

Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Liberal Proxies

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Abstract

This paper proposes a long term solution regarding the behavioral changes in Pakistan's foreign policy. From a state sponsoring terrorism to an ally in war on religious terrorism and extremism, as well as a regional cooperator, it can certainly contribute in bringing peace and economic development for Pakistan-Afghanistan and collectively for South Asia. The paper also demarcates what course of action Afghanistan shall pursue to bring about that change in Pakistan's foreign policy behavior.

Key words: *Deep state, foreign policy behavior, security establishment, proxy, strategic assets, religious outfits.*

1. Introduction

South Asia still remains one of the hotly debated zones of conflict and a hotspot of poverty, terrorism, and cross-border insurgencies between states such as Pakistan-India on Kashmir territories, between Afghanistan-Pakistan on Durand line, as well as religious terrorism and other proxy insurgencies sponsored by regional and international players. Suspicion, enmity, direct wars, in addition to proxy wars (particularly after the partition of Pakistan from India in 1947), among the three states (Afghanistan, Pakistan & India) have intensified the political climate in the region.

The conflicting interests of the three mentioned states, not only have never ceded peace among these states, but it has continued, if not intensified, with time. The three (opposing or competitor) states and their relationships in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries are

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mentioned as follows:

Muslim League led by Muhammed Ali Jinnah - founding father of Pakistan endorses the Muhammad Iqbal's idea of a separate nation for India's Muslims in 1940. In 1947 Muslim state of East and West Pakistan created out of partition of India at the end of British rule with hundreds of thousands killed in widespread communal violence and millions made homeless until the state of Pakistan was created.

Months after Pakistan's creation, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, the founding leader of Pakistan, died and the first conflict with India over disputed territory of Kashmir commenced. In 1951, Jinnah's successor Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated, leading to the first wave of military rule in the country. In 1958 martial law was declared and General Ayyub Khan seized power over the country. In 1960 general Ayyub Khan became President with the support of the military. Unfolding events, in 1965 second war with India over Kashmir took place and in 1971 East Pakistan attempted to secede currently Bangladesh, leading to a civil war with West Pakistan.

Looking at the atrocities committed therein by Pakistan's army using Jaama'at I Islami of Bangladesh in its favor against the Bangla people, (tape as policy and war as tactic), India intervened in support of East Pakistan, which eventually broke away to become Bangladesh, deepening the hostilities between the two arch enemies, India and Pakistan.

By 1973 Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto became Prime Minister and in 1977 riots erupted over allegations of vote-rigging by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which led to the launch of another military coup and takeover of the country by General Zia Ul-Haq as a military dictator.

In 1988 General Zia, the US ambassador to Pakistan and several high-ranking Pakistani army officials were killed in a mysterious air crash, effectively ending Zia's military rule. This was the era where Zia militarized the Islamic parties and established groups to infiltrate into Kashmir and Afghanistan

(Hanif, 2011). Following the unstable nature of politics in Pakistan, in October 1999, General Pervez Musharraf seized power in a military coup, bringing back military rule to the Pakistani state. By April 2004, Parliament approved the creation of the military-led National Security Council, institutionalizing the role of the armed forces in civilian affairs. Making the army further involved as the guardians of the state of Pakistan (BBC 20 July, 2018).

On the other side, with a turbulent war teary historical background, Afghanistan has a strategic geography in Southeastern Asia. Though this location has never been operationalized¹ for the interests of its own inhabitants, it is a country with tribal ties and codes and a multi-ethnic population that now allies with India, by perusing a friendly foreign policy as a counter balance and pressure tool against Pakistan. A step that has further convinced Pakistan's army to remain committed to its strategic depth approach towards Afghanistan.

India on the other hand, with 1.324 billion (2016) population and an emerging market in the region, commanding one of the most disciplined armies in the world, is on the verge of becoming a regional power hub. It is an arch enemy of Pakistan since 1947, the year both countries got independence from Great Britain. India remains committed to helping Afghanistan to become a stable and independent state, by contributing largely to its social and infrastructure development especially after the fall of the Taliban regime and post 9/11.

2. Pakistan's deep state (Army) quagmire

Balancing the Indian influence in the region and, particularly, Afghanistan; protecting and developing the nuclear arsenal and installing a pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan are the cornerstones of Deep State's Vision (Pakistan's Army). Pak Army remains the most powerful military institution in that country and the true guardians of the state at present. To accomplish this vision, an alliance 'Axis of evil'² Pak Army, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and religious outfits³ (parties) was established which in turn helped the Deep State⁴ keep, liberal elements within Pakistan in check, India at bay and

Afghanistan as a satellite state particularly in the Taliban era (Rashid, 2000).

One of the most effective elements in this Axis of Evil is the religious outfits. Since the Axis' formation which dates back to Zia's rule, the religious groups have continuously been the right arm of Pakistan's military establishment, where the army has used them as an armed proxy to maintain and use when and where they deemed necessary, from elections to Kashmir, to India and Afghanistan. Today, militancy, religious terrorism and insurgents fighting in Kashmir, Afghanistan and the tribal belt of Pakistan are organized and mobilized by these religious outfits, through their unchecked madrasas as main extensive facility and manpower bases. It was a need for Pakistan's foreign policy's to change Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) or the whole of Afg-Pak region into a multi-layered militancy and terrorism center by a combined strategy of the Axis of Evil.

Pakistan's military continues to portray these strategic allies (religious outfits) as the only patriots, while suppressing any other group/party/movement that challenge their grip on power. Hence, making it beyond imagination that Pakistani Army will put down and abandon these religious outfits indulging in extremism through madrasas, albeit the army's vision.

3. Afghanistan's quagmire

Peace is a national priority to the Afghan state as President Ashraf Ghani mentioned in an interview (News, April 6, 2016). The conflict in Afghanistan and peace is more a regional issue by nature than a domestic political turmoil. Taliban, Al-Qaida and recently Daesh⁵ are the threats, though in different capacities, faced by the Afghan state. Taliban, the most visible and direct threat that remains to state power and sovereignty is the insurgent group sponsored and supported by Pakistan.

To achieve this national priority peace program that the Afghan population desperately needs and deserves, the Afghan government needs to bring Taliban to the negotiating table and convince Pakistan to be a friend than

a foe in stabilizing peace in Afghanistan. Until now, the instruments used by Afghan State are the US friendship, India as a counter balance and the so-called Tahreek-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as claimed by Pakistan as a proxy to some extent. Despite several attempts from the National Unity Government (NUG) and its predecessor, Afghanistan has failed to initiate peace talks with Taliban due to an asymmetric capacity and few instruments for its foreign policy at its disposal; thus, making it impossible to change the behavior of Pakistan as well as Taliban so far.

4. Strategic policy change

Considering the historical and geo-political challenges thus far, the ambitious phenomenon of, ‘changing Pakistan’s behavior towards Afghanistan’ now requires a new approach. To achieve a long lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan as well as in the region, and to build a cooperative relationship than proxy politics that remains a trade mark of Pakistan, it is proposed that Afghanistan should establish a long term constructive relationship with liberal elements within Pakistan by following a long term policy under the name of ‘the liberal proxy’.

Liberal proxy refers to elements within Pakistan’s society who believes in democracy, good governance, economic liberalization and development and a ‘state not between army and mosque (Haqani, 2005) but a state for welfare and people. What makes their interests common with Afghan state is a natural bond due to the same destiny that the two sides share with the following reasons:

Firstly, the civilian liberal elements in Pakistan are in clear disagreement with the hegemonic⁶ role (i.e. dominant in political and religious context) the army plays in state affairs. This has hugely affected the capacity of civilian government as non-functioning and unresponsive, as well as very destabilizing in nature - taking into account the latest sacking of then Prime Minister Yousuf Reza Gilani in President Asif Zardari’s case and Nawaz Sharif’s offshore balancing case. It is perceived that Pakistan’s civilian government is merely a

silent spectator especially in relations to foreign affairs and other vital issues across the country. The liberal elements also disapprove of the double standards in foreign policy behavior of the Deep State. The religious outfits play a major role in the Deep State because they are perceived as the source of human and propaganda tools for terrorism and insurgency that is helping the Deep State to accomplish their foreign policy objectives such as, militancy in Indian occupied Kashmir and Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan.

Secondly, the liberal elements are also against the behavior of deep state for keeping the religious outfits as strategic assets in marginalizing the liberal elements in mainstream politics. As a stooge of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) these religious outfits have always been the unquestioned supporters of the Deep State or the establishment in Pakistan (Rashid, 1995).

Thirdly, the Axis has not only guaranteed the military dominance but has put Pakistan economically far behind its arch enemy India and also has not placed Pakistan state as a functioning democracy on the world's list of democratic countries. The Axis has brought Pakistan virtually to the brink of marginalization, if not collapse, economically and politically. Given the rise of India as a regional player which also does not satisfy the liberal elements to approve this alliance.

With the support of the Afghan state, if liberal elements within Pakistan with a vision of democratic state and strong civilian institutions, whose primary agenda is to create a welfare state, takes control of the power, the nature of the affairs and behavior of Pakistan will fundamentally change. Definition of national interests and the means to achieve them will also change once the civilian governments are true holders of power. As an example we can mention the transition that happened from military to civilian government led by the AK party⁷ in Turkey. The economic, social and political development which Turkey witnessed after the transition is unprecedented. Today, Turkey under the leadership of President Erdogan is more powerful and a key player in the region. Tunisia after the revolutions of the Arab Spring⁸ witnessed genuine free

and fair elections for the first time. The Tunisians are on the way to a welfare state that is ruled by the popular will than a dictator with his devil strategies of violence and suppression. So, the result for Pakistan will also be; a Pakistan with a genuine democracy and functioning civilian institutions dominated by civilian government and ruled by popular will than a military institution which will change regional cooperation and engagement phenomenon too for the region.

With the changing context of Pakistan politics, the nature of alliances, the means of foreign policy and national priorities will be far different than what we observe in today's Pakistan. This will lead to peace and harmony in the region and Afghanistan because the strategy for liberals will be economic development and institutional building focusing more on human development and security where proxy insurgencies and religious outfits are hardly allies. Again, economic and trade agendas will replace insurgency and religious terrorism in Pakistan's internal and external behavior. Therefore, Afghanistan needs to capitalize on the opportunity to bond with the liberal elements through a long term foreign policy agenda which provide support to empower them. The shift of power will fundamentally change the power relationship within Pakistan. Educated middle class, civil society and liberal minded politicians in political parties who have a liberal leaning are the targets the Afghan state could engage with.

5. Conclusion

While dangers are always present, new possibilities lie ahead. Determined collaboration between the liberal elements as well as Afghan state can break the cycle of yearly approaches to the brink of the policymaking cliff. With the gradual development of liberal elements within Pakistan, the nature of deep state and strategic depth politics will change fundamentally. Militancy and religious terrorism provided by religious outfits and used by Pakistani Army has nurtured economic failures, marginalization and destabilization not only in region but within Pakistan itself now.

To overcome Pakistani military's hegemony on state affairs, which is the root cause of terrorism and regional instability, Afghanistan and Pakistani liberal elements share much in common. This kind of an alliance can change the current religious terrorism and insurgencies which is active on both sides with different scales to trade, technological and economic development. The solution to the challenge of militancy, terrorism and radicalism in the Afg-Pak region is only possible if a constructive alliance is built between the Afghan state and the liberal elements that share common interests and destiny which will not only stabilize Afghanistan-Pakistan region but bring economic and trade opportunities and development for the mentioned and the wider region in southern Asia.

Notes and References

¹. Operationalization is a process where a country changes its resources into its capabilities.

². The phrase axis of evil was first used by U.S. President George W. Bush in his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002. In this paper, Axis of evil refers to: Pakistan's Army, ISI and religious parties who jointly work for the Deep State's vision.

³. Religious outfits refers to; all those political parties who have religious leaning or ideology.

⁴. The term "deep state" is used within political science to describe influential decision-making bodies believed to be within government who are relatively permanent and whose policies and long-term plans are unaffected by changing administrations.

⁵. Daesh means, Islamic State or (IS).

⁶. Hegemonic role means dominant in a political or social context.

⁷. AK Party is the Justice and Development Party abbreviated officially as AK Party. It is a national conservative political party in Turkey.

⁸. The Arab Spring also called Arab Revolutions was a revolutionary wave of both violent and non-violent demonstrations, protests, riots, coups, foreign interventions, protests and civil wars in North Africa and the Middle East that began on 18 December

2010 in Tunisia with the Tunisian Revolution.

⁹ Coll, Steve. 2018. *Directorate S: The C.I.A. and America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan*. Penguin Random House.

¹⁰ Haqqani, Husain. July 01, 2005. *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*. Washington.

¹¹ Hanif, Muhammad. 2009. *Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Penguin.

¹² Khalilzad, Zalmay. 2016. *The Envoy: From Kabul to the White House, My Journey Through a Turbulent World*. Macmillan Press.

¹³ News, BBC. 20 July 2018. *Pakistan country profile*. London: BBC.

¹⁴ News, BBC. Apr 6, 2016. *President Ashraf Ghani interview - BBC News*. Kabul: BBC.

¹⁵ Rashid, Ahmed. 1995. *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* Islamabad : Penguin.

¹⁶ Rashid, Ahmed. 2000. *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* . Yale University.

¹⁷ Richard L. Armitage and Samuel R. Berger, Chairs Daniel S. Markey. 2010. *U.S. Strategy for Pakistan and Afghanistan*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations.

¹⁸ 2016. *The National Interest*. September 14. Accessed June 15, 2018. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/forging-enduring-partnership-afghanistan-17708>.