.

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen.