

Scenario 58

PAK – ARMY ON 'WAR ON TERROR' - I:

In the wake of 9/11 War on Terror, **Dr Paul Craig Roberts** [an Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury for Economic Policy and Associate Editor of the Wall Street Journal & a well known columnist for Business Week] had once written in his essay '**Taliban the Wrong Target**' published on 13th November 2001 that:

'The war on terrorism has lost its focus. It has become a military campaign against the Taliban. The Taliban are not terrorists. Defeating them will have very little effect on terrorism.

The Taliban are a group of Afghans focused on their own country, not on the West. We are [otherwise] Israel's ally and are perceived as the power behind a corrupt Saudi royal family.

If the U.S. becomes bogged down in an Afghan civil war between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, we will achieve our own demoralization and embolden terrorists unimpaired by our efforts.'

Dr Paul had further elaborated that by using the authority of Islam to create a national unity in place of tribal consciousness, the Taliban were engaged in what the Council of Foreign Relations, the State Department, and the World Bank called "nation building." ***The Taliban did not participate in the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon.*** The anthrax letters were postmarked in the US not in Afghanistan.

Contrarily, most Americans believed that Muslim terrorists were not able to harm the US unless American Immigration Policy barred the Muslims from entering the US; it could have done better to protect the Americans than bombing the Taliban. In an arena of Nine-Eleven, President Bush had said that '***we [the Americans] are at war with terrorists, not with Islam.***' The fact, however, remained that about 25% of Muslims then found them at war with the US.

AN ERA OF NEW WORLD ORDER:

The American think-tanks and intelligentsia had warned the US ruling elite then quite well in time [referring to the above paragraphs written in November 2001, a few days after President Bush had decided to wage WOT in the aftermath of Nine-Eleven episode] that '**America should not land on Afghan soils**'; but it could not desist. Let us travel a little back.

A general acuity prevails that when the Soviets attacked or entered in Afghanistan (25th December 1979), the Americans wanted to resist them because they did not want the Soviet presence in this South Asian region. It is commonly perceived that the Americans had used Gen Ziaul Haq, the then military ruler of Pakistan, to fight a proxy war on their behalf to expel the Russians from the Afghan soil. The record points out that it was not the whole truth.

The British libraries, Home Office, Foreign Desks and War Colleges keep the special notes on Afghan War but the general public holds a very basic sketch of Taliban on Afghan soils which

the BBC had written for them. The British diplomatic briefs, perhaps based on BBC's unit of intelligence, contain that:

"During the recent years, more precisely in post 9/11 era, the re-emergence of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan posed a major threat to its own government; and also destabilised Pakistan through a series of bomb attacks and suicide killings. After withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan the Taliban emerged in the early 1990s in northern Pakistan which was predominantly a Pashtun movement; came to prominence in Afghanistan in the autumn of 1994.

It is commonly believed that the Taliban first appeared in religious seminaries; mostly paid from Saudi Arabia to restore peace and enforce the Sharia once in power. In both countries they were to introduce Islamic punishments; men were required to grow beards and women had to wear the all-covering burka; a similar contempt for music and disapproved of grown up girls from going to school.

Fact remains that many Afghans who initially joined the Taliban movement were educated in madrassas (religious schools) in Pakistan. Pakistan was also one of only three countries [along with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)] which had recognised the Taliban [government] when they were in power in Afghanistan from the mid-1990s until 2001.

The world knew the Taliban in Afghanistan more only after 9/11 episode in 2001 which were accused of providing a sanctuary to Osama Bin Laden (OBL) and the al-Qaeda movement. Soon after, the Taliban were driven from power in Afghanistan by a US-led coalition, although their leaders Mullah Omar and Osama remained at large. Later, the Taliban emerged in Pakistan as far stronger factions and groups.

The main Pakistani faction, known as Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was formed by Baitullah Mehsud (then) presently led by Hakimullah Mehsud. The Taliban in Afghanistan are still believed to be led by Mullah Omar and their early popularity was largely due to their success in stamping out corruption, curbing lawlessness and making the roads and the areas under their control safe for commerce to flourish. By 1998, they were in control of almost 90% of Afghanistan.

The Taliban were accused of various human rights and cultural abuses; in 2001, they went ahead with destruction of the famous Bamiyan Buddha statues in central Afghanistan.

On 7th October 2001, a US-led military coalition invaded Afghanistan and within two months the Taliban regime had collapsed. Mullah Omar and his comrades had evaded capture despite one of the largest manhunts in the world. Since then they have regrouped in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, but are now under pressure in both countries, from the Pakistani army and NATO respectively."

It remained a general discernment all over Pakistan and in both military and civil societies that Gen Musharraf had taken 'personal' decision to join hands with Americans in the aftermath of 9/11 episode. However, in the '**Capital Talk**' program of **GEO TV dated 7th December 2009**, Gen Shahid loudly told the viewers that:

'The US invasion of Afghanistan and our involvement in this war were very difficult events to handle. The U-turn after 9/11 was a complex and historic decision. There were great reservations within the Army with what we had to do.

There was no formal agreement undertaken [after 9/11 event] by the Army for operations in Fata. If there was any such agreement at the government level, the GHQ was not aware of it. When decisions were made at the government level, departments concerned, including the Army, were informed of their part in the process.

All that transpired between Washington and Islamabad and the war on terror was not shared with the Army. This does not imply that the Army as an institution was kept in

the dark. Regular corps commanders' conferences were held in which the president talked at length on these important issues'

However, the detailed picture can be found elsewhere, including the following paragraphs.

ANOTHER PICTURE OF THE PAST:

Referring to an Urdu column [written by Rauf Klasra] appeared in the **daily 'Jang' of 7th December 2009**, one can understand the whole philosophy of Afghan War; thus the sinking of a nation and country named Pakistan in the sand-grave of greed and curse.

The present youth would not be able to know about those black moments of early 1980s when a few Generals of Pakistan Army held a mutual table talk and decided to conquer Afghanistan on various pretexts like:

- *We want to save our Afghani Muslim Brothers from the Russia's attack.*
- *If Russia reached hot waters of the Arabian Sea, Pakistan would be their next target.*
- *Russia wants to make Kabul as their second capital; we should resist.*
- *The various Islamic countries around, especially the Saudi Arabia, would send their men [later called Taliban] to fight here in the name of jehad.*
- *Pakistan would manage those foreigners with American funds and ammunition.*
- *If America would be happy, we would get more financial aids from them under other heads.*
- *Afghanistan's Islamic rule would be copied and implemented in Pakistan, taking them as a role model.*

Tens of other similar reasons were added in the above agenda to make the Pakistani nation fool through planned media campaigns. Pakistan won that war in 1988, Russians preferred to quit, but left the two countries in ruins making them a laughing stock for the whole world; and for the historians, too.

Those army Generals named Ziaul Haq, Akhtar Abdul Rehman and some others could not conceive that if they were going to spread bullets and gunpowder in their neighbouring country, the same kind of stuff would also be seen in their own regions of Pakistan. Later the poor people of Pakistan had to go through the same burning fires along with two more versatile nuisances; Kalashnikov culture and drugs in abundance. Pakistan's present youth has taken birth amidst the whiffs of the same two menaces of killing powders; they have never breathed the clean air as available to the rest of the world.

That group of few Army Generals had decided at their own, purportedly on behalf of the nation, that only that ruler would occupy the presidency in Kabul to whom they give the clearance chit, to whom they would allow to pass through the green signal; how innocent [***do not say them fools***] they were. They were wise enough to handle the bags full of American dollars which were continuously pouring in their villas in the name of 'war money'. Their few families were happy but they had pushed their *jawans* and the next generations into the hell of miseries, gloom, and depression amidst showers of blood and arson.

The lower hierarchy of army command knew that their Generals were keeping those bags of US dollars at their homes but they were assured that the same *'are to be sent at Pak-Afghan borders and inside Afghanistan because there are no banks to keep that foreign currency'*; those dollars were not to be sent away on borders and were never sent.

It was not a story of one General; every top General and his lower command got their shares but only those who had become part of that loot-game; the cruel philosophy in fact. They were wise enough to keep those looted bags for their own families and kinship not for the dying *jawans* or lower ranks of their own flanks.

The history would not be able to name even a single General or his brother or son who had died in Afghanistan in that 'holy war'; it was a dying field for *jawans* and officers belonging to poor and 'tail-less' families whose dependents were never shown those dollars. They were only given titles of '*shaheed*' [martyrs] dying for Islam & Pakistan. Those golden Generals had sent their sons and brothers to America and Europe from where they returned to become either industrialists or ministers nothing less; people hear them daily in press & the media.

The whole Pakistani nation has continuously been betrayed, till today even, with a brain-washing slogan that '*Pakistan's survival depends upon the Islamic rule in Kabul*'; that too sponsored by the Pakistan's few Generals not all. Mostly it was argued that '*Islamic rule in Afghanistan, with Pakistan's choice is vital to wrestle with India successfully*'. What a logic; no other country could buy Pakistan's that ideology, putting the western border on arson to control the eastern borders, but the poor nation was made to believe it; hats off to Pakistan's media also.

During the next decade, another army General Pervaiz Musharraf joined the same orchestra but with different notes in mind. This time the team joined America in the name of War on Terror [WoT] as there were no Russians around; but the destiny was the same.

The same game rules were played that Pak army *jawans* and low ranking officers should die there. \$10.67 billions were begged and bagged from October 2001 till ending 2007 by some top Generals including Gen Musharraf. However, nation remained puzzled as before about the benefits they got out of those gimmicks; either termed Islamic war or WOT.

Ponder about that 'terror' and those terrorists. When Pak-Army wanted to tackle them in FATA or Swat or Balochistan, the Generals were dictated from Washington to hold on; those were not terrorists but '***our Afghan associates or the Taliban***'. When the same groups of terrorists attacked the Pakistani mosques killing dozens of innocent people, did bomb blasts in RA Bazars, in Charsadda, Hangu & Kohat; then the media was briefed that India or America or Afghan National Army had been sponsoring some miscreants. Height of agony it was.

Who was there to think for Pakistan being nationalist? Each times the compromises and conspiracy theories. Parliament remained impotent like ever, they never felt the necessity of making out effective laws. The judiciary always took refuge behind the barriers of '*insufficient admissible evidence*'; both were cowards in fact; the poor people suffered and continued to suffer since two decades at least.

The Pakistan's mighty Generals, on both occasions, preferred to conquer Kabul instead of marching towards Srinagar in Indian Occupied Kashmir.

In a live TV program, M Malick, editor '***the News***' once made a nice analysis on the situation:

'The irony of fate of this poor nation is that the three Generals who should have been behind the bars over the said Kabul Conquering Quest, are welcome on Pakistan's TV live programs as "defence experts". No one asks them about their blunders. Pakistan is going mad for playing role in Afghan-Peace negotiations but is unable to control terrorism within the country.

'We still do not have good scanners, planning it for the last two years. Our intelligence agencies are zero; billions of funds are there but they don't have name of any terrorist on their lists. Our GHQ and air bases are attacked by them. We are unable to make the GHQ safe but are going to offer for Kabul's security – what a mockery of ourselves.'

Daily Jang's columnist, Rauf Klasra visited Bangladesh in early 2009. In those days there were some frictions, slogans and voices in one area claimed by some 'religious militants'.

Klasra asked his host columnist that if that trend would be going to spread all over the country and how much time it would take. The Bangla columnist smiled and said;

'It will never make good news for you; it is not going anywhere. Soon it will die down; will be controlled by the people and police because our Bangla army do not support these extremists; no governmental policy or opposition party favours them.'

Klasra opined that since ten months we had never heard any **'Islamic extremist activity'** from the Bangladesh. However, whenever the innocent children are killed in Pakistani mosques, we discuss that:

'We are unable to take care of Rawalpindi Cantt area here; how we'll fulfil the commitment of controlling Kabul, if at all we are offered. Let us shun such wishful thinking; let us be realistic; let us think Pakistan first.'

ONE GENERALS' WISH-PAKISTAN RUINED:

It was Gen Ziaul Haq who was bent upon to fight the Soviets on the plea that:

'Pakistan would not tolerate presence of the white bear in its neighbourhood. The Soviets should not get an access to the hot waters of Arabian Sea through puppet 'un-Islamic' government in Afghanistan.'

The fact remained that all the army regimes in Pakistan since 1979 took the Afghan cause as their premier responsibility and extended all material, regimental and moral helps, openly and covertly, with aid from the foreign world and without, to their Afghan counterparts.

What the poor Pakistani nation got out of this long and tiresome operation; A gift in the shape of officially recorded three million *Afghan Muhajreen* (un-officially ten million), *devastated economy, gun culture, terrorism spread at their door steps, suicide bombers and second spill of Afghan War in which Pakistan lost thousands of their security officials since 2001.*

The Pakistan had spoiled all their business, industry and social set up as well as the international support by allowing a large influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan. All of them and their generations have their *'SHANAKHTI CARDS'* (National Identification Cards of Pakistan), Pakistani Passports, property ownership documents and substantial businesses in all major towns of the country. There lies 2100 miles unmanned border and a belt of Tribal Area in between the two countries which though exists geographically in Pakistan but no Pakistani law is applicable there by constitution.

On the event of Nine Eleven, Gen Musharraf decided to stand by America to expel Taliban from the government and their native soil but some Pakistani Generals only routinely denied that their army had any sympathy for the Taliban. In early September of 2003, US soldiers suddenly blamed, while chasing Taliban fighters in southern Afghanistan, that they had nabbed three regular Pakistani army officers.

First time the question appeared that whether Pakistan was on the side of US or of Taliban backed arrogant forces. Gen Musharraf kept mum. Pakistan was fingered at by al-Qaeda's top planner, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, no body else. It is on record that Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, later an admitted mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, was caught in March 2003 inside a Pakistani army officers colony in Rawalpindi, suspected that he was sheltered there by a serving army major.

Lt Gen (Rtd) Talat Masood once told in live TV show that *'there exists a strong anti-US feeling in the army'*. After Gen Musharraf turned against the Taliban at US stance there was a sense of betrayal inside the armed forces, might not be visibly seen due to strict discipline.

A script, just for change, from **'Daily Times' of 16th November 2003:** that a Washington-based veteran journalist, Khalid Hasan and Amir Ghauri of Prime TV were at the 11 Corps HQ

in Peshawar [*The 11th Corps oversees all Army operations in the Pakistani Tribal Areas bordering the sensitive and challenging terrain with Afghanistan where the US Army has been desperately trying to fish out fugitive Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters since more than a decade*] as guest of Lt Gen Ali Jan Orakzai on 23rd October 2003. Gen Orakzai told the horror he had to face when he travelled to Tampa, Florida for the inauguration of the new Centcom C-in-C, Gen Abizaid, who had replaced Gen Tommy Franks. He had gone on the invitation of the US Army. He reached London to take a flight to New York.

When he went in for briefing at the airline counter in London, he was asked to take off his shoes, his jacket and his belt; thoroughly screened and checked because he had Pakistani green passport. The same treatment was repeated at JFK. Gen Orakzai told the US Immigration he was a guest of the US Army, he himself was an army General and he had a flight to catch for Tampa which may leave without him if he was delayed; but no effect.

So Pakistan Army's Corps Commander was asked to take off his shoes, carry the shoes bare footed to the machines for screening and was asked whatever number of questions were relevant. The General openly told the media that he would never come to the US again.

Alleged news about sharing nuclear technology with North Korea and Iran played another role in parting of ways. Gen Musharraf disgraced Dr Abdul Qadeer, the veteran nuclear pride of Pakistan, by arresting him, torturing and forcing him to read over the dictation endorsed by the Americans. The graph of hatred against America was seen at 86% in general populace of Pakistan; some army Generals had also felt it but Gen Musharraf's army rule continued and American plans of extending harm to Pakistan got strength as well as wide appreciation both in the US and India [actually blended with criticism and betrayals].

Once in 2003, ***The Time's editorial*** concluded;

"Beneath the surface of Washington's new closeness with Islamabad, mutual suspicions continue to fester. ... Neither country has fully delivered what other expected. ... The Bush administration has withheld trade benefits Pakistan deserves. General Musharraf has failed to sever all links with international terrorism."

The partnership, however, continued.

Going back to early 1980; while deciding so, Gen Ziaul Haq did not bother to approach his populace but discussed the matter with his closest friend and the then DG ISI Gen Akhtar Abdul Rehman. When DG ISI agreed with him he placed his thinking and brief plans on the table in next Corp Commander's meeting. He had argued that to block the way of the Soviets, it was imperative to help the Afghan brotherhood. Then he approached the leaders of 'Islamic political parties' and certain 'Landlord politicians' to stand by him.

Then America was not happy with Gen Ziaul Haq's plans at all. The then American National Security Advisor Brzezinski had categorically told Pakistan's Military ruler that ***'Pakistan should not interfere in affairs of the other governments; let the Afghanis deal with the Russians in a way they want to settle,'*** but Gen Ziaul Haq did not heed to any sane advice.

A high level Commission sent by the US President Jimmy Carter had also recommended Gen Ziaul Haq to refrain from fighting with the Soviets at foreign soil; and that Pakistan should focus its attention on its own development instead, but the military head was hard on accepting it. Jimmy Carter had also offered some aid for Pakistan's development plans which Gen Ziaul Haq had discarded terming it as 'peanut' for him.

Getting frustrated from his American ally, Gen Ziaul Haq called Conference of Foreign Ministers of Islamic countries on **27th January 1980** and placed his proposal before them. They all agreed with his plans and especially the Saudi government had announced to bear major part of expenses. The matter was then taken to the UN Council which passed a resolution condemning the Soviet aggression against its neighbouring country. That was the moment when America jumped into the game.

The war continued for about seven years and ultimately the Soviets had to quit Afghanistan.

TALIBAN: WHO WERE THEY?

There was seen a point of difference amongst the senior officers of Pakistan Army on the issue of governing authority when the Soviets left Afghanistan. Jama'at e Islami (JI), which was once banned to be even named in Gen Ayub Khan's time of 1960s, had been covertly helping the army and Gen Ziaul Haq. JI was of the view that Pakistan government should help Hikmatyar Gulbadin and Burhanuddin Rabbani in Afghanistan whereas the Pakistan's liberal army Generals were of the opinion to include all factions of Afghan fighters in making a new set up in Afghanistan. The days of interim set up and of *Mujahideen* were over.

It was a hard fact that all Afghan fighting factions, who had pushed out the Russians across their borders, were pure Islamic. Younus Khalis, G Hikmatyar and B Rabbani all were having Islamic way of governance in their minds with little difference but all they were fighting to establish their own government in Afghanistan not to bring Islam only.

For instance, the first battalion of *Mujahideen* or Taliban were consisting of all those pilots or artillery men who were with the Afghan President Najeebullah at one time. Then they let their beards grow long and joined Taliban while making necessary adjustments in their way of life.

{An untold fact that the original 'Taliban' faction came into being in Kandahar province of Afghanistan due to internal frictions amongst members of Hizb e Islami (HI). Taliban were then encouraged and helped by all opponents of Mujahideen who were then ruling Afghanistan. For instance Rasheed Doostam (an Uzbek by origin) had not only given cash support to Taliban but also had sent trained pilots to fly war planes & helicopters based in Kandahar; American CIA immediately provided them strategic equipment and basic knowledge.

Pakistan government was not happy with Rabbani's governance and Mujahideen; thus also started helping Taliban secretly. Not only had this, Pakistan asked Saudi and UAE rulers to extend them financial aid. In those early days Taliban were fighting to take control of mostly the Pakhtun areas which were under the influence of H Y Gulbadin [a political opponent of Rabbani, the then ruler of Afghanistan] so Rabbani, though was a Tajik by origin, had also opted to help Taliban.

What was the result: the Taliban went stronger and started posing threat to all their helping hands. After dealing with Gulbadin, they first expelled Rabbani from Kabul, then launched unending battles with Rasheed Doostam, then brought CIA to senses by awarding the major pipeline contract to a company from Argentine [the American competitors] and in the last threatened Pakistan, too.

The rest has been the history still lingering on.}

Later, when Benazir Bhutto assumed power in 1988, the GHQ and ISI gave a detailed briefing to her on Afghan policy then going on. Benazir Bhutto had got notes from the Foreign Office too. She noted down certain important points from the GHQ's briefing and then merged them in her write up. To go ahead according to her own perception she had constituted an '**Afghan Cell**' comprising of certain army officers and some from the Foreign Office. The GHQ had, for instance, suggested that Pakistan should recognize the then Interim set-up in Afghanistan but Ms Bhutto declined. Subsequent developments proved that Benazir Bhutto's political decision was correct.

In February 1989, in a meeting of the Afghan Cell headed by the then PM Benazir Bhutto, the Foreign Office Officials placed an 11 point agenda before all. The US envoy Robert B Oakley was also sitting in the meeting. These eleven points were basically meant for the Afghan *Mujahideen* as a future agenda because the Soviets had nearly moved out from Afghanistan. The underlined fact was that Pakistan was not inclined to recognize the interim government then in making in Afghanistan.

The ISI Chief Lt Gen Hamid Gul was then saved by Benazir Bhutto saying that *'it is too much for Gen Hamid Gul. He is not a General of Afghan army. May be that the Mujahideen do not agree with all terms or 11 points being coined by us.'* Benazir Bhutto told the meeting that there would be only three points to proceed further by Gen Gul:

- That the *Mujahideen* of the interim set-up should take control of any one city in Afghanistan and make a formal announcement of their government.
- That the *Mujahideen* should give a call to the Irani *Mujahideen* also to join them.
- That Zahir Shah, the former Afghan ruler, should also recognize the interim set-up.

The ISI Chief Gen Hamid Gul had to agree with the proposal because it was brought forward by the prime minister. Gen Gul told the meeting that in that cold weather it was not possible for the *Mujahideen* to take control of Kabul, however, Jalalabad could be the best option. It was agreed by all and Gen Hamid Gul was given green signal to go ahead.

On 5th March 1989, Jalalabad Operation was launched but the US Ambassador had played the double game. In the meeting he had promised 6000 tons of ammunition but in fact only 100 tons was supplied. Washington had changed their priorities and had not agreed with Robert B Oakley's recommendations in the back drop of Ojhri Episode of 1988 and more due to the fact that Soviets were already working on their planned quit. American government was not at all interested that *'who rules and controls Afghanistan'* after Russians quit. The operation failed.

It was in that background when the *Mujahideen* were raised in Afghanistan and subsequently termed as Taliban. Those were the local Islam-minded people gathered under the guidance of some Generals and certain ISI officers from Pakistan, equipped with financial aid, arms & ammunition supplied by the US through the then rulers of Pakistan, to continue with their activities.

The other historians have also reached a similar conclusion that *Mujahideen*, no doubt, fought against Russians but they were under three different commands; under Ahmed Shah Masood, Gulbadin Hikmetyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani.

When the Russians announced for going back, the three leaders tried to eliminate each other to get hold of Kabul. To create harmony amongst those Afghan leaders, Lt Gen Hamid Gul had to go and stay in Kabul to bring them on one table. In the meantime, the fled away soldiers of these three factions gathered themselves in Kandahar and declared them as 'Taliban'.

Already there were seven *Jehadi* parties emerged when the Soviets left. To keep them together was a big problem because all they were always fighting over the dollars and ammunition supplied by the US and Saudi governments. Due to that inside sharing battles no one was seriously interested in making the government; the political process blocked. When at last, the Russians left Afghanistan, the Taliban took reigns of the country in hand and planned to impose their fundamentalist thoughts over the region; ***those people, the original Taliban, were independent and not under any group at beginning.***

TALIBANIZATION COMES TO PAKISTAN:

On 18th October 2007, Benazir Bhutto's cavalcade was creeping through towards the Jinnah's mausoleum over an especially fortified, bullet-proof truck, waving lustily at her followers and occasionally wiping her tearful eyes. At 11.50 PM, when the cavalcade reached the Karsaz Bridge, Benazir stepped down to use the makeshift washroom built in the lower deck of the truck. Just 20 minutes later someone tossed a grenade on the right side of Benazir's truck to break the three rings of security cordon through explosion. In the ensuing confusion, a suicide bomber sneaked under Benazir's truck from the left and detonated himself. Simultaneously, a sniper showered bullets on the truck's screen to ensure nobody could escape to

safety. The cavalcade soon turned into a crying grave yard; human flesh and limbs flew around leaving 143 people dead.

Benazir Bhutto was not atop the truck at that fatal moment; the explosion was powerful enough to rip off a door of her truck. The assassination plan later revealed the prior knowledge of Benazir's security arrangements in detail; the suicide bomber had successfully evaded the jamming devices fitted into two vehicles immediately in front and behind Benazir's truck. 21-year old suicide bomber had 15-20 kg of an explosive mix of C4 and TNT on his body; for Benazir Bhutto, two police jeeps accompanying her got the whole burden and torn into pieces.

Al Qaeda, along with local militant groups affiliated to it, was suspected but did these groups had assistance or tacit approval of *jehadi*-minded elements in the administration? Benazir told the media next day that:

'... I had made it clear (to Gen Musharraf) that I won't blame Taliban or Al Qaeda if I am attacked, but I will name the three / four officials as I know quite well my enemies in the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment.'

The PPP insiders disclosed their identity to *Outlook* naming Brig (ret'd) Ejaz Shah DG IB; Ch Pervaiz Elahi-the CM Punjab; former DG ISI Lt Gen Hameed Gul and Hassan Waseem Afzal, a former official of the NAB.

Categorically named in Benazir's letter, Hassan Waseem Afzal was then Secretary to the Governor of Punjab; appointed to this post after he was removed as NAB's Deputy Chairman on Benazir's insistence during her Abu Dhabi meeting with Gen Musharraf in July 2007. Hassan W Afzal had incurred Benazir's wrath because he had made it his personal mission to pursue corruption cases against her in UK, Spain and Switzerland. On his instance and personal interest there were only two persons against whom the Interpol had issued 'Red Notices'; Benazir Bhutto & Inam R Sehri of FIA who had once arrested his real & only brother in law [named Javed Zia] in September 1995 in a cheat-cum-fraud case.

The FIR filed by Benazir Bhutto in Karachi carried as suspects *'those four names which were given to Gen Musharraf'*, neither of Taliban nor of any other *Jehadi*-group. However, the intelligence agencies believed that the *Jehadi* elements could be responsible. Inspired by those Taliban in Afghanistan, the Islamist groups in the border areas of Pakistan had also started regimentation and influencing the local folk residents especially in the tribal belt.

These local Taliban then started threatening the way of life of general populace particularly of the settled areas of NWFP like Swat & Dir. Later, they claimed their presence every where in Pakistan; for instance in Lahore as well where they, in 2008-09, bombed certain places of entertainment. Soon the government had reached the conclusion that the Taliban's brand of *Sharia* was anti-progress, anti-education, anti-culture, anti-entertainment and anti-women.

Due to government's ineptness, a large majority of people were unaware and oblivious to what had happened to a part of smoothly governed Pakistan, especially to Swat, and what was on its way. To protest or demonstrate or even comment on this threatening challenge emerging in the name of Islam and religion was not given priority neither by the governments in power nor by intelligentsia. Some media-men who propagated the cause of Taliban or those who criticized them being opposite to the prevailing norms of contemporary development theories; both sides either eliminated or severely attacked.

Local groups of Taliban flourished because in Pakistan a common man kept his lips tight while speaking against this new breed of clergymen because no one liked to be labelled as 'un-Islamic' or 'western-minded'. Taliban's apparent activities were 'Islamic' therefore the law enforcement agencies did not touch them. When these local Taliban started targeting video

shops, TV show rooms, shops of barbers doing 'beard-shaving service' and coercing the people to keep their 'shalwars' 6 to 9 inches high from their feet, the alarms were triggered in the higher echelons of the successive rulers; but it was too late then. Suddenly the situation deteriorated; had gone worse and out of control.

Both the government and the people went genuinely scared that had the Taliban succeeded, they would tolerate neither higher courts nor any parliament. The justice that they would dispense would be barbaric, and the proposed *Shura* [the Law Making Body] would have medieval rules and procedures. Where there was Talibanisation in some parts of Pakistan, mostly southern Punjab and scattered towns in un-educated northern belts, civil administration was non-existent and the armed forces started struggling to combat with the Taliban.

Religious *Madressahs* in Gen Ziaul Haq's era had started emerging like mushrooms, flourishing and producing young persons with obsolete and fundamentalist ideas. Some human rights groups and organizations started urging people to raise their voice against these extremist elements. Some were organizing demonstrations and marches to let these extremists know that the majority do not want them to succeed.

During 2008-09 there were numerous demonstrations by the women and girls in various parts of the country with play-cards carrying picture of a girl with a line saying, "**Save me, save Swat, Save Pakistan.**"

AFGHAN TALIBAN – THE REAL FACTOR:

It may be kept on record that the Taliban of Afghanistan, who were fighting with President Hamid Karzai for the last eight years, welcomed the US President Obama in 2008 in an unfamiliar way. They asked Obama to close all evil US Detention Centres for militants; completely withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan; reverse the 'satanic' policies of his predecessor George W Bush and stop defending Israel. The message was conveyed to President Obama through SITE Intelligence Group. The text also contained that:

'Obama's move to close Guantanamo Detention Centre is a positive step for peace and stability in the region and the world. If he wants real stability in the world, he should also void all those evil projects established in the light of Bush's satanic perspective of instability in the world.' (Ref: The News dated 30th January 2009)

It is a matter of record that Mr Obama had, in his first week of take over, ordered to close all overseas torture and detention cells including the US military prison at Guantanamo in Cuba. Guantanamo was established in 2002, as a means to hold detainees beyond the reach of American courts and at the time of closure in 2009, it contained 245 prisoners. There was another detention centre at the US Airbase Bagram in Afghanistan which held hundreds of [610 till ending 2010] detainees. Dr Aafia Siddiqui was kept here before she was shifted to US after a media uproar.

The Afghan Taliban's above message was mainly focusing on this Bagram Centre urging that Mr Obama should have felt courage to close it too. Taliban's message further said that:

'If Obama is right, and according to his words, wants to open a new page based on peaceful interaction built on mutual respect with the Islamic world, the first thing he has to do to stop and annul all these (Middle East Policy) procedures which were created according to Bush's criminal policy.'

He [Mr Obama] must completely withdraw all his forces from the two occupied Islamic countries (Iraq & Afghanistan) and to stop defending Israel against Islamic interest in the Middle East and entire world.

It is imperative that Obama, before he gets hit by the same fate as the communist empire in the past, must find potential ways to carry a message of peace and stability to the world.'

Michael Semple maintains [referring to his essay based on an interview with a Taliban Commander published in **New Statesman** of **11th July 2012**] that *'two other aspects of the Taliban's political practice are remarkable. First, they have maintained their internal cohesiveness for approaching two decades. Second, they manage to operate from behind an iron curtain, with tight central control over communications between the movement and the non-Taliban world.'*

The Taliban keep enough political thinkers within their ranks and their leadership speaks with authority and inside knowledge. Most leaders of the group had been held in Guantanamo for various intervals of time and then **'purposefully released'** to accomplish their assignments mutually negotiated with the American bosses.

Michael Semple answered certain cogent questions as per his own assessment and knowledge [one can differ with] but generally reflected the actual situation on the Afghan soils. For instance, to a question [Does the Taliban movement hope for military victory over the Afghan government?] he replied that *'it would take some kind of divine intervention for the Taliban to win this war'*.

For another question [NATO has clearly announced a timetable for withdrawal from Afghanistan, what is the justification for the Taliban to continue their armed campaign?] Semple replied that *'they also believe that over time they will become stronger than the Karzai regime. The Taliban are fighting to expel the foreign occupiers and to enforce Shariat.'*

How a head of the state be selected, is an interesting event. Last time the Taliban called 2,000 religious scholars, including people from every district, to elect Mullah Omar. The point of this election was to establish who can be a just ruler, who knows how to respect fellow Muslims, how to apply the Shariat and how to maintain peace and eradicate narcotics. Voting [might be informal] is very important in the Muslim tradition.

However, the Taliban also kept note that Afghans would not accept a repeat of the Taliban's effort to impose an **'Ameer'** and that; ultimately, democratic elections make sense for Afghanistan.

Taliban are criticised for their social policy; for banning female education and using force to make people comply with fundamentalist's rules but, according to their philosophy, *'the developed world has no right to ask them about their social policy'*.

The international community has failed miserably in everything they promised with Afghans; promises of making Afghanistan secure, prosperous and free of drugs. Instead, the country has gone the most insecure place in the world, has grown more poppy than ever before; seen utmost humiliation for getting their houses searched daily by Americans or NATO soldiers. Taliban's treatment of women, their harsh enforcement of beards and prayers were tolerated but not white soldier's harsh shouts.

Taliban were then prepared to hold talks with the Afghan government but the Kabul regime had no authority in the issues concerned with war – power and control of the armed forces; real authority still rests with the Americans. Afghani Taliban have established a political structure and they are running it. Michael Semple [referring to above essay again] quoted a Taliban leader saying boldly that:

'At least 70% Taliban are angry at al-Qaeda considering them a plague. Some even concluded that al-Qaeda are actually the spies of America. Originally, the Taliban were naive and ignorant of politics and welcomed al-Qaeda into their homes. But al-Qaeda abused our hospitality. Taliban who returned from Cuba have refused to let al-Qaeda operate in their provinces.'

Osama [Bin Laden], through his policies, destroyed Afghanistan. Had he really believed in jihad he should have gone to Saudi Arabia and done - jihad there [against their Monarch], rather than wrecking our country. We have already paid a high price for [our earlier] association with al-Qaeda.'

The analysis of the above quoted interview confirmed that the AfghaniTaliban and Afghani-
stan's allies had opposing views; the former viewed the Karzai regime as a puppet of the
United States. But the west had invested much in the Karzai regime and was not ready to
ditch it; the US wanted Taliban to negotiate with Karzai whereas ***they were serious to
subvert the Karzai government; their old enemy of the 1990s, the non-Pashtun
Northern Alliance was placed next***.