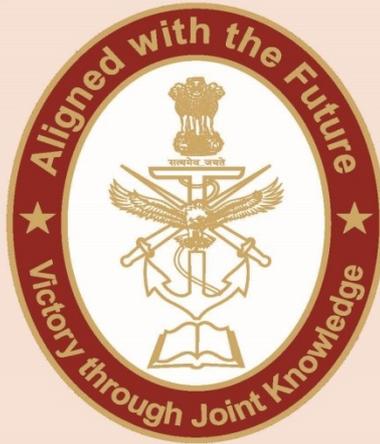


# CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



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### WARNING BELLS ON THE HORIZON: AFGHAN CONNECT TO INDIAN SECURITY

BY

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

As it is getting clear by the day that the US is likely to move out of Afghanistan in face of her changed strategic priorities, public opinion back at home and futility of continuation of a war with no end. It is also certain that with the US draw down, the Taliban are going to be the major power brokers for governance in the Afghanistan. The US, Russia, and China all three big powers have been engaging the Taliban leadership at different platforms and formats to bring about some kind of reconciliation amongst the Afghan society. They obviously have their national interests to maximize the share in the political pie in the changed scenario wherein the US is seen to be vacating a strategic space in Asian landscape.

**Pakistan, with their long association with the Taliban, happens to be the common arbitrator in the ongoing political parleys, and with that she is back on centre stage in the Afghanistan affairs.** The US having ridiculed them a year ago for doing nothing except indulging in deceit and duplicity is back in soliciting their help in striking a deal with Taliban. Russia and China have been in touch with the rebellious outfit alongside Pakistan separately for quite some time. India is nowhere in the entire mechanism for Afghani reconciliation issue despite being an important stake holder with investments worth \$ 3 billion for developmental projects in recent times. **Pakistan, accordingly, would have a favourable Taliban connect and may prompt anti India narratives to the new**

**political dispensation of Afghanistan.** Hence, a matter of grave concern for Indian security matrix.

Last time it was in 1989 when the Soviet Union was forced to move out of Afghanistan who had occupied it for generally the similar reasons what Americans have been trying to pursue since last 17 years. The history is repeating itself and so is going to be the fall outs of this new episode of global grand game. It is here that India has to stop and look back as to what happened in 1989/90, in aftermath of Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. In that, **Pakistan replicated the Afghan model of insurgency in the state of Jammu and Kashmir by diverting the Taliban cadres alongside Pakistani militants and support of section of local separatists.** The insurgency in Kashmir continues despite three decades of ups and downs of events inimical to Indian interests.

The fact file is indicative of a reasonably conducive environment in the Kashmir valley once again to step up the insurgency quotient by infusing fresh blood to the sinister anti India designs of Pakistan. There is a high degree of radicalization of youth looking at the audacious congregations to save the holed up militants, frequent stone pelting and expression of dissent through overt support to agenda of the separatists. Pakistani regular forces continue to violate 2003 ceasefire by indulging in frequent fire assaults to support the infiltrators on the LC and providing logistics support to them with impunity.

The political hierarchy of Pakistan does not leave any opportunity to raise the Kashmir issue in all the possible international forums. They are known to have openly declared their moral support for the so called freedom struggle of Kashmiri population, besides supporting the jihadi leaders like Hafiz Saeed and Azhar Masood and their organizations to operate from Pakistan. The Pakistan army narrative continues to be anti India in all its manifestations **as it is a compulsion without compromise for them in the face of losing all the four battles against India**, albeit initiated by them on the presumptions of their superior military capabilities.

Pakistan continues to orchestrate military situations creating hype of a threat from India as an excuse not to divert forces on their western border and at the same time make a case to seek military and financial aid from US and other co religious well wishers. To do that, Pakistan keeps the LC live with occasional high profile terrorist activities in the Indian hinterland, especially when there is some important political event, proposals of talks, confidence building initiatives, or visit by the foreign dignitaries.

It is all done through tactically timed terrorist activities to show case their nuisance potential, thereby prompting India to give in to Pakistani dictates and compromise on political issues. It also serves the purpose of the Pakistan army to continue to retain their predominance in the matters of governance. Therefore, it is a fair deduction that there seem to be no change in Pakistani intentions, though politically they claim to be keen to come to negotiating table to sort out the differences and resolve the contentious issues.

**Apropos, it is appreciated that once Afghanistan situation starts getting stabilized even partially, Pakistan is expected to induct their Taliban partners to increase the ante in the Kashmir valley in the name of Jihad.** Taliban cadres on their part would be more than willing to do Pakistani bidding as over period of time militancy has become their full time profession and source of income. Moreover, there would be no dearth of financial support to Pakistan by fellow Islamic countries for the purposes of religious cause.

China is also likely to support Pakistan on the quiet as it suits them to keep India on defensive for their ongoing scheme for economic expansion and security reasons through Pakistani geographical space. The US, once out from the region would continue to need Pakistan as a front line state to take care of their interests, hence unlikely to get involved beyond a point. The Russia probably would like to be neutral looking at the economic leverages both with India as well as Pakistan. **Therefore, India has to fight their own battle against the inimical environment likely to emerge after US draw down from the region.**

India, accordingly, needs to work out mechanism to handle political, economic and security contingencies. India, as a principle, has been supporting the legitimate governments in Afghanistan all these years. Taliban have been indulging in violence and rebellious activities against the duly elected Afghanistan government, hence India did not have any association or political connect with them. However, once Taliban join the main stream and become part of the government post reconciliation, there would be a case to review the policy. In the changed circumstances, it would be in order for the Indian government to reach out to Taliban they being part of the internationally recognized government as and when it happens.

India enjoys the good will of the afghan people through their historical and cultural connect which needs to be hyphenated for creating positive synergies with the new political dispensation irrespective of its composition. What needs to be projected is the positive dividends of continuation of

ongoing Indian assistance to Afghanistan in education, health, industries, skill development, infrastructure, military & police training and in host of other sectors. India being a well established development partner of afghan people has potential to take this relationship to the next level.

The new government saddled with the task of reconstruction and rehabilitation of the ravaged country would, surely, seek help of India with her proven capabilities reflective in various projects executed by her. Other countries on periphery of Afghanistan barring China have far lesser institutional experience in infrastructure development and associated technologies and requisite skilled man power. It would make the new Afghan polity to see the reasons and sense to continue the positive relationship between the two countries. Therefore, it is likely to restrain Taliban polity to indulge in anti India activities on behest of Pakistan as even they would give priority to development once they are in power and responsible for governance of the country.

Simultaneously, there is a need to launch a fresh diplomatic campaign to reach out to the friendly foreign countries to isolate Pakistan for their complicity in spread of terrorism. Once Afghanistan gets stabilized, it would be in the interests of all the regional as well as extra regional stake holders to ensure that Pakistan is pressurized to mend their ways and refrain from abetting terrorism. India with her positive political equations with the most of the big players on world stage may like to emphasize on regional stability as a priority area for the world peace.

Since the Kashmir problem has its roots in Pakistan, there is a need to launch a perception reorientation campaign highlighting the illegality of Pakistani claims over Kashmir and bluff of Pakistan army narrative to cover up their failures and vested interests to remain in power. The social media needs to be utilized to target the Pakistani civil society to highlight the futility of continuation of anti India narratives which is the nemesis of current state of their economy and societal insecurities.

Similarly, a psychological campaign is warranted to impress upon Kashmiri population as how Pakistan is trying to manipulate them in the name of religion for their vested interests. The current soft approach to deal with the pro Pakistan separatists also need to be reviewed by exposing their dubious agenda at the cost of innocent citizen, thereby isolate them from the masses. To do all above, the unified command and control mechanism at the state and national level needs to be further refined and empowered. Political initiatives aimed at bringing back

misguided youth through rehabilitation schemes development and employment generation need to be worked out with utmost seriousness.

Afghanistan is an important country for our strategic interests, hence there is no option but to continue good relations with their government irrespective of its composition. Therefore reaching out to Taliban once they are part of the government would be in our national interests. Pakistan is expected to play mischief in reducing Indian political foot prints which needs to be neutralized through aggressive and assertive diplomacy.

As regards to likelihood of Taliban cadres joining the Pakistan sponsored insurgency, it would surely add to the existing internal security challenges. In 1990s when Pakistan initiated insurgency with the help of Taliban, we were not prepared for such a phenomenon. Whereas, the force structures and processes as on date are in place to deal with such contingencies. We have adequate experience are well entrenched to face any escalation in the insurgency quotient which has happened number of times earlier also.

Therefore, there is nothing new for the Indian security establishment, hence not a matter of great concern as it is being talked about. Yes, we have to be alert and proactive on the borders and hinterland to ward off inimical acts by Pakistan and their associates. What we certainly need is empowerment of security forces through technology, proactive doctrinal approach in sync and synergy with the diplomacy and political higher direction in mitigating the negative influences of emerging environmental threats on our periphery. Earlier we take requisite actions at political, diplomatic and military level, better it would be to face the emerging challenges of security connect due to fast changing situation in Afghanistan.

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