**The Wolf and the Lamb (Part IX)**

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The US’ “War on Terror” was an intriguing misadventure. Among other things, it saw allies fighting with, against and hoodwinking one another concurrently. Quite naturally, therefore, it met the fate it deserved.

Pakistan, illusioned to be a Non-NATO ally of the US, stood by Washington’s puppets in Kabul. It ditched its next-door ally in the Afghan Taliban and created a domestic enemy in the form of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In return, it was stabbed in the back by Kabul and treated like bonded labour by Washington. It was whipped non-stop to do more and better.

The US abandoned Kabul and sold the Afghan National Army (ANA) to the Taliban at Doha. The ANA returned the compliment by surrendering to the Taliban without putting up any fight after the US’ withdrawal. And, Kabul’s watchman fled with plane-loads of stolen US dollars.

The US, in pursuit of its global agenda, started touting India, Pakistan’s arch-enemy, as its Deputy Sheriff in the region. It went overboard to keep Pakistan under constant pressure. It manoeuvred Pakistan into the “grey list” of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and kept the threat of black-listing dangling over its head like the sword of Damocles. It connived at Afghanistan and India aiding and abetting the TTP militants to bleed and keep Pakistan on its knees. In classical duplicitous master-strokes, it declared the TTP as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and killed its dicey leaders. This was done to keep the TTP on a tight leash and, at the same time, bluff or signal Pakistan that the TTP leadership would not be allowed to double-cross.

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The US was no less treacherous with its puppets in Kabul. According to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee proceedings, it “walked in … the Doha negotiations … without taking the Afghan government into the loop….The dialogue with the Taliban … centred on US withdrawal from Afghanistan while underlining the fact that the Taliban were allowed to attack Afghan forces but not the US troops …” And, with tongue in cheek, it blamed the Afghan losses on Pakistan’s hobnobbing with the Haqqani Network.

During the War, spanning over two decades, Pakistan’s Armed Forces killed more than 18,000 TTP militants and destroyed their infrastructure and support base in the country. At least 1,100 Al-Qaida terrorists were also either captured or killed. Many of the TTP operatives escaped into Afghanistan, where some of them joined the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province, while others remained in the TTP. According to the US Department of Defense, in 2019, there were 3,000 to 4,000 TTP militants in Afghanistan.

Pakistan’s Armed Forces are undoubtedly amongst the top 10 in the world. But the insurgency cost it 83,000 lives and $150b in the economy, in addition to the agonizing dislocation and arduous rehabilitation of 3.5 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Obviously, the TTP could not have survived and thrived without active support from across the borders. Pakistan said it had “significant proof of Indian support of TTP to destabilize Pakistan and to counter Pakistan’s Afghan policy”; and that “India (was) funding Taliban in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Baluchistan.” The gruesome murder of 132 innocent children of the Army Public School (APS), Peshawar in December 2014 left no doubt in any mind that “a banned outfit (could) not function on such a big scale unless foreign powers (were) funding it.”

The Indian intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), funded, equipped and trained the TTP terrorists in the disproportionate string of Indian consulates on the Pak-Afghanistan border. Likewise, Afghanistan welcomed the militants as “guests” and allowed them free movement and medical facilities in government-run hospitals. Afghanistan’s intelligence agency, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), went overboard to embrace them. Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah is on record having acknowledged that the TTP had “a foothold in Afghanistan”. The NDS officials, too, acknowledged privately that “they (had) staged attacks against Pakistan”.

During the initial days of the War, while Pakistan was quelling the TTP, the US was wooing India into a strategic partnership, along with Australia and Japan. Taking a cue from the coordinated relief operations of the four navies for victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the US floated the idea of “more maritime cooperation” amongst them. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), as it came to be known, was formally initiated in 2007. It was “paralleled by joint military exercises of an unprecedented scale, titled Exercise Malabar.” The alliance was suspended by Australia’s withdrawal by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in December 2007 but revived by his successor, Julia Gillard, in June 2010. Then onwards, it never looked back. No doubt, the partnership was essentially directed at China, yet, as witnessed by India’s role in Afghanistan, it was not without far-reaching implications for Pakistan.

Concurrently, the US paved the way for the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement (2008), also known as the “123 Agreement”. The process, initiated in 2005, took over three years to mature. Under the agreement, the US lifted the 3-decade long ban on nuclear trade with India. It also approached the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to grant a waiver to India. This made nuclear India the only non-signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which could have nuclear deals with other countries. This gave India a decisive strategic edge over Pakistan.

The FATF was yet another ploy to twist Pakistan’s arm. It kept the Non-NATO Ally of the US under constant threat of being black-listed and, thus, axised with Iran and North Korea. In 2008, Pakistan was “found” lacking in its commitment against terrorism and placed in the “grey list”. This was done at a time when Pakistan was amid Operation Rah-e-Haq, fighting against the TTP- TNSM (Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi) coalition in Swat. The injury-cum-insult was repeated in 2012 when Pakistan’s Armed Forces were struggling against a resurgence in terrorist activities throughout the country.

In February 2018, Pakistan stood in the dock again to receive the FATF’s verdict on the monitoring report, prepared by the International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG). It requested permission to submit a compliance report on the ICRG’s charge sheet before the FATF could take a decision. The request was “accepted and the meeting concluded on a positive note”. But, “due to immense pressure from the US”, exerted in the FATF’s plenary meeting at Paris on 29 June, Pakistan was placed in the “grey list”. The U.S, UK, France and Germany “asserted that Pakistan had failed to take necessary measures against terror-financing on its soil”. The decision was based on the ICRG’s report, which stated that “Pakistan had shown some progress on three out of the four major areas of concern…. Cross-border smuggling of cash was the only area where Pakistan admitted slow progress and lack of success”.

The decision disregarded the FATF rules, which entitled countries with stressed economies to lenient consideration.

According to the FATF rules, Pakistan needed the support of only three member countries to be de-listed. China, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey were the obvious hope. But, the US, assisted by India, went out of its way to win over China and Saudi Arabia – China was offered vice president-ship of the FATF and Saudi Arabia, an observer promised full membership. Turkey stood firm but could not bail out Pakistan single-handedly.

The Acting U.S. Secretary of State, Alice Wells, attributed the decision to Pakistan’s “inefficiency to take concrete actions against Hafiz Saeed, the (accused in) Mumbai attacks and (anti-India) organizations, such as Jaish-e-Muhammad, and other sectarian” groups. In September 2020, Pakistan’s Anti-Terrorism court convicted Hafiz Saeed for terror financing. Pakistan has also “taken sufficient measures” to comply with the FATF’s demands. But it remains “under the increased monitoring of the FATF” – in the “grey list”. Dr Marcus Pleyer, President of the FATF, announced on 25 February 2021 that “what is essential now (sic) Pakistan completes the action plan.”

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