

Pakistan should tread steps watchfully

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(http://www.veteranstoday.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Pakistan-flag_5.jpg)

Delving into the history of Pak-US relations spread over six decades one finds that the US relationship was always transactional in nature. Friendship turned into coldness and at times hostility the moment its objectives were achieved. After betraying Pakistan in the 1965 and 1971 wars against India, it made friends with Pakistan in 1981 to help fight the proxy war against Soviet forces In Afghanistan. No sooner the objective was accomplished in 1989; Pakistan's sacrifices were forgotten, abandoned with indecent haste and put under tough sanctions. After 9/11, the US once again needed Pakistan and offered its hand of friendship. President Bush led team duped Gen Musharraf that it will make Pakistan its strategic partner and resolve all its economic problems if it agreed to become the frontline state in the war on terror. Pakistan was assured that this time the US would forge lasting relationship based on mutual trust and friendship and will not repeat past mistakes.

Once Mush fell into the honey-layered trap, the US in conjunction with its actual strategic partners began to weave a web around Pakistan through well-planned covert operations. Parameters of the plan rested on destabilization, denuclearization, de-Islamization and balkanization of Pakistan. With India in the vanguard, Pakistan was to be politically destabilized, economically ruined, socially traumatized and militarily weakened to make it a failed state. Afghanistan was selected by CIA, RAW, MI-6, Mosad, BMD and RAAM as the base to launch covert war. FATA and Balochistan were chosen as initial targets to spread anarchy and later terrorism was to be exported to other parts of Pakistan. Covert operations were to be supplemented by focused propaganda war to defame Pakistan and discredit its prime institutions.

To start with Mush was coerced to ditch friendly Taliban regime in Kabul and provide desired assistance to US led forces to occupy Afghanistan. India was then given a green signal to go ahead with its false flag operation in the form of an engineered terrorist attack on Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001 and blame Pakistan with a view to extract Kashmir related concessions. Once required concessions were acquired, it was then India's turn to hoodwink Mush by signing peace treaty and making him change Pakistan's age-old Kashmir policy.

In the meanwhile, Mush was browbeaten by Washington to launch military operations in South Waziristan (SW) to flush out foreigners and nab their sympathizers failing which NATO troops would barge in. Once regular troops got engaged in fighting with tribesmen in Waziristan, CIA started structuring TTP and making it into a viable force strong enough to confront the Army and possibly defeat it or as a minimum tie it down. To put added pressure, Balochistan was heated up in 2004 with the help of Marri, Bugti and Mengal Sardars. Baloch insurgency was gradually transformed into separatist movement.

In order to assist and guide the TTP and BLA, CIA network was established duly reinforced by Blackwater in 2007/08. All these harmful steps were taken to engulf whole of Pakistan in the flames of terrorism and expedite slumping socio-economic indicators and thus making Pakistan fully dependent upon foreign aid. In this timeframe, the US installed its dream team in Islamabad in March 2008 which enabled the US to tighten the noose around Pakistan's neck speedily. When Obama took over in January 2009, the first thing he did was to bracket Pakistan with Afghanistan making Af-Pak border region into single combat zone. He also appointed Richard Holbrooke as Special Envoy who behaved like a Viceroy. Drone war in FATA was intensified and so was psychological war.

On one hand terrorism was deliberately stoked and on the other Pakistan was impertinently asked to do more. Pakistan's huge sacrifices were underplayed and its weaknesses owing to resource constraints overplayed so as to undermine Pak Army and ISI, the custodians of national security and strategic assets. The Indo-US-Israeli nexus knew that without weakening and discrediting these two institutions, their quest to steal nukes would remain unfulfilled. India militarily strengthened by USA and Israel itched to attack Pakistan but remained restrained owing to Pakistan's effective nuclear deterrence. Mumbai attacks were stage-managed on November 26, 2008 under a calculated plan but it misfired because of Pakistan military's aggressive response.

Swat and SW were prepared as strategic ambush sites to sink bulk of Pak Army and thus create conducive conditions for Indian military to undertake its much hyped limited war under the framework of Cold Start doctrine. When the Army closely supported by PAF turned the tables upon the plotters, the US then applied full pressure on Pakistan to push Pak Army in the inferno of North Waziristan (NW) on the plea that insecurity in Afghanistan was a sequel to safe havens available to Haqqani network (HN) in NW. with 150,000 troops already deployed in the northwest, additional corps required for another major operation would have been at the cost of getting imbalanced on the eastern front. Having seen the jingoism of India in December 2001 and again in December 2008, it was surprising that the US kept insisting that India posed no threat to Pakistan and that it should shift all its troops from the eastern border towards western border. Other than the Indian factor, an operation in NW would have brought all pro and anti-Pakistan militant groups in FATA together with HN and banned terrorist groups on one platform to fight Pak security forces.

When Gen Kayani resisted and expressed his security concerns and ISI initiated series of preventive actions in the wake of Raymond Davis incident in January 2011, the US decided to punish Pak military by undertaking a stealth attack in Abbottabad on May 2, 2011. Primary aim of the incursion was to tarnish the high image of Gen Kayani and Lt Gen Pasha and to force a change of military leadership.

When the two survived and ISI continued with its efforts to dismantle CIA network, CIA-RAW

sponsored terrorist attack on Mehran naval base was launched on May 22, 2011, destroying three PC-3 Orion aircraft. In addition western front was heated up with the help of absconder Fazlullah and his militants who were provided safe havens in Kunar and Nuristan. Pak-US Strategic dialogue was also suspended.

In the wake of Taliban attacks on high profile targets in Kabul on September 13, 2011 and murder of Burhanuddin Rabbani on September 20, the then CJSC Admiral Mullen lost his sense of balance and in his fit of rage he dubbed HN as a 'veritable arm' of ISI. During her visit to Islamabad in October that year, Hillary Clinton warned Pakistan that US forces would step into NW to eliminate safe havens if Pakistan didn't pay heed to US demand. When Pakistan didn't oblige, attack on Salala border post was launched by NATO Apaches on November 26. Failure of US military to tender apology broke the last straw on the camel's back. Pakistan could take it no more and it rightly cut off military relations with Pentagon besides closing Shamsi airbase and NATO supply routes and sending back US-UK military trainers. As a consequence, for next seven months Pak-US relations hit rock bottom. This period however allowed the ISI to send home CIA spies operating under different guises.

Pak-US relations have sailed past the roughest patch and have re-entered friendly waters. In September 2001, the US at its pinnacle of glory ordered Pakistan to facilitate its intrusion into Afghanistan. This time the US in dire strait is requesting Pakistan to facilitate its safe departure from Afghanistan. It also wants Pakistan to persuade the Taliban to talk and arrive at a negotiated political settlement. It wants to leave behind stable Afghanistan and friendly government. Under the changed environment there is noticeable change in the behavior of US officials. Rate of drone strikes has come down significantly and targets are chosen with care. The US has promised to fund Bhasha dam and to help in overcoming energy crisis. Indo-US charted Silk Route and TAPI pipeline are being advocated as more profitable options than the Kashgar-Gawadar Silk Route and Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline.

John Kerry during his short visit to Islamabad on August 1 played the same old tunes of long-term friendship. He was all smiles, friendly, accommodative and conciliatory. He dangled the carrot of resumption of strategic dialogue in next six months. He extended an invitation on behalf of Obama to Nawaz Sharif to visit Washington. It will however be premature to conclude that all is now well. Such assuring words and promises had been uttered by Richard Armitage and others way back in 2001 but we know how the US treated Pakistan all these years.

India and Afghanistan are still being used by the US to exert external pressure on Pakistan. TTP and BLA are used to mount pressure from within. Ongoing escalation of tension along the LoC together with tantrums of Karzai and Afghan senior officials and spate of terrorist acts in various parts of Pakistan are designed to put pressure on the new government to pick up cudgels against the militants in FATA rather than initiating peace talks. Acceleration of militancy in Balochistan is aimed at giving a message that establishment of nationalist government led by Dr Malik has not lessened the resolve of separatists seeking independence of Balochistan. Other objectives are to sabotage IP gas pipeline and Gawadar projects. Likewise, stepped up terrorist acts including DIK jailbreak in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are aimed at undermining PTI government advocating peace talks with Taliban. Overall aim is to provoke Pakistan to launch the much delayed operation in NW which has become the safe haven of TTP.

Apart from application of pressure tactics to keep Pakistan tamed, the US is bent upon making India a global power, a permanent member of UNSC, a counterweight to China and a dominant player in Afghanistan. To this end, the US has taken practical steps to strengthen India economically and militarily. It would like settlement of Kashmir issue but on Indian terms. It will not benefit Pakistan at the cost of annoying India. In other words, as a policy it would always prefer India over Pakistan and in

In the backdrop of foreign policy framework of USA in which Pakistan doesn't figure out, we must be careful in jumping to wishful conclusions. We should tread our steps watchfully and remain vigilant not to again get deceived by sweet talk of US leaders asserting that they want to move to 'full partnership' with Pakistan. Rather, our leadership should be mentally prepared to get ditched once again after completion of ISAF's drawdown in December 2014.

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