

## **Scenario 177**

### **PML[N] – TALIBAN TALKS FAILED**

#### **An Apology:**

In Pakistan, there has been an opposite school of thought, abundantly available on media pages, which always kept the opinion, that the army should confine itself to their barracks and not beyond.

However unfortunately, the PPP's rule during 2008-13 and PML[N]'s first two years 2013-14, for instance, brought utter humiliations, disasters, uncounted killing of uniformed officials in military and police both and loss of economy, stalled development, zero foreign investment, frequent flight of capital and industries to Dubai, Bangladesh and Jakarta; utmost fear in social lives, mutilated generations and the worldly mistrust plus other vices.

Foreign policy ought to be formulated by the elected civilian government in consultation with properly trained specialists, professionals and academia but not by those political partners who sell their opinion and terror in the name of religion and sectarian hatreds.

The above statement is the core idea of democracy and its manifestations are profusely available in all democratic countries but NOT in Pakistan because two families, Zardari's and Sharif's, mostly run the countries like their family business concerns – BUT in the name of democracy.

In fact, one can see the worst form of **aristocracy, monarchy or 'badshahat'** – all in the name of religion, Islamic Republic and democracy.

Pakistan keeps a worst kind of aforementioned system of government coupled with hypocrisy at the highest level and of the highest order BUT the system is run in the name of Islam and democracy.

***[Pakistan is the only 'democratic country' where by constitution there cannot be elections within the political party. So the PML(N), PPP, PML(Q) and JUI etc will remain the business monarchs within their kins only.]***

***Pakistan's next PM would be Bilawal Zardari, Asifa Zardari, Maryam Sharif, Hamza Shahbaz, Moonus Elahi etc no one else from the party through merit or capability.]***

Here in Pakistan, all politicians will keep on threatening the whole nation, its superior courts, its army, and other institutions NOT to go beyond constitution but within themselves, who abides or fits in Articles 62 & 63 of the same constitution – NO ONE.

There have been no local body elections since 2008 till 2013 in the country except that in Khyber PK a year after – no political party wanted to pass on constitutional obligations downwards.

There were other constitutional requirements also; consider the whole set of fundamental rights of citizens – no government, civil or army, could seriously address even one single provision of the same constitution.

All 'uppers' would continue to build their empires through corruption and mal-practices; whole set of superior judiciary impotent but if some one talks about their sleaze in media - democracy comes in danger [***Jamhooriat khatrey mein aa jati hai***].

### **TALIBAN AS PAK-US PARTNERS:**

Pakistan's PM Nawaz Sharif, however, made it clear on parliament's floor that ***"terror attacks should be stopped. Terror and talks cannot go hand in hand together"***; further stating that all arms of government were on the same page to curb terrorism.

The PML[N] government had invited the TTP to talks but they did not heed their plea and continued to target security forces and civilians. The efforts, and of course hopes, had ended after a US drone strike killed their then-leader Hakimullah Mehsud in November 2013.

Later the Taliban contended that they would only talk ***'if the Pakistan army withdraws from the Pak-Afghan border areas and puts an end to US drone strikes'***. Responding to PM's speech, the PTI Chief Imran Khan reminded that the proposed peace talks should be open and transparent.

The fact remains that the Pakistan Army had already resolved to launch a forceful attack on Taliban hideouts in FATA but the high command was

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waiting an appropriate moment to tell their political counterparts in black & white. Thus on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2014, when Pak-Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif visited Combined Military Hospital [CMH] in Bannu to see his injured army personnel, the message was passed on to the PM in person.

Two days earlier, **on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2014** about 25 soldiers were martyred and more than 30 were injured when a suicide bomber collided with a military convoy in Bannu. The convoy was about to leave for Razmak town in North Waziristan when the tragedy struck as the blast occurred in one of the civilian vehicles hired for the movement of troops.

Next day, **on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**, about 17 people including six security personnel were killed and three school children were seriously injured in a suicide blast near R A Bazar, a market close to Pakistan's military headquarters [GHQ] in Rawalpindi. The said suicide bomb attack was triumphantly boasted by the TTP claiming *"to take revenge [after seven years?] for the Lal Masjid massacre and to continue struggle against the secular system."*

When the TTP felt that the Pak-Army had resolved to react sternly, they immediately floated a move to the PML[N] government, through its lieutenants in Pakistan's political streamline like Prof Munawwar Hasan of JI and Maulana Samiul Haq of JUI, to re-invent the peace-talks chapter to which PM Sharif immediately responded and agreed – thus the whole scenario of the Pak-Army's suffering turned into anger.

It is on media record that after Army Chief's visit to Bannu Hospital, the army didn't bother to listen the PM's plans for TTP-Talks. Gen Raheel immediately conveyed green signal for his troops to retaliate on immediate basis without waiting for PM Sharif's rhetoric passions.

The army started launching attacks where needed causing hefty losses to the Taliban. The attacks continued sometimes with the aid of Pakistan Air Force [PAF]'s air raids – and went up to 8<sup>th</sup> June 2014 when formal announcement of **Operation Zarb e Azb** was made.

The TTP answered the Pak-Army's those achievements with 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014's APS massacre slaughtering 153 students and teachers. That was the decisive moment for the Pakistani nation and the government.

**About a year later;** during the **3<sup>rd</sup> week of November 2015**, Pakistan's Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif visited America to hold strategic talks on Afghan situation. Just days before his departure from Pakistan,

Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis surprised the whole world by making an official confirmation that:

***"We view the Taliban as ...an important partner in a peaceful Afghan-led reconciliation process. We are not actively targeting the Taliban."***

Since about four years the US had been trying to hold negotiations with Taliban; once they were nearly close to sit on the table in Qatar where the US had made out an office also. The talks, however, could not be substantiated because the US administration could not manage to get release of a Taliban leader from Guantanamo Bay Detention Centre.

*[The Taliban had made it as a pre-condition to bring their old companion, a minister in Taliban's government over Afghanistan during end 1990s, on the table.]*

Now, after President Obama's hilarious loud voices of '**DO MORE**' urging Pakistan to crush Taliban, the American stance was suddenly changed.

Referring to '**the News**' dated **17<sup>th</sup> November 2015**; the Americans had been trying for peace talks with the Taliban since 2012. Recall President Bush had said in September 2004:

***"...as a result of the US military, the Taliban no longer is in existence. And the people of Afghanistan are now free."***

***"In Afghanistan, America and our allies, with a historically small force and a brilliant strategy, defeated the Taliban in just a few short weeks."***

After more than 14 years of defeat and humiliation at the hands of the same Taliban, the Americans were back to square one. The change in their position regarding the Taliban so drastically articulated that America had suffered the worst defeat in its history – more than Iraq and Vietnam. One never knows when the Americans would come out on streets with the demand of public hangings for Presidents Bush and Obama.

The quick response from the Pentagon appeared after the battle of Kunduz which led to the downfall of the city **on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015**; though the city was re-taken by the joint venture of the US and Afghan forces after few days but the world media noted that to counter the

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Taliban force of 500, the Afghan government had to deploy more than 7,000 troops.

The question arises that if the Pentagon's above statement was based on serious thoughts then why were the Americans helping Afghan government to take back Kunduz; Pakistan could get alert with such gimmicks. One could recall the US intervention in 2001; it was a disaster for Pakistan because it pushed the Taliban onto their side of the border.

Pakistan had sided with the Americans – the Taliban promptly declared war on Pakistan and quickly turned it into the world's biggest terrorist battlefield; forgetting their actual enemy, the America.

Till Gen Raheel Sharif's resolve the situation continued as such but the danger existed. Afghanistan was still unsettled and thus the Taliban continued to roar around. The Taliban fought the US invasion for 14 years so how could they surrender at the point of near victory – so no conciliation; no concession – they were aimed to take Kabul again. The US later accepted them as a party to negotiate settlement.

The history was on Afghan Taliban side then. They suffered but resisted – that was why they were taken seriously; the Afghan situation was going to settle according to its own dynamics. Pakistan was not able to afford taking either side in Afghanistan; it could amount to feeding more Afghan prejudices amongst the unruly groups there on the helm of affairs.

Initially, the US wanted permanent presence of American troops to have a strong grip over Eurasia region. But after the exceptional surge in militancy the plan changed and they included the Taliban as a small stakeholder in Afghanistan. For this the Americans allowed the Taliban to set up an official office in Qatar, took them off the list of terrorist organisations, released several high-profile prisoners and involved Pakistan for support.

But the Taliban were adamant for Americans to leave Afghanistan and for Hamid Karzai to be removed from power and the Taliban to be given control of the '**Afghan Emirate**' as was before Nine Eleven 2011. This was too much for the Americans to concede for obvious reasons.

The change in Kabul regime and in leadership of the Taliban were serious factors supporting the revised US plan. President Ashraf Ghani was more open to negotiations with the Taliban as compared to his

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predecessor Hamid Karzai. The Taliban's new leader Mullah Akhter Mansour had also shown more flexibility on the option of dialogue though several Taliban leaders were still challenging his leadership.

*[The Americans had to leave because their official combat mission had already ended **on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2014.**]*

The situation was ripe for Taliban-Afghan-US negotiations. The fall of Kunduz consolidated the leadership of Mullah Mansour; it convinced many voices in the Afghan regime for additional compensations to the Taliban. The Kunduz incident was yet another harsh display of surge in militancy by the Taliban; though it provided strong justification for continued US presence in Afghanistan.

The result appeared soon; after the fall of Kunduz, President Obama announced that US forces would stay in Afghanistan till 2017. There was another important stakeholder in all this game – Pakistan; the three partners were not able to enter into negotiations without Pakistan. Even though Pakistan was not directly a party in negotiation process, it could lay influence over the Taliban through the tribal belt at Pak-Afghan borders.

It was fortunate for the US and the Kabul regime that Pakistan was actively pushing the Afghan Taliban for peace talks. Not only this, Pakistan had launched several military operations in its two Waziristan agencies. Pakistan had done all this even though this had caused serious repercussions at home, especially in Karachi city.

The things started moving in the right direction for the US and the key player was Mullah Mansour; he had apparently consolidated his control over the Taliban. Mullah was ready to accept power-sharing with Ashraf Ghani and the presence of some US troops and bases. Afghan journalist Raza Wazir rightly pointed out:

*"The key issue: the Taliban were maintaining the unity of their rank and file. For years, the ground fighters have waged war under the banner of jihad, which is why it is now difficult for them to talk with the puppet Afghan government."*

It required a fundamental shift in 14-year policy of war; that was a tough venture. The US could not succeed despite its best efforts through various corners. In the meantime, Qatar government asked the Taliban to shun their activities and their office was closed. After a few months, Mullah Akhter Mansour was targeted in a drone attack in Pakistani

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Balochitan – that was a disastrous and tragic death of the whole movement; most things came to stand still.

**PAK-POLITICIANS IN INDIAN BASKET:**

See an article written by Dr Shahid Qureshi, titled as '***The Pakistani politicians in Indian Basket***' which appeared in **The London Post** dated **11<sup>th</sup> May 2015** – but it describes mostly the events of year 2014.

The article is placed below ***verbatim*** – with no cuts or comments.

"Pakistan is the only country in the world whose rulers have their businesses, assets, wealth, children and grandchildren outside Pakistan in the hands of people who can twist their arms and neck at any time to get what they want. A security analyst told me that:

*'Pakistani agencies have so much evidence of involvement of these politicians in anti-state activities and compromising national interests of Pakistan that they can be hanged within no time'.*

In greed of wealth and power these people have been reckless and have harmed national state. Why not?

Some leaders including ANP and Sindhi nationalist have been taking money from India allegedly to keep national importance project of 'Kala Bagh Dam' controversial. Others from MQM-A and PPP have caused losses of trillions to Pakistan by striking in Karachi, creating law and order situations for years and followed the Indian plan of '**keep Karachi and Pakistan bleeding**'.

The arrests of many MQM-A terrorists in Karachi and other places who admitted receiving terrorist trainings in Indian military camps left no doubts that politicians are complicit in this terrorism against Pakistan. MQM-A, Pervez Musharraf and Asif Zardari have killed thousands of Pakistanis in Karachi in the name of re-conciliation and NRO.

*'Pakistani security agencies have tons of evidence of wheeling and dealings of some important national politicians with India and other anti-Pakistan states'* said a security analyst.

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Pakistani politicians not only believe but also prove with their actions that Pakistan Army is hurdle between friendships with India. Some reportedly ask Indians for assessment report on Pakistan army. For example audiotapes of conversations from China between Gen Pervez Musharraf, then Pakistan army chief in 1999, and Gen Aziz Khan was provided by the Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan to Prime Minister Nawaz Sahrif. After the Mumbai attacks it was Nawaz Sharif who confirmed the identity of Ajmal Kassab as Pakistani citizen.

Up till now Zardari regime and current Nawaz Sharif government did not ask a single question to the Indians about the involvement of US agent David William Hadley aka Dawood Gillani in the Mumbai terrorist attacks whom USA refused access to the Indian Home Ministry for questioning.

After Mumbai terrorist attacks Prime Minister Gilani told Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that he would be sending Pakistani ISI Chief Gen Shuja Pasha to India to assist in investigations. What kind of mindset it is?

Memo scandal fame president Asif Zardari said: "*Indian Air Force Jets entered in Pakistan air space due to technical fault.*"

[In fact] The plan was to bomb few sites in Azad Kashmir after the Mumbai attacks to cool down the India public. A Pakistan Air Force expert, however, told me that we could see Indian jets from 300 miles inside Indian air space and our fighter jets were ready to counter any breach into our air space. So much so PAF jets locked the missiles on Indian jets and showed the photos of locked Indian jets to the visiting US General to GHQ in Pakistan with the warning '**next time we will shoot them**'. Indians were trying to copy USA off course.

The recent speeches in India of Memo scandal character Hussain Haqqani advisor to President Asif Zardari leaves no doubts in any sane mind that **Pakistani politicians not only corrupt but also treacherous too**. Nawaz Sharif's government's defence minister Khawaja Asif maligned Pakistan Army in his speech in the Parliament.

Information minister Pervez Rashid fully supported malicious over 8 hours GEO TV campaign against ISI and its Chief General Zahir ul Islam, '**we support the people with argument and not the with guns**'. These toxic characters cannot survive in their positions with the full support of Nawaz Sharif and his mind-set.

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His [PM Nawaz Sharif's] sons Hassan Nawaz and Hussain Nawaz were writing letters to George Fernandez the Indian Defence Minister for assistance after his removal in October 1999 by General Pervez Musharraf.

That is why when Altaf Hussain of MQM openly sought the assistance from notorious Indian Agency RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) against Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif government kept quiet. It means when politicians break the national laws they can forgive each other no matter how damaging it is to the state?

In his previous tenures Nawaz Sharif fancied Ambanis and this time his dealings with Indian business magnets Jindals and Mittals raising many questions. His finance minister Ishaq Dar, father in law of his daughter, is very instrumental in these deals.

A senior journalist in London Wajahat Ali Khan reported that:

***"....in May 2014 tour to UK Nawaz Sharif, his brother Shabaz Sharif and Ishaq Dar met with Indian business iron magnet Lakshmi Mittal late night while former Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz advisor to Mittal also present."***

Nawaz Sharif took his son to the official visit to India and also met with the Indian businessmen including Jindal's. He however refused to meet with Kashmiri leadership of Indian occupied Kashmir. Nawaz Sharif's photo below with Jindal family was published in Indian media in 2014.

[PHOTO]

**On 23rd May 2014**, Indian journalist Pravin Mishra wrote an interesting article - **This is why Modi has sent an invitation to Nawaz Sharif:**

*"After spewing continuous venom against Pakistan all these years and during the run up to the general elections 2014, Narendra Modi sent an invite to Pakistan PM for his swearing-in ceremony. The real reason is not peace, but Adani."*

Adani Power wants Narendra Modi Government's nod for export of electricity to Pakistan, reports Financial Express. Adani Power is planning

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to set up a 10,000-MW thermal power plant in the Kutch region and the bulk of the electricity to be produced from it is likely to be exported to Pakistan. The company, a part of the \$8.7-billion Adani Group, is country's leading private sector thermal power producer with a current capacity of 8,520 MW.

BJP's PM candidate Mr Modi made hate speeches against the Pak regime headed by PM Nawaz Sharif for the "biggest insult to India" quoting the "**dehati aurat**" remarks and had warned that:

*".....the country will not tolerate this. The Indian journalists who were eating sweets served by Nawaz Sharif while he was insulting our country's PM by using slangs, the country expected them to kick the sweets. They are answerable to my countrymen as country also has self-respect and dignity."*

Talking about his analysis of Narendra Modi's stand on Pakistan, after interviewing Modi, **Times Now** editor-in-chief Mr Arnab Goswami said:

*"On Pakistan, Narendra Modi was extremely clear. He has made an on-record statement that there shall be no talks if terror continues. In the past, there was talk that he was taking a middle path and could have been softening his stand."*

*However, in his interview with **Times Now**, he was extremely clear about his stand. As I said, it was an on-record statement and this according to me will be a significant departure from the UPA's stand on Pakistan."*

Criticizing the government for having talks with those who behead Indian soldiers, Modi in an interview with Arnab Goswami had stated, "**Bomb, bandook or pistol ki aawaz mein baatein sunai de sakti hai kya?**"

Now that Mr Modi has got majority in the elections, there's a complete u-turn in his stand and nobody is talking about the real reasons.

Adani Power has discussed the proposal of the Kutch project with the UPA-II government, but there was not much progress. The company hopes to implement the proposal during the incoming NDA regime as a coal-based project in phases beginning with 3,300 MW and ramp it up to 10,000 MW within the next five years, he said.

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While the initial investment would be around Rs 13,000 crore, [*CRORE is equivalent to 10 million*] for ramping up the capacity to 10,000 MW a total of Rs 40,000 crore would be required, according to the source. The project is likely to be implemented by Kutch Power Generation Company Limited (KPGCL), a Adani Power subsidiary. The company is learnt to have acquired land at Bhadreswar in Kutch for the project.

Adani Power has reported a net profit of Rs 2,529 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2014, against a net loss of Rs 585.52 crore in the corresponding quarter in the previous fiscal. According to a company statement, its consolidated EBIDTA has risen to Rs 4859 crore in FY14, which is an increase of 322 per cent.

Last week the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence had slapped a Rs 5,500-crore show cause notice on the Adani Group for alleged over-valuation of capital equipment imports. Also last week the firm announced purchase of the Dhamra Port in Orissa.

Everything Mr Modi says is to pamper the emotions of his vote bank. Everything Mr Modi does is to benefit the corporations and help them loot our nation's natural resources. No wonder, Mukesh Ambani has added \$6 billion to his fortune since September 13, 2013 when Narendra Modi was named BJP's PM candidate, reports Bloomberg.

The wealth of Gautam Adani quadrupled to \$7.6 billion, from \$1.9 billion in September 13. That's over \$25 million per day in a nation where some 800 million people live on less than \$2. True, good days have actually arrived for some. Nation's much hyped 'lost self-respect' may rest till the next elections. Read More At: [http:// www.truthofgujarat.com](http://www.truthofgujarat.com)

The fact of the matter is Pakistan needs to put its house in order. The businesses, assets and wealth of Pakistani politicians and elite abroad have become a number one security threat. By hiding corruption money abroad Pakistani politicians have given their necks and hands into the hands of foreign states.

I told BBC world news that '**Pakistan's number one problem is TREACHERY**'.

(Dr Shahid Qureshi senior analyst of BBC and journalist based in London)

**ANOTHER BETRAYAL:**

Leaving the topic in between [*yeh kahani phir sahi...*] – let us move forward. After American attack on Salala check post on **26<sup>th</sup> November 2011**, there was uproar throughout the country.

The US Defence Department officially declared that Pakistan refused to be part of a joint investigation into that NATO attack on Pakistani check post of Mohmand Agency in tribal area. The decision was one of the several Pakistan's military and civil authorities taken in its protest against the said attack in which **24 army personnel including one major and one captain of the Pak-Army were killed.**

The Press Secretary US Defence, George Little, confirmed it in his 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011's briefing to the media. Pakistan's Director General Military Operations [DGMO] Maj Gen Ashfaq Nadeem had already ruled out the possibility of a joint probe, saying that earlier joint investigations carried out for similar attacks were unable to produce any results.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani parliament held a joint session to discuss the attack and the Senate passed a **unanimous resolution** to condemn the attacks. The cogent question was that would the Senate's resolution and the parliament's impending joint session be able to form a concrete strategy against such attacks in future? And if formed, would such a strategy be followed by the country's military and civil elites?

Referring to media reports of **14<sup>th</sup> April 2012**, a unanimous adoption of the revised recommendations of the **Parliamentary Committee on National Security** [PCNS] was a civilian approach to Pakistan's foreign policy but very little was different to what went before. Details were:

- The NATO convoys were allowed but without arms and ammunition; [*which was never there anyway – and even otherwise which Pakistan's security person would dare or be permitted to peep into the NATO containers*].
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- Pakistan would seek (note 'seek' and not 'demand') a cessation of the drone strikes. [*Hillary Clinton had made crystal clear just a week before that 'America will continue its drone strikes whether we seek their cessation or not'*].
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- There would be no foreign bases on Pakistani soil; [*though since the closure of the 'so called secret' Shamsi airbase in Balochistan the Americans never demanded any such facility*].

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- Contractors or operatives would not be allowed; [*meaning thereby that the Americans should go more careful about covert operatives not to repeat Raymond Davis episodes again*].
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- Strict monitoring of all goods in transit at entry and exit points would be launched for tax and transit fees [*but Pakistani tax collecting teams are known world over for their bargain skills*].
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- Pakistan would seek (but again not demand) an apology for the Salala incident which triggered this wave of tension; [*it was already settled that America would offer a regret to restore our national pride and dignity – but even that was not done*].
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- New protocols would be adopted [*but actually it was an update of then existing Standard Operating Procedures*].
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- Hot pursuit would not be permitted for Americans [*but on rare occasions would be tolerated or ignored as before*].
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- There would be no more unwritten and secret agreements, between Pakistan and America; [*it looks good on paper but could safely be ignored by either side at their convenience*].
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- The oil and gas pipeline projects with Iran and Turkmenistan would be actively pursued and we would continue a **results-oriented dialogue with India**. [*It was not at all related with American role in War on Terror.*]

The intelligentsia and media analysts concluded that: '**....it was an impressive wish-list and a cautious statement of intent, but hardly a policy document and the nature of our relationship with the US remains a work in progress.**'

**PM's PEACE TALKS WITH TALIBAN:**

May be just a coincidence; that after taking over the government by the PML[N] in May 2013, the Pak-Army could not move for military action in Waziristan because of an announcement of Taliban's office in Doha, Qatar; and the Americans welcoming that development.

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It was not the case that the Pak-Army was about to launch any operation – no way; Gen Kayani was simply watching the videos of slaughtering by Talibans; losing more officers and men to Taliban ambushes, six of Pakistani soldiers were killed in an ambush **on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013** but not moving a bit any corner – unbecoming attitude of a Pakistani General.

As the Americans engaged, however fruitlessly, with the Taliban in Doha, Gen Kayani got another excuse; no military action in North Waziristan, he conveyed the message. He played around with the status quo in that embattled region – Taliban availed more time thus more chances to hit the Pakistan and its army.

Pakistan's political elite and its Army - both confused; Taliban were able to muster virtual American diplomatic recognition via Doha. A triumph for Mullah Omar and could be a problem for Pakistan, because Mullah Omar's resurgent emirate, waiting patiently for the Americans to depart, was extending into Pakistan – Hakeemullah Mehsud was there as Mulla Omar's envoy and commander.

With the American invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan's control over its tribal areas had gone weakened. History reversed itself; Pak-Army's geniuses under Gen Zia sought strategic depth in Afghanistan in 1980s; but later in post 2001, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda availed more drastic strategic depth in Pakistan, may not be admitted by some.

The Americans were opening talks with the Taliban not to get their arms laid down, **but as a face-saving exercise**. They wanted to exit Afghanistan with less humiliation; they were asking Taliban to make their departure easier - it was written on the wall. Hamid Karzai was smarter – he kept quiet and continued to receive Dollar bags as before.

Karzai knew the outcome of Doha talks well. Pakistan was used like tissue paper once again – the first time under Gen Zia, the second time through Gen Musharraf – still kept itself in claiming 'stakeholders' in the Afghan game. Though remained confined to the level of picking up its about 45000 dead bodies repeating the same time beaten slogan **'that the US is our ally'** – nothing beyond.

The new incumbent, PM Nawaz Sharif, was mad for talks with the Taliban. The new Interior Minister Ch Nisar Ali Khan started laughing at the intelligence agencies' reports in Balochistan and FATA but kept mum about the Taliban. The *Lashkar e Jhangvi* [LeJ] had openly claimed responsibility for murdering hundreds of Hazara Shiite but the interior

minister was heading for a conference on Balochistan – no crackdown over the killers; what origin the actors belonged – LeJ, local terrorists or the TTP.

**Imran Khan was also the leading champion of talks with the Taliban.**

And as if all this was not enough, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, to great applause in the media, agitated the National Assembly that ***'the army should get out of the tribal areas'***.

As things were, the Pak-Army itself had little appetite for an operation in North Waziristan. The foreign media had commented that ***'...Gen Kayani is now a lame-duck, his extended term about to expire this autumn'*** – painful for the whole Pakistani nation.

Referring to ***Ayaz Amir's*** essay in ***'the News' dated 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013:***

*'...what was the nature of talks Pakistan's political elite was aiming at with Taliban.*

*The talks are either between the victor and the vanquished, in which case the victor lays down terms and the vanquished has little choice but to accept them; or talks are between equals (or near-equals), in which case there is give-and-take.*

*....what idea of talks is there in the minds of the peace lobby?  
.....Pakistan was not the victor in this conflict.*

*Pakistan was in no position to dictate terms; that Hakeemullah Mehsud was not about to come down from the hills and surrender; and the Taliban were not about to lay down their arms. So what then will we be discussing?'*

Hats off to such Pakistani patriots – so ingenuous and timely prophecy it was made which came true just within a year – the political and the then military elite had no acumen to see which was ***'written on the wall'***.

At the end same like terrorism and suicide attacks rather more vigorously.... as had been before. Pakistan wanted to give the TTP time to consolidate their plans at the cost of its own sovereignty and more loss of lives. TTP wanted to implement their own Islamic notions – were the newly PML[N] government ready to accept that.

If not, then why a **panel of Imran Khan, Nisar Ali, Achakzai and Fazlur Rehman was made** for negotiations; the chance of passing the kick, and not taking responsibility. More fascinatingly, *PM Nawaz Sharif wanted the Taliban to make assessment of those leaders' real worth.* What calibre that leadership held; any culprit for Quetta killings or Karachi *bori-band* bodies or Shabqadr Police Station attacks or responsible for Bannu Jail breaking were held and hanged – no way.

Soon after the first austerity budget of June 2013, all 33 ministerial chambers in the Parliament were redecorated with new two-ton air conditioners, new LCD TV sets, fresh flooring, redone bathrooms, all on an emergency basis, an example of austerity the nation could be proud of – and Rs:39 million given as rewards to Ministry of Finance officials for their **'night awakenings to devise that nice budget'**.

About two months later, in his Eid greetings to the Afghan people, **Amirul Momineen Mullah Omar** desired his companions that:

*".....to respect the rights of others in Afghanistan, and creating an **inclusive government** after foreign troops withdraw next year.*

*The Taliban will keep fighting the forces of occupation but they are [the US] also ready to enter into peace talks.*

*Modern education is a fundamental need of every society in the present time."*

What the Taliban lacked was flexibility and the capacity for shrewd judgement; but then seen learning diplomacy and even statesmanship. Good for them and good for Afghanistan, but in Pakistan's Northwest Territories still it was an extension of the Afghan jihad.

*[The fact remained that Al-Qaeda and the Taliban were never one - the US attack brought them closer. However, there were Taliban leaders who were unhappy with the burden Bin Laden was placing on them and on Afghanistan.]*

Leave Mulla Omar aside; a new generation of young Taliban leaders cropped up in Afghanistan and Pakistan separately. Usman, an ex-medical orderly, who led the attack on GHQ Rawalpindi; Adnan Rasheed, the junior tech from the PAF, an explosives expert in the attempt on Gen Musharraf's life, then was freed from Bannu jail, and they lead the D I

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Khan jailbreak, to name only these two, represented a new dedicated cadre whose aim was the overthrow of the existing order in Pakistan – in what shape it was.

A cogent fact; that had Pakistan a vibrant and vigorous state through any government during the last decade, this phenomenon could have been curbed in the bud. Radical fringes in other societies had been taken care of through stern actions – the Baader-Meinhof gang, the Red Brigades, even wider insurgencies as in Algeria had been crushed by the military.

However, Pakistan was different. The Pakistani political elites were not only corrupt, they were also demoralised; coward enough to take hard decisions. See the past; GHQ, Kamra Aero-Complex and Karachi Naval Base under attacks, the Taliban holding wide swathes of FATA – Pakistan civil and military command went immensely impotent.

A large country with almost 200 million heads – one of the world's biggest armies, 7<sup>th</sup> nuclear power to boot, no end of tall talk, but no guts at all, not even the right words, how to meet the challenges on the horizon. Most leadership talked Islam but engendered top hypocrisy nothing beyond.

Some pseudo-political figures like Zardaris and Farooquis, real-estate tycoons like Malik Riaz, cement magnates and bank owners like Manshas, always kept the Pakistani governments in their pockets.

**OPEN LETTER TO HAKIMULLA MEHSUD:**

What were the short comings of the then political and military elite, can be judged better from an **open letter** addressed to the then TTP's Chief Hakimullah Mesud, written by a known contributor **Ayaz Amir**, published in the print media on **28<sup>th</sup> June 2013**. Every respectable Pakistani could feel the pinch and punches enumerated in soft words but pointing towards the '**compromised helplessness and cowardice**' of the then rulers. The verbatim version is here:

*"Respected Amir Sahib, we have no quarrel with you. The areas under your command, where the righteous flag of the Taliban flies, we ceded control of a long time ago, and we have learned to live with the outcome. Our watchword, as you would not have failed to notice, is peaceful coexistence...live and let*

*live. So why should we be targeted? We don't want war – we only want to be left alone.*

*Consider the following: even though American drones hit targets in the areas under your control, where our sovereignty is little more than fiction, our molten anger is still directed at hated Americans.*

*The Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (your partners in strategy) may carry out daring strikes in Quetta and claim responsibility for the same; foreign trekkers may be gunned down in the shadow of the **Nanga Parbat in remote Baltistan** (putting paid to the notion of tourism in those parts); terror strikes may take place almost every day in KPK; a justice of the high court may be targeted in Karachi in day light, but do we ever, God forbid, take your name or (blasphemous thought) criticise the forces under your command fighting for the greater glory of Islam?*

*We continue to insist that drone strikes are the root cause of the problem. What further proof is needed of our friendly neutrality? Yet your anger is directed at us. **Do you have a greater sympathiser than Imran Khan? Yet two of his MPAs in KPK were killed [and Khan remained silent].** This approach, Amir Sahib, needs to be reconsidered.*

*There can be no two opinions of your **superior strategy, sparing Punjab** while turning much of your wrath at the other provinces. This is the indirect approach at its best, hacking away at the limbs which are an easier target, and lulling Punjab, the country's heartland, into a false sense of security.*

*Your reach now extends up to Karachi where in Sohrab Goth and other localities on the northern fringes of the city your presence is by now formidable.*

*So things are moving your way as it is. And the Americans will have moved out of Afghanistan with bag and baggage, by next year except for a token presence for face-saving purposes. And look at the positive changes wrought in Pakistan, a Taliban friendly government in Peshawar, and a Taliban sympathetic government in Islamabad which may blow hot and cold on terrorism but you know, as much as we do, that it will keep speaking in a roundabout manner, a skill it has honed to perfection, without coming to the point.*

*After every hit from your side, **Imran Khan will stay say that it is all the fault of the drones; and Nawaz Sharif will say we must talk to the Taliban.** A situation more favourable to your cause would be hard to imagine. Doesn't this call for some reciprocity, a let-up in the attacks which have rocked the rest of the country, apart of course from the sacred land of the five rivers?*

*We are not asking for the moon, just for equal treatment. Shahbaz Sharif entered the storybooks with his celebrated remarks that since the **PML-N and the Taliban shared the same philosophy** – reverence for Islam – Punjab should not be targeted.*

*And for the last three years or more Punjab was spared, a factor that played no small part in the PML-N's sweeping Punjab victory in the recent polls. What if Lahore had been racked by violence the way, say, Peshawar was? The polls then might have had a different tale to tell. Be that as it may, with the strategic winds blowing in your favour, and the Pakistani state having lost whatever appetite it may have had for hard decisions, all we ask for is a respite.*

*In this respite, trust us, **we'll call an all-parties conference**, something at which we've become rather good over the years. When in doubt or beset by nameless fears, summon all the usual suspects, bearded and non-bearded, ghazis of the spoken word...for some of the most energy-sapping exercises in rhetoric known to the planet.*

*We have learned some funny phrases along the way: '**we must all be on the same page**'; '**all stakeholders must be taken into confidence**'. The comedy goes on and the 'stakeholders', God bless them, also go on and on, spinning more and more generalities, empty phrase - mongering with not much in it – **if the Americans can talk to the Taliban, why not us?...and more on the same lines.** The Americans are negotiating a withdrawal. Do we also want to negotiate a withdrawal?*

*So, mighty Amir Sahib, have no fear that we should be asking you to surrender or that before entering into talks you should be put to the necessity of laying down your arms. We are not foolhardy enough to insist on conditions we have no means of*

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*enforcing and you, as the entire history of your movement testifies, are not ones to fall for pious declarations.*

*Your aims are clear: the acceptance of your sovereignty over the areas under your control. And we would probably end up asking for – here it comes again – a respite: let us be...even as Pakistan's elite classes transfer their assets abroad, most of our leading politicians and businessmen having done so already, and the chattering classes go on doing what comes best to them, pulling long faces and dissecting the country's woes over their well-watered glasses.*

*We should be taking a closer look at history: Russia on the eve of revolution in 1917; Weimar Germany before Hitler's rise to power; the defeatist mood in France on the eve of the Second World War. Why go so far? Why not recall Dhaka prior to the army crackdown in March 1971? What was plain to others seemed not so to us.*

*Countries in adversity, countries caught up in war...there's nothing strange about that. But countries where spirit and resolve dissipate...that's a different thing. In which category does the Pakistani malaise fall? Danger written on the wall, etched across the skies, probably branded on our souls, but we refuse to acknowledge it.*

*No matter how the Taliban problem arose, no matter to what extent the Americans are responsible for aggravating it, these abstractions no longer matter. The challenge is ours to face, the United Nations or the Salvation Army not coming to our assistance. But we are lost in other things [sorry].*

*Respected Amir, be happy therefore at our sense of priorities. Even as you are clear about your aims, don't you marvel at the way we run about in different directions, sometimes after Musharraf and Article 6, sometimes after skeletons rattling in our ancient closets?*

*But then it is unreasonable to assume that you will help us attain clarity. **The more confused we are the easier your task.** But to ask a last favour, could you shed some light on the mixture of hope and fear lurking in our hearts?*

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***Your sympathisers amongst us – Imran Khan, Chaudhry Nisar, maulanas of various ilks and brands – tell us that once the Americans are gone the threat you pose will automatically disappear.***

*Far-seeing Amir, **on this crucial point will you enlighten a troubled nation?***

*Yours – Ayaz Amir*