



DEVELOPMENTS IN PAKISTAN

FROM 01 DEC 09 TO 31 MAY 10

INTRODUCTION

Constitutionally Pakistan is an Islamic Republic with Parliamentary system of democracy in the federal set up. The President is Head of the state and Head of Government is the Prime Minister. It is administratively divided into four provinces namely Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province. Pakistan is located in the western part of South Asia, surrounded by Republic of India on the East, Afghanistan and People's Republic of China on the north, Islamic Republic of Iran on the West and the Arabian Sea (Indian Ocean) on the south.

POLITICAL SCENARIO

Pakistan came into being on

14th August 1947, by gaining independence from the British rule by process of partition from India sub-continent. It continues to face many of the same problems that have constrained the growth of the country since its inception i.e. Government instability, tense relations with India, ethnic differences, political

divisions among provinces, economic dependence on international aid, and weak prospects for democracy. It is difficult to tell if Pakistan is at the verge of disintegration or on the way of renewal. To overcome the present state of affairs, it appears that Pakistan has realized need of the hour and taken a step towards process of democratic consolidation. The unanimous



passage of the 18th amendment to Pakistan's

constitution by parliament and signature into law by President Asif Ali Zardari is a major development to establish a parliamentary government system. The amendment constitutes one of the most dramatic decentralization of power in Pakistan since the drafting of its 1973 constitution and reverses President Pervez Musharraf's efforts to concentrate power in the indirectly elected office of the presidency.

As a result Pakistan's parliament has institutionalized a new political consensus on the country's legal and political framework. It gives the parliament, prime minister, judiciary, and the provincial governments' greater autonomy under the constitution. Although these changes offer an opportunity for Pakistan's political parties to begin seriously addressing the country's serious economic and security problems, the full impact of the amendment's many changes will only be assessed over time as the country's major political entities test their empowerment within a political set up in which the military establishment remains the most powerful player.

This prompts to envisage a fundamental change of civil-military dynamics in which the civil institutions in Pakistan are strengthened, including expansion of civilian oversight of military activities; bringing intelligence operations under elected rather than military or bureaucratic leadership; transparency of military procurement; and getting foreign policy decision making under the civilian leadership. Yes, such a dynamic change may be too much to expect in the short-term as envisioned by its founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

As far as army is concerned it has gradually acquired a corporate structure and identity that appears to precedes broader national interests. It tends to act independently in foreign dealings, particularly with China and the United States. It has penetrated the civilian sector and now controls large segments of civil administration and it has a wide economic footprint that goes beyond its jurisdiction. Internally weak political parties, tied to individual personalities or brought together by temporary and short-sighted common interests, have turned to involve the army in political affairs, only to later lament its active role and taking over of the power.

The increasingly important role of the army has

been encouraged by the US relationship. The United States has at various times given its strategic and often short-term foreign policy interests precedence over sustaining democracy in Pakistan, by aligning with the army as a centre of power.

It will not be wrong to say that the relationship between civilian and military institutions does not exist in a vacuum; it is directly linked to the nature of Pakistan's relationship with U.S, and then to its relationships with India and role in Afghanistan. So long as the Pakistani army can make up, the perception of an existential Indian threat or even an immediate threat from domestic terrorism, it will be extremely difficult for a civilian government to assert its control over the vast functions which are now controlled by the military decision-making machinery. The most likely scenario is continuation of the status quo where essentially the military rules behind a civilian "form".

Lastly the reality is that Pakistan remains a strategically important country in a troubled region of the world, sitting as it does on the cross over point of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Gulf. It also has nuclear arms, whose control and safeguarding is the key to the future stability of the region. As of now it appears that the army has maintained effective control over the nuclear weapons. But that has not minimized the concerns.

ROLE OF PAKISTAN IN US EXIT-POLICY

Today, Pakistan is at a crossroad as a partner of the West in the global 'War on Terror.' Its army is operating in a changed and highly charged domestic political environment where a controlled form of democracy exists. After decades of conflicts with India, including one that led to the break up of united Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, now, for the first time, Pakistan's army is waging a largely futile war against an unseen enemy-'Islamist terrorists'-within its own borders. The eastern front against India is relatively calmer. But the western front bordering Afghanistan is flooded with insurgent activity spilling over from Afghanistan and also home-grown radicalism, involving the Islamist Taliban who is intent on fighting the United States in Afghanistan and putting their stamp on the tribal areas of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. Even the

settled areas of the NWEFP, including SWAT, and the urban heart of Pakistan and its capital, Islamabad, have become havens for the radicalized Islamists who wish to impose Islamic law on their fellow citizens and who have challenged the military with some success.

As of now due to US pressure, the Pakistanis are concerned about a widening of the war beyond the operations against the Pakistan Taliban and to go after Afghan Taliban sanctuaries inside Pakistan. Pakistan perceives its home-grown Taliban differently from the Afghan Taliban, who are not viewed as Pakistan's enemy. It is obvious that US-Pakistani relations will progress only if the divergent objectives of the two sides can be resolved.

It is also quite evident that the Pakistani military operations in the SWAT Valley and South Waziristan are being used to counter a threat to Pakistan's internal security from indigenous elements. They are not directed against the external activities of Al-Qaida. Nor are they directed towards facilitating the military operations of the NATO forces and the Afghan national army in Afghan territory. The safe havens of groups like Al-Qaida, LeT & Haqqani, which are seen as an asset and not as a threat to Pakistan, are being shifted from place to place to escape detection and action by the US. On the other hand US pressure on the Pakistan army to expand its war or else accept US direct attacks on Afghan Taliban leaders in Baluchistan may trigger serious trouble within Pakistani society and especially within its army that leads to destabilization of the country.

Now if the Obama strategy in Afghanistan can somehow avoid producing deeper rifts within Pakistan society and its army, then the chances that disintegration of Pakistan's army, and probability that Pakistan will turn into a failed state is minimized. This is more likely when U.S says that the most important strategic objective in the Af-Pak arena is the stability of Pakistan. Therefore the logical conclusion is to think about the impact of NATO policies on the jointness of the Pakistan polity and its army and expect their (Pak) action in coherence with NATO's objective. With this in the backdrop one can appreciate the ground realities, wherein Pakistan is playing a half hearted game.

As a matter of fact Pakistan can play a major role in bringing the stability in Afghanistan, provided its political conscience is honest to do so. But if it

continues with the game of "Hide & Seek" to save Afghan Taliban in Pak then even NATO forces may not be able to achieve their prime objective.

FUTURE OF PAK-TALIBAN

Pakistan has various types of terrorism and internal threats, with most insurgent groups identifying themselves as religious or ethnic separatists. Some political parties represent religious and ethnic communities, and conflicts among these parties have resulted in violence, which is rarely based on religious reasons but rather the different social, political, and economic status that correlate with religion. Some Islamic militias have links with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. These militant groups have definite influence on Pakistan's foreign policy, and they have assisted their counter parts in other countries.

One of the main concerns of the Pakistanis' think-tanks today is a 'OBVIOUS' fear in the West that Pakistan is on the verge of a takeover by the Taliban or radical Islamic groups, and that such a takeover will destabilize the region and especially India with its large Muslim minority. As per the inputs it appears, the Pakistani government opts for deals with Taliban and Taliban-like militants when it is in a position of relative weakness. Rarely these deals, are helpful in empowering the state legitimacy, and often end up benefiting the militants, allowing them to consolidate and bargain for a further retract of army presence from the territory that the Taliban wish to control.

It is likely that this tug of war will continue for some time with each side testing the other. But, it is difficult to predict what shape the Pakistan Taliban movement will take in the coming years. As a matter of fact it will depend on strategies that the Taliban might employ, and how the Pakistan responds to those strategies. The Pakistan Taliban as on date does not seem to be organized & has numerous factions and overlapping objectives. Nonetheless as on date, four broad Taliban strategies are in evidence in Pakistan and the same may determine the scope of its future. These are:

- (a) Taliban have recognized that they can gain a tremendous advantage vis-à-vis the government by engaging multiple fronts simultaneously.
- (b) The most effective Taliban approach to win the support of local populations have been to take advantage of local grievances against the state.
- (c) Exploit Sectarian Conflict undertake contract

attack &

- (d) Soft Control of Urban Areas by intimidating the system with ready to compromise attitude.

These four specific strategies that the Taliban have used, and may likely to continue to use, are the basis for their expansion in the frontier. The advantage for the Taliban is that only two or three out of the four strategies have to work for them to achieve results. The SWAT and South Waziristan operations have proved on ground that the army can carry out a policy of "forceful" containment. However, Islamabad tends to run short in the follow-up civilian reconstruction, and that the Pakistan Taliban is biding their time and will return once the army loses interest. Most likely a war of attrition favours the Taliban in that its continuing suicide bombings will weaken the morale. After all how many suicide bombing attacks can Pakistani cities take before conceding to the Pakistan Taliban? With this in the back drop, it appears that major Taliban advances in the frontier over the coming years are likely to come by way of a series of face-saving government negotiations.

It appears that the opinion of both the public and Pakistani policy makers, seem to have turned against deal-making with the Taliban for the time being, but it is almost certain that the government has not foreclosed this option because of the complex ground realities.

On the other hand a new free-style Islamists emerge who do not play by the old rules and who are unmoored from established institutions such as madrassas and religious parties, this may result in increase of new militant alliances that also outstrip the ability of the government to contain.

INDO-PAK PEACE PROCESS

In the prevailing situation the need of the hour is sincere & genuine change of mind set and a broad review of policies on part of both the countries. It may appear hypothetical but it is the only way out after more than sixty long years of continuous animosity that has given almost nil results. It will not be wrong to say that India have moved forward by accepting Kashmir as an outstanding dispute between the two countries, hence Pakistan should also accept that it is better to set aside more obstinate problems like

Kashmir for better times and concentrate on resolving the ones that can be resolved easily.

It is true that Indo-Pak relations are not beyond repair or improvement, but not to recognize the limits to this process would be to live in a imaginary situation. The problem is complex and the canvas large. The relations are subject to convulsions. The only solution is if Pakistan can stop playing international strategic games and be at peace with itself, possibly then only it can be at peace with India too. It must understand the strategic indivisibility of the subcontinent. Pakistan has to appreciate that its stability and economic progress is in India's long term interest.

The Indo-Pak talks have had an intermittent history. The process of official dialogue started in 2004 and saw initial progress. Although as per the records available it appears that by the third round it had lost its momentum and was becoming more of a ritual than necessity. Finally this also came to a grinding halt after the Mumbai attack as there was hardly a possibility of resumption under the altered circumstances.

The composite dialogue initiated by Musharraf ran into trouble, mainly because of the internal situation within Pakistan, especially after the judiciary controversy. Though there have not been any major breakthroughs in Indo-Pak relations in recent years, there have been significant developments, which may be expanded and developed further. For example, the ceasefire between India and Pakistan along the international border and LoC has stayed intact, except few exceptions. The main problem that confronts India and Pakistan today is how to keep channels of communication open with present situation in the region. Developments in the Af-Pak region, growing terrorism and deadly violence in both countries, and emerging new conflicts relating to a extremely emotive water issue are some of them.

There is no need for India and Pakistan to look for new ideas or themes to improve their relations. There have been adequate themes identified already, which need to be built upon.

In the backdrop of the above facts it may be concluded that peace and stability in India-Pakistan relations is essential for the well being of both the countries. Civil societies in India and Pakistan,

support the goal of peace and reconciliation; peace constituencies in both countries must therefore, be further strengthened by providing them greater support. It is also essential that the trust deficit and the wrong side of history not be allowed to blow on the task of moving relations forward. Also trust can be best built through multiple uninterrupted dialogues.

A comprehensive reconciliation can only be ensured, through engagement at every level: engagement of political leaders, official dialogues, civil society meetings, cooperation between business and corporate leaders.

Progress made in previous rounds of talks may be carried forward in the official dialogue to achieve the ultimate objective of regional stability & progress.

INDIA'S OPTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN POST JULY 2011 & IMPACT ON INDO-PAK RELATIONS

The current situation in Afghanistan is a very complex one with a number of actors - internal and external, conflicting interests and capabilities. It is not likely to change in the next few years. This includes the various ethnic nationalities of Afghanistan. The warlords and their vested interests in the production and smuggling of narcotics, and arms is believed to be a routine. Corruption alone is a US \$ 2 billion industry. A weak government in Kabul without any viable succession option is visible. Its inability to exercise any control outside Kabul is well known. Reportedly it has weak army and law enforcement machineries. Their growth is hindered by factors of corruption and local ethnic interests. Most importantly, there is more than one group operating inside Afghanistan and many from Pakistani soil.

Now all indications are there that the US will commence withdrawal around Jul-2011. It is necessary for India to think of the post-US situation. The West had made it their mission eight years ago to get rid of Al Qaeda and Taliban from Afghanistan to make America and its allies safe. Today, they rationalize and prepare for a dignified exit by saying that Al Qaeda is not really in Afghanistan while the Taliban are a reality, so the world must deal with this reality.

There are talks of good Taliban and the bad Taliban. These are essentially rationalizations to set the new discourse. Good Taliban or those who will be weaned

away from the main Taliban and may not have the authority to deliver what they promise. Attempts to divide the Taliban have essentially failed.

Departure of the International Forces will only add to the instability of the region and India needs to prepare itself for this eventuality. It is an accepted fact of history that the Taliban were the creation of Pakistan. But what is not known today is the degree of control Pakistan exercises on the Taliban. This is one aspect, which deserves objective assessment by our intelligence agencies to ensure India's effective presence in Afghanistan post Jul 2011. Either way it is feared that there will be a destabilizing effect on Indo-Pak boarder. It is doubtful if the Taliban will rest after assuming power in Afghanistan. Return of the Afghan Taliban to power whether by force or some peace process, would definitely raise the spirits of the Pakistani Taliban and likeminded jihadist. If the Taliban succeed in Afghanistan then we may expect a repeat of what happened in India after the retreat of the Soviets from Afghanistan. There will be far too many of unemployed jihadist in Pakistan who might want to continue their jihad. This situation may be countered if hard power option is reviewed.

The environment scan of Afghanistan's neighbors other than Pakistan reveal that the Iranians are unlikely to remain idle spectators as a Sunni Wahabi neighbor is going to be an unsettling factor for them. Saudi Arabia on the other hand would want a Wahabi regime in Afghanistan that would check the Iranians and hopefully also keep the anti-Saudi extremists in Afghanistan. The Chinese have already begun to move in with their commercial and resource interests into Afghanistan as they would see an opportunity to move closer to the Persian Gulf, given their steady relations with the Iranians. The Chinese would see themselves moving into empty spaces up to the Persian Gulf vacated by a returning US forces at almost nil cost. China also intend to keep the Islamist extremists away from Xinjiang so their presence in Afghanistan and image might be an insurance against these extremists. The Central Asian Republics and Russia have their concerns about the dangers of Taliban's ideology spreading into their countries. In addition to this absence of a strong unitary authority more confusion will prevail in Afghanistan that has been run on drug money and foreign support from Pakistan.

In the given situation India may plan for multipronged action for ensuring its presence in Afghanistan post Jul 2011. The first & foremost is to appreciate that it would be self defeating to withdraw from Afghanistan at this juncture after the attack in Kabul because this is what the Pakistanis want us to do. India must therefore continue with its present policy of extending infrastructure and financial assistance to the Karzai government. This has earned India tremendous goodwill in Afghanistan. Secondly to cater for long term business interest India may seek access to Central Asia through Iran, since Pakistan will not oblige, through diplomatic actions. Thirdly India needs to develop contacts & strengthen them with all sections in Afghanistan, with different power centres and ethnic groups. Russia, China, the Central Asian Republics and Iran are all extremely wary of the spread of Wahabi Islam and its destabilizing consequences. These are the other interested regional powers with whom, India may seek common ground to address common problem. Last but not the least preventing Pakistan from using Afghanistan as a base for terrorist activity in India is important & essential.

As a matter of fact it will be judicious mix of hard, soft & smart power in Afghanistan which may help India in meeting its long-term political objectives.

WHAT TO WATCH?

Democratic Consolidation and Effects of Kayani's Continuation - The unanimous passage of the 18th amendment to Pakistan's constitution by parliament and signature into law by President Asif Ali Zardari is a major development and deserves appreciation by all concerned for its attempt to establish a parliamentary government system.

But in the present situation a Taliban insurgency which spread from the Frontier areas to Baluchistan, and then Karachi and the Punjab heartland could easily overwhelm the civilian bureaucratic state, and provide opportunities for the military to take over

governance. In such a case, Gen Kayani will ensure the military to seek out civilian representatives to be the "face" of the Pakistani state, so as to divert public annoyance & aggression away from the military and dominance of military is maintained on ground. The export of Jihadies on western borders may also continue as it is.

Water Overtaking Kashmir Issue Being an emotive issue, it seems "WATER" has the potential of overtaking the Kashmir controversy. The Indus River flows into Pakistan from India. Both countries have systematically brought up the issue of water in their bilateral relations. The dispute is regarding certain projects and the flow of the Indus River and its tributaries.

The water crisis in Pakistan is multidimensional. Practically the issue has helped Pakistan maintain the heat on India and thereby aggravate the tensions in the region. The outcome of such an endeavor also helps in terms of its propaganda within Pakistan. Along with this, it adds to the rhetoric of the Indian threat under which Pakistan has been living for more than sixty years.

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), which governs the sharing of water resources between India and Pakistan, has proven to be incredibly resilient. The ground reality is that the monsoon is key source of water for the Indus River but this fact is most often forgotten, in favor of criticizing India. Also the Himalayan glaciers are depleting. In the given situation India, which has severe problems with the availability and quality of water, may find extremely difficult to cater for requirement of Pakistan within the given boundary conditions of IWT. The issue is now being referred to Court of Arbitration in accordance to IWT for settlement.

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