

Scenario 222

THE BLAME GAME-II

WEST's NEW SCAPEGOAT FOR DEFEAT:

Referring to **Irfan Raja's** article in **Daily Sabah** dated 27th October 2021:

"Pakistan is Western media's new scapegoat in Afghanistan. Ever since the fall of Kabul, many US officials are campaigning to threaten Pakistan with sanctions and accusing it of contributing to the defeat in Afghanistan. Americans believe that because of Pakistan's role and support, the Taliban retook Kabul."

Raja mentions that correspondingly, 22 influential US senators passed a **bill** in the House, '*giving a hefty bipartisan endorsement to open an independent investigation of US failure in Afghanistan.*'

Additionally, a Canadian politician and former diplomat, **Chris Alexander**, started a Twitter campaign to put sanctions on Pakistan for its role in Afghanistan. One simple question here:

- **Between 2006 and 2015, nearly 50 militant groups declared war on Pakistan, conducting over 16,000 terrorist attacks on its territories. It suffered more than 80,000 casualties and lost over \$150 billion in the economy.**
- **The conflict also drove 3.5 million of Pakistani citizens from their homes.**

WHAT SACRIFICE WAS OFFERED FOR AFGHANISTAN BY CANADA?

BUT....what sacrifices the Canada offered during 20-years being a NATO ally.

It was shameless move by Mr Alexander who didn't know even an iota about the contemporary history and wars.

Daniel Markey in his write-up in the **Foreign Affairs** [discussed in next paragraphs] raised two important questions as to:

- 'How could the US failed so completely to engineer a change in Pakistan's behaviour in Afghanistan?' 1
- Why couldn't Washington convince or coerce Pakistan to join its side?' 2

In the next paragraphs, the writer (**Daniel Markey**) himself replied these two questions with justification [shortened for space constraints]: 3

This situation recalls the US defeat in **Vietnam**, after which **Cambodia** was blamed for the setback. Despite repairable losses in Afghanistan, evidently, the US had not learned any lessons from the costly and deadly war in Vietnam and Iraq. In the same vein, the Western media was not ready to admit that its irresponsible role in propagating a designed propaganda campaign of **Weapons of Mass Destruction [WMD]** had destroyed an entire Iraqi nation along with the so called prestige of a super power. 4

Following the fall of Kabul, most sections of Western media played the same old game of finding a neighbour and blaming it for the US 'MISSION FAILURE' in Afghanistan. 20 years is such a long time to build a nation and, even if it was not a US mission, **the US has no excuse for its failure – being a superpower**. Once again, history repeated itself for America: but its whole machinery remained busy in searching for a new scapegoat to cover their follies in Afghan-War. 5

For a long time now, the US and Pakistan maintained a *fragile relationship* – exhaustive reasons are placed in coming chapters. In a **Harvard Business Review** article, **Nir Eyal** poses a question, *'Why you need an imaginary scapegoat'* that is built upon an internet theme of **DJ Khaled**, a man who warns his social media followers about a group of villains. After learning this, the Western media opted to fit Eyal's analysis of the *'imaginary scapegoat'* in Afghan-War situation. Several American officials, strategists and media commentators were bent upon to demonize Pakistan's role in the US's WAR ON TERROR [WOT] – the reply lies in the beginning above. 6

The Western media raised this hue and cry against Pakistan and its ISI because of their opposing thoughts about ISLAM. They played it more on the instance of Indian media lobby knowing well that Pakistan and India are die-heart rivals in all spheres of international forums. India had very nefarious and wicked plans in association with Afghan President Ghani – they wanted an access to hot waters of Arabian Sea 7

through breaking Balochistan [Pakistan's biggest 4th province]. Now their plans: India's \$3 bn investment on infrastructure and American's \$87bn investment on training of Afghan Security Forces have gone into vain plus both countries lost their prestige.

AMERICA FAILED TO WIN ISI: WHY?

There cannot be two opinions that the US completely failed in Afghanistan and wasted its two decades time, finances and honour as well. But the intelligentsia also held the opinion that the US Pentagon and CIA miserably crashed and collapsed in terms of Washington's approach to Pakistan, its army and the ISI.

Why some Pakistani groups cheered the Taliban's return to power in Kabul. How the US failed so completely to engineer a change in Pakistan's behaviour about Afghanistan? Why couldn't Washington convince or coerce Pakistan to join its side – simply because since a decade the US continuously humiliated Pakistan by keeping India dearer and making two puppet Afghan regimes subservient to Indian domain.

It was, of course, a battle of survival for the fittest.

US-Pakistani dialogues after President Biden's speech announcing their quit and on the allied issues showed clear signs of friction: Pakistani officials earned great public praise for their assistance in evacuating third-country officials from Kabul, while US diplomats remained less optimistic about Taliban reprisals; they remained concerned about threats of resurgent al Qaeda and Islamic State [ISIS] affiliates in Afghanistan.

Cool minded think tanks in Washington appreciated just how little leverage the US often held with Pakistan, particularly when it tried to push an overlong list of priorities and made demands that scamped counter to Islamabad's interests. If the relationship had to gain vital American national interests, as it did after the 9/11 attacks, the US policymakers could level credible threats to ensure Pakistan's compliance with their agenda, too.

Alternately, the US should have lowered its ambitions with Pakistan to transactional cooperation on issues where the two sides could see eye to eye. This could include some counter-terror operations in Afghanistan, as well as regional diplomacy and crisis management.

Let us return to the recent history of Afghanistan for a while. In the chaotic aftermath that followed the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan

in early 1989, Islamabad had no plans to expand its influence westward ¹ but the US dragged it in the battlefield – perhaps to negate Iran. Then ² some Pakistani security officials started supporting the Taliban out of ³ ideological sympathy.

Pakistan withdrew its official support to the Taliban only after 9/11 event and it became sanctuary for fleeing Taliban leaders because they were mostly *Pashtuns* and their step families were [still they are] residing in tribal belt areas [FATA] all along Pak-Afghan border where Islamabad had no writ then. Within months, the whole country was depleted with bombing and terror activities – loosing about 50,000 civilians and 5000 army troops within a span of first 5-6 years of war.

Pakistan became a safe haven for the Taliban because the two countries have about 2500+ miles shared border, mountainous and barren highlands with tribal way of living. Additionally, the dummy political order that the US created in Afghanistan offered fertile ground for insurgency, as the government in Kabul was endemic with corruption and made enemies of many of its own citizens.

New **Afghan forces, especially trained in India**, wasted all American funds – could not stay for even a day to defend Kabul in August 2021. Washington totally failed in tackling the Taliban especially in its last years of stay – and thus preferred to negotiate an earlier withdrawal.

The American policy makers knew that the US rarely placed Afghanistan at the top of its list of priorities; 1st position always given to India – just to make it stand against China. Pakistan always kept at number 3 which was the hatred level for the West. This priority order clearly explains why Pakistani leaders repeatedly doubted Washington's seriousness of purpose in Afghanistan. These doubts were only compounded after 2003, when the US focused greater attention on Iraq.

- ***Another reality that every American administration since 2001 preferred to work with Pakistan's military directly after buying the ruling [mostly corrupt] elite – politician and bureaucracy both – then why complaints.***

The US collaborated closely with the Pak-army and its ISI to capture or kill al Qaeda operatives – but simultaneously patronising Indian RAW to launch its offensives in Balochistan, Kashmir and Tribal regions. Washington rarely found exploitable fractures within the Pak-army and even feared that sowing such divisions would risk collapsing the most

effective institution of a nuclear state. No matter the implications for Afghanistan, that was never considered a plausible risk.

Referring to an essay titled ***‘Why Washington Failed to Win Over Islamabad...’*** by Daniel Markey appeared on all media pages on **9th September 2021** [words & phrases re-arranged]:

“.....an important contingent within the Pak-army straightaway opposed any cooperation with the US and rather attacked Pakistanis who collaborated with Washington, including fellow officers in the army and the intelligence services. In December 2003, Gen Musharraf escaped two assassination attempts traced to military officers within the organization; and several other plots were also reportedly foiled.

Over the next few years, that opposition to the US materialised into a domestic insurgency under the banner of the Pakistani Taliban [TTP]. The group initially enjoyed sympathy from many quarters in Pakistani society, including serving and retired military officers; the violence had spiked against the Pakistani state itself to an unprecedented level.”

It remained a fact that even those Pakistanis who were working with the US in previous times were not convinced that Washington’s lead could be fruitful for Afghanistan’s future; truth being that US officials never demonstrated much sympathy for Pakistan’s concerns. They were never serious about Islamabad’s anxiety vs Kabul-based puppet governments. Both Kabul and the US were often seen siding with India - rather routinely preferred strategic partnerships with the later.

Immediately after the famous 9/11 episode, **Pakistan was ‘threatened to be taken into the stone-age’** – US Secretary Powel’s phone call is still remembered by the whole Pakistani nation. Then the US many times tried to impose coercive measures to win Pakistani support—frequently adopting carrot and stick policies but such efforts never provided any soothing effect for any party.

Later, Washington often talked about the sale of F-16 fighter jets but got the issue melted in extensive congressional debates which ultimately lost its utility – thus the US suffered in the long run. *‘Reimbursements for Pakistan’s military operations’* amounting to millions of dollars were unnecessarily delayed; or tied with strings - leaving Islamabad internally bleeding.

Once an opportunity came immediately before President Obama’s 2009-10 rush into Afghanistan; the US could have forced Islamabad into

serious negotiations. Washington instead chose to delay negotiations in 1 the hope that its military advances would deliver a sweeping victory over 2 the Taliban. That was a crucial moment to take Pakistan into confidence 3 before actual despatch of forces – but the US lost it due to its fake and 4 false ego. 5

On 2nd May 2011, the US SEALs killed OBL in a raid near Abbot Abad; 6
the whole Pakistani nation knew that the said act was accomplished with 7
President Zardari-CIA-Gen Shuja [the then ISI Chief] nexus whereas the 8
rest of the Pak-army was betrayed in humiliating mode. However, rather 9
than following up with new threats of what would come up in return, 10
the US officials preferred to play a blame-game more vigorously. 11

The US officials kicked the Pakistani military when it was already down. 12
Contrarily they hoped to maintain good relations with Pakistan by 13
continuing the US military access through its roads and airspace into 14
Afghanistan; they also believed that Pakistan's situation could get worse. 15
In fact the worst days were ahead for the US due to its short sightedness 16
coupled with their failed diplomacy and proud intelligence both. 17

The Biden administration and its associates had known about the black and 18
hollow media propaganda of their companions – Kabul and India; openly 19
felt that none of Afghanistan's other neighbours could hold as much 20
influence as Pakistan. Within years, the conclusion appeared that Islamabad 21
went more attached to China and seen less inclined to trust Washington's 22
commitments. Washington learnt very soon that a strategic partnership 23
with Islamabad became out of reach at least for the time being. 24

Very few people knew that the US forces had already developed working 25
relationship with the Taliban to counter ISIS in recent years. In the given 26
scenario, the US had already started efforts to calibrate its relationship 27
with Pakistan; but it's a future story. 28

ISI HOSTED 7 INTELLIGENCE CHIEFS:

On 11th September 2021; Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence [ISI] DG 29
Gen Faiz Hameed welcomed participation of the heads of intelligence 30
of China, Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and 31
Uzbekistan to discuss the Afghan situation in detail and planned unified 32
strategy to cooperate with the Taliban government in Afghanistan. 33

Notably, the foreign ministers of all the countries mentioned above had 34
met earlier the same week for the same purpose. The high-level meeting 35

1 was convened days after Gen Faiz Hameed's return from Afghan capital
2 Kabul, which he visited on the invitation of the Taliban. The seven chiefs
3 discussed the immediate future of Pakistan and Afghanistan's security,
4 economic and trade ties with the Taliban leadership.
5

6 Russia and other central Asian countries had been monitoring the rapid
7 developments in Afghanistan since the Taliban began its offensive against
8 the US-backed Afghan government, which culminated in President Ghani's
9 collapse amid the pullout of American troops and the Taliban seizing
10 power.
11

12 Few days before, the Taliban announced its new interim government,
13 headed by Mohammad Hasan Akhund, with Abdul Ghani Baradar as
14 his deputy. The Taliban invited only six countries to the inaugural
15 ceremony of the new government -- Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan
16 and Qatar – just to put another slap on the western and American faces.
17 However, the inauguration event was cancelled after the Taliban was
18 pressurised by allies not to conduct that ceremony in the back-drop of
19 the anniversary of 9/11 terror attacks in the US.
20

21 As the five participants exchanged views on the security situation in
22 Afghanistan, it may be recalled that about a week back, the ISI chief had
23 visited Afghanistan and especially met *Hizb-e-Islami* head Gulbaddin
24 Hekmatyar. On a similar note, foreign ministers of countries neighbouring
25 Afghanistan held a virtual conference on 8th September 2021, to discuss
26 the latest developments in the war-torn country.
27

28 **PM PAKISTAN's 'ABSOLUTELY NOT':**

29

30 **On 14th September 2021;** in a public hearing in Congress since collapse
31 of the US in Afghanistan, the US Secretary of State Blinken said to the
32 Foreign Affairs Committee that US IS ANGRY ON PAKISTAN, adding:
33

34 *"Pakistan has a multiplicity of interests some that are in conflict with*
35 *ours. It is one that is involved hedging its bets constantly about the*
36 *future of Afghanistan; it's one that's involved harbouring members of*
37 *the Taliban; it is one that's also involved in different points cooperation*
38 *with us on counter-terrorism."*
39

40 Blinken categorically told the lawmakers that Washington would re-examine
41 its relationship with Pakistan. The US would re-evaluate the role that
42 Pakistan played over the last 20 years but also the role we would want to
43 see it play in future. Blinken also called on Pakistan to deny legitimacy to

the Taliban unless they meet global demands. He said that ‘Pakistan needs to line up with a broad majority of the international community in working toward those ends and in upholding those expectations’.

However, during the hearing, the furious lawmakers **accused the White House** of presiding over a historic disaster. Mr Blinken stayed cool as he faced the toughest grilling of his career at the first congressional hearing on President Joe Biden’s end to the 20-year war, which brought a swift victory by the Taliban. However, Blinken continued to speak that:

“Former president Donald Trump had set the withdrawal from Afghanistan. We inherited a deadline; we did not inherit a plan.

After Trump’s February 2020 deal with the Taliban and drawdown of US troops, the movement was in the strongest military position it had been since 9/11.

Biden administration was intensely focused on the safety of Americans. Even the most pessimistic assessments did not predict that Afghan forces in Kabul would collapse.”

The United States and its allies ultimately evacuated 123,000 people out of Afghanistan, one of the largest airlifts in history.

America’s anger on Pakistan was exactly not on the terms Mr Blinken narrated; most analysts and media gurus had complete knowledge of the background reason. The real reason was Pakistani PM Imran Khan’s media interview in which the US was bluntly refused any access to any facility on Pakistani soils in connection with the Afghan-war. PM Khan’s famous dialogue **ABSOLUTELY NOT** became talking point for the whole world then.

On 19th June 2021; Pakistan’s PM Imran Khan conveyed a big NO to the United States on its request of military bases for future operations in Afghanistan. The statement from the premier came during an interview with Jonathan Swan of **HBO Axios**, which was then aired two days later, on 21st June 2021 instant.

PM Imran reiterated Pakistan’s stance on the use of military bases and categorically stated that Islamabad would not allow it.

PM Khan was asked by the American journalist for his comments on giving access to the Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] to Pakistan

1 military bases as was permitted during Gen Musharraf's tenure. The
2 proposal was floated to land the CIA in Pakistan to conduct cross border
3 counter-terrorism missions against Al Qaeda, ISIS and the Taliban.
4 **ABSOLUTELY NOT**, PM Imran Khan had spontaneously responded
5 and added:

6
7 *"There's no way we're going to allow any bases or any sort of action*
8 *from Pakistani territory into Afghanistan – [asserting once more]*
9 ***Absolutely not."***

10
11 Axios on HBO is a documentary-news program that combines the
12 reporting of Axios journalists with the expertise of HBO filmmakers to
13 explore the collision of tech, media, business, and politics. The US was
14 in talks with Pakistan and other regional countries for cooperation in
15 future operations in the war-torn country, Afghanistan, to keep a check
16 on its militancy. Pakistan had also officially conveyed to Washington that
17 it was NOT possible.

18
19 Pakistan's ISI DG Lt Gen Faiz Hameed was in Kabul during the first
20 week of September 2021 and as having meetings with the Taliban
21 leadership as well as other Afghan leaders including Gulbadin Hekmatyar.
22 There was no government in Afghanistan then; in such a situation,
23 Pakistan's political high-ups could not visit Kabul because there was no
24 counterpart. Pakistan showed a good gesture by sending its ISI Chief in
25 person there to show the solidarity with the Afghan people.

26
27 As Pakistan and Afghanistan shared deep strategic, economic, political
28 and social relations, Islamabad could not abandon ordinary Afghans
29 and close its eyes to the likely impacts to be caused to the country in
30 case of instability in Kabul. Negating the impression that the country
31 was following an Afghan policy different from the rest of the world,
32 Fawad Chaudhry, **a Federal Minister of Pakistan**, said the only difference
33 was that Pakistan had been calling for a political solution to the
34 Afghan crisis for years, while the US and other world powers realised
35 the importance of the option only recently – after getting defeated after
36 20 year's war.

37
38 Forming a government in Kabul was the right of the Afghan people only
39 and Pakistan supported the idea of an inclusive government there. He
40 said Islamabad could only play a role in the stability of the war-torn
41 country and that the new government there would be recognised in
42 consultation with regional countries and world powers. Indian taxpayers
43 and Lok Sabha should question Modi government's Afghan strategy in

which it had wasted billions of dollars in Afghanistan while this amount could have been used for the welfare of the marginalised people in India.

Question arises that why the Indian government and media were presenting Afghanistan as the biggest issue though ***the two countries shared not a single inch of border***. India could not be given any role in Afghanistan, for it had always used Afghan soil for sponsoring terrorist activities against Pakistan.

EUROPE's BEST PAL IN 2021 CRISIS:

While the whole Europe including the UK was desperate to repatriate its citizens from Taliban's new regime in Afghanistan – they wanted to avoid another refugee crisis - Europe turned to Islamabad for help which was honoured by the PM Imran Khan's government.

Referring to SAIM SAEED's essay in ***POLITICO.EU*** of 3rd September 2021:

"Meet Europe's unexpected new best friend.

As the Continent scrambles to evacuate its citizens from Afghanistan and prevent a potential wave of refugees on its borders, Europe is reaching out to Pakistan — long seen as a recluse state — (now) for help with both.

In only one week, the foreign ministers of Germany, the Netherlands and the UK visited Islamabad. They asked Pakistan for its assistance in the humanitarian crisis next door, and showered praise on the country for its help evacuating thousands of diplomatic staff and Afghan workers from Kabul."

Germany's Ambassador to Pakistan Bernhard Schlagheck said it would not have been possible to fly out German and Dutch staff without Islamabad's assistance, while Pakistan also received friendly calls from the EU Council's President Charles Michel, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, the Austrians, and the Slovenes.

This newfound affection for Pakistan is a significant shift in the diplomatic tides from this spring when the EU had eyes only for Pakistan's arch-enemy India. In April 2021, the EU committed to an Indo-Pacific strategy that meant to see increased **European cooperation with India** against Pakistan's ally, China. In May 2021, **Brussels**

1 **also launched free-trade talks with New Delhi.** However, Pakistan
2 gracefully avoided bargaining with any EU member for its hardships
3 and sufferings in the field of economics, trade incentives, diplomatic
4 support for the disputed region of Kashmir or travelling concessions
5 for UK or the EU countries.

6
7 Pakistan looked to invest only in cordial relationships with Europe,
8 which was caught flat-footed by the US's heuristic decision to withdraw;
9 they were all trying to secure their own interests in the region without
10 the American help and so-called 'US's flimsy directions'. Before the
11 Afghan crisis, Pakistan was not at all popular in Brussels though it had
12 been supporting the NATO.

13
14 The EU mostly posed as a major trading partner of Pakistan but in
15 fact had placed the later much low in the EU's priority list – especially
16 in comparison with India. With the Taliban's take over in mid-August
17 [2021], the whole scenario changed suddenly. Islamabad played its role
18 in helping European and foreign officials leave Kabul, including **294**
19 **Dutch citizens, 201 Belgians, 216 Italians, and 273 Danes.** In addition,
20 Pakistan also helped evacuate more than **4,000 Afghan nationals** who
21 worked with the US and allied forces in Kabul.

22
23 *[.....interestingly, on 17th August 2021, the UK government had*
24 *announced plans to welcome an additional 5,000 Afghans fleeing*
25 *the Taliban in a new resettlement programme prioritising the*
26 *women. It had already got plans to relocate 5,000 people as part*
27 *of an **Afghan Relocation Programme** designed to help present and*
28 *past employees of the UK government. Home Secretary Priti Patel*
29 *wrote in **Daily Telegraph** that day:*

30
31 *"I want to ensure that as a nation we do everything possible to*
32 *provide support to the most vulnerable fleeing Afghanistan so they*
33 *can start a new life in safety in the UK.*

34
35 *The UK is also doing all it can to encourage other countries to*
36 *help. Not only do we want to lead by example, we cannot do*
37 *this alone."*

38
39
40 But how fast the developed nations eat their own words, no one can
41 guess. Just two weeks later, the four Foreign Ministers of EU and
42 UK were there in Islamabad to shift their burden and follies on poor
43 Pakistan's shoulders.

Pakistan did its moral duty bravely; PM Mr Khan's prime thinking brought fruit. He immediately launched talks with Taliban leadership the day they captured Kabul Palace. Pakistan's that 'welcome gesture' allowed it to continue flights and keep its embassy open, even as most countries were scrambling to leave the country. See the Dutch Foreign Minister **Sigrid Kaag**'s address at a press conference in Islamabad on the very next day:

"We have tremendous admiration and respect for Pakistan and we would like to reiterate our gratitude."

UK's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told the media that: **"Pakistan is a vital partner for the UK."**

Hosting refugees has been a toxic issue in Europe, and the Continent was to avoid the animosity it experienced over the last influx of 2015-16. Austria loudly announced not to take in any Afghan refugee after the Taliban took over, and **French President Macron said:**

"Europe must anticipate and protect ourselves against major irregular migratory flows that would endanger those who use them and feed trafficking of all kinds."

That's where they sought Pakistan's help – which has been loosing its own economy since 1980s when millions of Afghan refugees were there on its soils – and not a single person went back. In good days, the EU prefers India to trade along with pointing towards Pakistan's depressed economic state, its repressive blasphemy laws and the lack of protection for minorities. Then the stances changed suddenly in August 2021 when the **Dutch Foreign Minister Kaag** said in Islamabad:

"We're mindful and grateful for the longstanding hosting role Pakistan has played for the refugees over the years. We will explore ways in which we can assist Pakistan in its role as a hosting nation to refugees and wanting to invest and make use of the improving climate to attract business and invest in Pakistan itself."

BUT the Pakistanis were mindful even in that changed arena – knowing that all countries would forget Pakistan when the dust would settle down. UK continued to keep Pakistan in RED list in the name of coronavirus sanctions; no EU country promised to remove Pakistan from the **"grey list"** of the Financial Action Task Force [FATF]; no EU country called Pakistan to join their trade scheme called the **GSP+**; no EU country

allowed Pakistan's national carrier, **the PIA**, to fly up to their airports – but this time there was no President Musharraf or Zardari in place; nothing was on sale now.

GOVERNING PAKISTAN IS NOT JOKE:

On 26th October 2021; One Usama Siddique interestingly wrote on media pages that: '**Governing Pakistan isn't a joke**' and he was more than 100% true. Usama continued saying that the External Forces tried and failed in destabilising Pakistan with numerous attempts; that spanned over years. However, at the internal front, the country was badly beaten by:

- Target Killings
- Suicide Attacks & Terrorism
- Corruption & Economic Stranglehold
- TTP & BLA through Indian secret funding
- Indian infiltrations through Afghanistan

In this Asian region, the US & EU were encountered with 3 major problems since decades

- CPEC [BRI]
- Pakistan's Nuclear Capability
- Pakistan's mostly dishonest & 'ON SALE' rulers

The West was able to strike a blow to CPEC in the past two corrupt ruling regimes but not through 2018-22, while there's a ruler in place in Pakistan; loyal to the safety and integrity of Pakistan at least.

PM IK and the Army Chief Bajwa sent a crystal clear message to the West that Pakistan was no more available for hire to fight wars at the behest of others. No more slaughtering of Pakistanis in the killing fields of unjust clashes.

The Western bugle of war against CPEC and BRI was up; look at the statement made by the US Deputy Secretary of State **Wendy Sherman** while visiting India during 5-7th October 2021:

'.....we don't see building broad-based relationship with Pakistan.'

It was a wake-up call for the whole Pakistani leadership. Pakistan had clearly conveyed a message that it would not restrict CPEC, rout to

Central Asia would go ahead - no border closures. However, the opposition in Pakistan was bent upon to play usual notorious gimmicks.

Pak-Army, the powerhouse in Pakistan, also understood that PM IK was mentally and psychologically tough – a rare breed in the third world. President Biden played mind games with IK; he tried to outsmart and humiliate IK because he, being a Vice President with Obama, knew the Pakistani leaders Sharif brothers, AAZ and IK personally.

On 19th November 2018; newly elected Pakistani PM Imran Khan, in response to disparaging and critical comments made by President Trump, had courage to tweet:

“No Pakistani was involved in 9/11 but Pak decided to participate in US War on Terror. Pakistan suffered 75,000+ casualties in this war & over \$123 bn were lost to economy...Our tribal areas were devastated & millions of people uprooted from their homes. The war drastically impacted lives of ordinary Pakistanis.”

Quoting the above phrase, one **American researcher John Akins** wrote in his thesis submitted to **University of Tennessee**, Knoxville USA in August 2019 that:

“Like so many partner states drafted into America’s fight against al Qaeda, the previous two decades have left an indelible impact on Pakistan’s domestic political landscape, particularly given the key strategic role Pakistan played in US counter-terrorism efforts.

*.....this chapter shows how the use of the military in Pakistan’s north-western border region, given the prevailing conditions of this periphery, led to a violent backlash in the form of domestic terrorism. As terrorist violence intensified, U.S. officials continued to press Pakistan to ‘**DO MORE,**’ with the resulting **1SE military operations by the Pakistani army** making worse the local conditions that contributed to the dramatic rise in domestic terrorism, trapping the country in a deadly cycle of violence.”*

[The Terrorism Trap: the Hidden Impact of America’s WOT

by John H Akins is referred]

ISLAMIC STATE - Khorasan [IS-K]

As the **Islamic State-Khorasan** [IS-K] started ramping up attacks in Afghanistan; Pakistan used its network of informal channels to feed

intelligence and technical support to the Taliban rulers to combat the threat.

Pakistan has been passing the Taliban raw information as well as helping it monitor phone and Internet communication to identify IS-K members and their operational hubs but the communication between the two sides remained confined to informal discussions, rather than an established intelligence-sharing partnership. However, this uphill task could only be undertaken by brave countries like Pakistan not like the US or India.

It remained unclear how much intelligence countries like the US would be able to share. Without an embassy or military presence in Afghanistan, US intelligence gathering capabilities stand crippled, and the Taliban had previously denounced the US for flying drones over Afghan territory. Referring to **S George's** essay in **'The Washington Post'** dated 23rd October 2021:

*"Despite those regional concerns, the Biden admin is struggling to create stronger military and intelligence partnerships with Afghanistan's close neighbours. **Pakistan and Tajikistan have so far refused to host US bases**; dis-allowing the US to maintain 'over-the-horizon' pressure on terrorist threats in Afghanistan".*

Lisa Curtis, a former adviser to the White House NSC and now director at the Centre for New American Security said:

"There are shrinking options regarding countries on which the US could rely for staging counter-terrorism operations. Currently, the bulk of the US military assets available for a possible strike in Afghanistan remain in Qatar, some 1,200 miles away, making their use expensive and risky."

The head of the US Central Command **Gen Kenneth McKenzie** told the lawmakers a month earlier that:

"It's yet to be seen if the Taliban could stop the IS-K or al-Qaeda from using Afghan territory to launch international terrorist attacks. We could get to that point, but I do not yet have that level of confidence."

Afghanistan's close neighbours were equally concerned about the rise of the IS-K in Afghanistan, despite a reluctance to work with the US

because of numerous conflicts. At a meeting held in Moscow during the 3rd week of October 2021, Soviet Foreign Minister **Sergei Lavrov** said that:

“Russia’s Central Asian friends have assured him that they do not want US military units stationed in their countries. While the US military had established temporary bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan after 9/11 of 2001’s attacks, those agreements have long since been vacated.

The situation right now is very different than it was when that post-9/11 cooperation took place.”

For Central Asia, it could have been a very costly thing to agree to have something like that on their territories. The possibility of militant spill-over was seen in Iran, which shares a 570-mile border with Afghanistan, and China, which always feared increased IS recruitment of Uyghurs, a Muslim minority in western China under relentless pressures from Beijing including ‘re-education camps’ that have since been denounced by the West.

Russian President Vladimir Putin also charged that there was a clear ‘concentration of extremist and terrorist groups’ near Afghanistan’s northern borders, focusing on inciting ethnic and religious conflicts and hatred.

The IS-K had, till then, far fewer fighters in Afghanistan than the Taliban — roughly 2,000 according to the latest UN estimate, compared to Taliban ranks estimated at more than 60,000 — but many feared it could grow if the Taliban fractured or if disaffected Taliban members sought a return to the battlefield to join other groups.

After the fall of Kabul, the IS-K launched a campaign of direct assaults on Taliban security forces as well as escalating violence against Afghanistan’s Shiite minority, which it regards as their orthodox rivals.

{In a month-long spree beginning in mid-September 2021, the Islamic State carried out 47 attacks, ranging from assassinations and assaults on military checkpoints to suicide bombings at Shiite mosques that killed dozens. All but seven of the attacks targeted Taliban fighters.}

Referring to an article of **Henry Kissinger** on *why America failed in Afghanistan*; published in **The Economist** dated 25th August 2021; the former American statesman said:

"It was not possible to turn the country into a modern democracy, but creative diplomacy and force might have overcome terrorism.

THE TALIBAN takeover of Afghanistan caused an immediate concern on the rescue of tens of thousands of Americans, allies and Afghans stranded all over the country - their salvage needed our urgent priority.

*The fundamental question remained that how America planned to withdraw **without much warning or consultation with allies** or the people most directly involved in 20 years of sacrifice. And why the basic challenge in Afghanistan has been conceived and presented to the public as a choice between full control of Afghanistan or complete withdrawal."*

The US had risked the lives of its military, staked its prestige and involved other countries, without any home work on strategic and political objectives. Strategic - to make clear the circumstances for which the US opted to fight; political - to define the governing framework to sustain the outcome of the war. ***The US lost primarily because of its inability to define achievable goals*** and to link them in sustainable foot-steps by the future American regimes.

Henry Kissinger rightly pointed out that in this US-Afghan war, the US military objectives were too absolute and unattainable while the political ones too theoretical and vague. The failure to link them to each other involved America in conflicts and domestic controversies. The US entered Afghanistan amid wide public support in response to the al-Qaeda's attack on America. The initial military campaign prevailed with great effectiveness but ***then tensions developed with Pakistan amidst carrot & stick policies which didn't work this time unfortunately***; Henry Kissinger had floated a very bold statement.

However, soon the US lost its strategic focus. The White House got convinced that ultimately the re-emergence of terrorist bases could only be prevented by transforming Afghanistan into a modern state with democratic institutions and government. But there was no timetable for such major reforms because Afghanistan has never been a modern state. There was no sense of common obligation and concept of central

authority. The whole Afghan soil has been in tribal pigeon holes indeed 1 since
centuries. It was precisely Afghanistan's inaccessibility and absence 2 of
central authority that made it an attractive base for terrorist groups. 3

4
Afghan entity could have been analysed in the light of its past and 5
historical notes; the people live in ethnic groups and tribal clans, in 6
basically a feudal structure where the decisive power brokers are the 7
organisers of clan defence forces. Typically in latent conflict with each 8
other, these warlords unite in broad coalitions primarily when some 9
outside force—such as the British army that invaded in 1839 and the 10
Soviet armed forces that occupied Afghanistan in 1979—sought to 11
impose centralised governments. Both retreats, British and Soviets, 12
sufficiently prove that the Afghan people are only willing to fight for 13
themselves. 14

15
The fact remained that the Taliban could be contained but not eliminated 16
during this longest war. And the introduction of unfamiliar western-like 17
government weakened the US political commitment and enhanced 18
already widespread corruption to unparalleled heights. 19

20
Moreover, the counter-insurgency side of the American debate was 21
defined as progress, the political one treated as disaster. The two 22
Administrative and military groups tended to paralyse each other during 23
successive policy discussions in White House and else where. An example 24
was decision in 2009 to declare a surge of troops in Afghanistan with a 25
simultaneous announcement that they would begin to withdraw in 18 26
months. Here, the counter-insurgency was reduced to the containment, 27
rather than the destruction of the Taliban. 28

29
In fact political goals were not co-ordinated with counter-insurgency 30
efforts. India, China, Russia and Pakistan often had divergent interests 31
then; so the US needed a creative diplomacy to have distilled common 32
measures for overcoming terrorism in Afghanistan. But this alternative 33
was never explored. Having campaigned against the war, Presidents 34
Trump and Joe Biden undertook peace negotiations with the Taliban and 35
committed for withdrawal plans for which the US had induced allies 36
to help. 37

38
America couldn't escape being a key component of international order 39
because of its capacities; sudden withdrawal tarnished its honour and 40
images both. The US could have recognised that no dramatic strategic 41
move was available in the immediate future to offset this self-inflicted 42
setback; thus its rashness brought disappointment among allies, 43

encouraged adversaries, and caused confusion among the media from all around the world.

20 years long chapter was closed

**IN FACT,
AFGHAN PEOPLE SUFFERED WAR FOR NEARLY 4 DECADES**

**BUT
HOW IT STARTED
HOW FINISHED -
SEE DETAILS IN NEXT PAGES**