

INDO-PAK THAW: INDIAN STRATEGIC PATIENCE VS DESIGNER

NARRATIVES OF PAKISTAN

BY

LT GEN RAMESHWAR YADAV, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (RETD)

Will Pakistan come forward to propose talks with India post Jul 2018 elections ?. The YES may come from the newly elected civilian government in Pakistan accompanied with high decibel pronouncements of their desire to live in peace with all their neighbours. It would be a much needed approach as Pakistan all these years has been playing with the big boys, Russia, US and China and not with their regional peer group around them. In that, Pakistan has a history of indulging in politico-military complicity with terrorist strains as central concept of conduct of their diplomacy. As a result, Pakistan does not have good relations with India, Afghanistan and Iran and stands isolated and vulnerable on the brink of economic collapse due to her misplaced priorities.

Apropos, there lies an opportunity with new political dispensation to apparently make a new beginning and shape new political horizons. **A nudge by China to Pakistan cannot be ruled out to facilitate their politico-economic strategic interests** as they are most affected party due to security situation in the Af-Pak region. Pakistan has to take care of sensitivities of US also which has impacted on their economic buoyancy in absence of US aids. Whereas, the deep state has their own agenda to exploit the leverages courtesy their unique geographical location making Pakistan indispensable entity in strategic matrix of big powers. Therefore, the **YES, if it happens, may well turn out to be a cosmetic façade for the ears of the mentors and the international community** to show case Pakistani intentions to accommodate their interests.

The strategic big picture in the region and internal political dynamics **may prompt the Indian establishment also to agree to open a low level dialogue** despite her current hardened stance on Pakistan sponsored terrorism. In that, the Indian strategic patience would be on display once again simply to give peace a chance, albeit from a political position of strength. In that, it may well be packaged to show case the effectiveness of hard line policies of current Indian polity as **yet another diplomacy aye** on the eve of the forth coming elections in 2019.

The **Pakistani establishment has been trying to internationalize the Kashmir issue** as against the spirit of 1972 Shimla accord. Their aim seems to be to settle the issue in their favour by involving the big powers as they also need Pakistan for their own political agendas, a quid pro quo like bargain. To do that, the Pakistani narrative talks of the military brinkmanship of India on daily basis on her Eastern borders alongside afflictions of terrorism by (bad terrorists) backed by unseen external forces is a challenge to her national security. Accordingly, the highly victimized Pakistan deserves to be treated with sympathy and the situation warrants intervention of the international community.

Therefore, looking at her military compulsions on Eastern borders and internal security duties, **there is a little cushion for providing military assistance to US inc in Afghanistan unless Pakistan gets requisite military and financial aid** to augment their depleting combat capabilities. The US, therefore, need to review her policy toward their old ally who stood by them always to push their strategic agenda with utmost commitment. Indeed an emotional appeal for the purposes of American cause itself.

As the past pattern indicates, there are fair chances of orchestrating a retreat from talks by the Pakistan army at an appropriate time when their diplomatic purpose of convincing the US to recommence the suspended aid, an impediment in their attention towards Afghanistan would be met. **The Indian bogey suits them to manipulate their stance based on fresh security threats, albeit orchestrated by themselves to create such inimical situations which Pakistan cannot ignore.** The Pakistani NO has many reasons which are too deep rooted to resuscitate.

Post partition of India, the Pakistan prefers to be different to anything Indian and to prove this differential they have pushed themselves to the wall , wherein the extra regional forces are exploiting their **self created politico-economic vulnerabilities**. They have gone to the extent of putting even their sovereignty at stake in their anti Indian obsession. **Pakistan, surely, is in a bind and suffers from self destructive political paralysis beyond repair.**

Moreover, their 'YES' has little meaning as seen in all previous engagements despite Indian political initiatives and magnanimity in accommodating their immature antics in order to mend the fences. India has gone to the extent of returning 93000 prisoners of war after 1971 war without any humiliating pre conditions which she could have easily imposed. It is seen

that **no sooner the Pakistani leaders cross the Red Cliff line , they go back on their promises and indulge in back stabbing nullifying the peace overtures by India.** The history speaks for itself wherein 1948 was followed by 1965, which in turn was followed by 1971 and later Kargil happened in 1999 soon after Lahore declaration.

The pattern continues to be the same without any change, the case in question is the request **by Pakistani DGMO seeking ceasefire** on the lines of 2003 agreement on 29 May, and within few days the border was active once again. Similarly the Indian government's offer of **suspension of operations in the holy month of Ramzan in J&K** was not of liking of the Pakistan who obviously do not want normalcy to come to the troubled state. As a result, the firing incidences on the LC have gone up with a tally of 400% higher violations till Jun end as compared to 2017 for the similar period. Therefore, Pakistan cannot be relied at all based on all the reckonable historical evidence so far.

The 'No' has its genesis in the anti India narrative perpetuated by the Pakistan army establishment **to retain primacy in the matter of governance in that country.** Infact, the political initiative was wrested by the army in 1947 itself when the manipulative yet naïve Pakistani polity let loose Pakistan army to grab the lands of Baluchistan and Jammu and Kashmir in an illegal manner in violation of laid down norms of British Indian government as regards to merger of the princely states.

The initial successes against almost no opposition by the state forces prompted the notion of superiority of Pakistan army and their lead role in shaping of Pakistan as a newly emerged nation state. Moreover, **in the absence of consolidation of other national** institutions of governance in the newly formed nation, **the well organized army became the sole benefactor, and a saviour.**

In consequence, **the Pakistan army assumed the role of a mentor deviating from the mandate of an army in a democratic set up from the very beginning.** The army leadership have been usurping political power at their whims delegating the civil government to the status of rubber stamps of the military over period of time. It is beside the point that the **Pakistan army has failed their nation by losing all the wars waged by them against India,** despite the full benefit of planning and preparation, a pre requisite for offensive operations.

Moreover, the national humiliation of surrender by military in their Eastern wing in 1971 war reflects **adversely on professional reputation of the Pakistan army and its leadership**. Hence, it is a **compulsion beyond any compromise** for Pakistan army to continue the hype of Indian hegemony bent upon obliterating Pakistan as a nation state simply to maintain their bluff lest the civil society rebels against their narrative.

Apropos, Pakistan, despite starting with a forward looking positive Indian cultural moorings, have chosen to push their youth back into dark medieval ways on the pretext of jihad, an agenda of rich Islamic nations, instead of empowering them through modern education. **In that, Kashmir issue has been orchestrated as a media for perpetuating their Islamic cause** with support of few self seeking Kashmiri local leaders and availability of poor unemployed youths to do their bidding for pittance of money. It obviously has been done to extract financial support from the rich Islamic countries in the name of such religious endowments, an unethical indulgence from all accounts.

Further to above, the human rights violations heaped upon the co religious population of J&K by India makes the situation acute enough for international pressure to rein in India. It is another matter that such emotional sensitivities of Pakistan, the self style benefactor of Islam, are confined to Kashmir and not elsewhere in the Muslim world afflicted with atrocities of horrendous dimensions. **It obviously exposes Pakistani hypocrisy, deceit and duplicity.**

The Pakistani military leadership is under false impression that the non state actors have capability to oust the big powers like Russia, and by that precedence Kashmir is a cake walk. They forget that Russia moved out of Afghanistan and disintegrated primarily due to economic reasons and not the military nuisance of the Taliban. Pakistan army continues to nurture medieval mindset wherein one could conquer lands with military force alongside political deceit. They draw motivation from the raiders who came from lands beyond the Kyber pass and plundered their own ancestors to the extent of taking away their cultural ethos and religious beliefs. **Pakistan obviously continue to be on the wrong side of the history probably by design.**

Pakistan army, comprising of superior soldier material as they advocate, is actually indulging in **un soldierly cowardly act by hiding behind the poor youngsters** as their front men doing their bidding. If the jihadis are not on the

scene, then Pakistan army designs stand exposed with cascading effect on internal as well as external political environment. Moreover, having lost all the wars against India, they may have to face the public humiliation and ridicule from their mentors and supporters. Hence, a **deep sense of insecurity prevails in their psyche**. Therefore, the negative narrative is a tried and tested **mechanism by design by the Pakistan army to cover up their professional inadequacies** and unethical anti India bluff.

In order to **evade their accountability**, Pakistan army has been using civil government and non state actors as dispensable commodities when the going gets rough for them. **Going back on Kashmir issue is a not an option for them** as it is the sole biggest political investment to keep the fratricidal tendencies of ever rebellious regional polity and civil society in check. If Pakistan agrees to move back on their Kashmir rhetoric, then they have to forego whatever they have under their illegal occupation. **Therefore, it will certainly not happen, hence do not expect a full YES from Pakistan ever.**

In the prevailing circumstances, there may be a cosmetic 'Half Yes' to take care of sensitivities of their benefactors as a mechanism to extract resources and political leverages to keep them afloat. **China** has interest in pushing through her CPEC scheme, **Russia** is looking at their access to warm waters of Indian Ocean an ambition since czarist era, and **US** needs Pakistan to provide military and logictics support, besides controlling Taliban in their Afghanistan fiasco. Add to above is the concept of **'Islamic bomb'** when hyphenated with their fight in Kashmir puts Pakistan in the league of Islamic forefront. Therefore, Pakistan has high political bargain and encashes benevolence of all hues from these affected parties.

If Pakistan says full YES and sincerely mean it, then creating depth against India into Afghani political space would no longer be needed leading to dilution in compulsions of Pakistani linkages with Taliban. As a result, additional military forces from their Eastern front would be available for Afghanistan front to support US lead GWOT and take care of much needed internal security within Pakistan. Consequent of improvement in security situation in the Af-Pak region, the Chinese and Russian interests would also be taken care of by default.

All this sounds good, but if it happens then Pakistan loses her strategic value and concomitant political bargain to quite some extent after some time. Hence, why should Pakistan lose out on her leverages laying golden eggs so

far. And, Kashmir happens to be the centre of gravity of Pakistani designs to perpetuate her nuisance, thereby seeking such opportunistic political leverages. Hence, the **violation of LC and acts of terrorism would continue unabated as extension of their deceitful and manipulative political design.** Apropos, the Pakistan narrative is unlikely to change in near future unless some miracle happens.

They are likely to continue to conduct their diplomacy using non state actors in their make believe notion that India can be put under pressure with such antics and would submit to their dictates. But, it is not happening as there is no ambiguity in Indian stance of no **talks unless they come clean and retract their support to terrorism in India.** It is the right policy and India should continue on this path and desist on getting lured into Pakistani game plan and inducements of extra regional players post elections in Pakistan. However, a window may have to be kept open for any sensible and sincere approach.

Our experience so far prompts that, it would be better to deal with Pakistan on our terms instead of short term diplomatic euphoria for the sake of electoral calculus. Political dispensation would look stronger if Pakistan is seen to be on the roll and not permitted to fire their political shots with impunity. To do that **all the political parties need to be on the same page as it is the defining movement for India with her effective 'strategic pull' as on date to make Pakistan see reason.**

The Pakistan does not deserve to be handled with Gandhinian accommodation and traditional Indian strategic patience any more. Therefore, until Pakistan is politically stable, sincere and seen to be serious enough through her actions on ground over reckonable period, the Indo-Pak break through can wait. Till then, **simply ignore Pakistan as it remains an irritant of non malignant nature which can be treated, if need be, at an appropriate time.**

Disclaimer: Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CENJOWS.