**Armageddon Creeps On - PART-II**

[Imran Malik](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/imran-malik)

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In 2006 Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peter, published an article, “Blood Borders: How a better ME would look like” in which he predicted and depicted Pakistan’s breakup. A map therein showed Iran’s and Pakistan’s Balochistan breaking free, KP being gobbled up by Afghanistan and GB-AJK by India. That left only Sindh and Punjab, as the rump, to be called Pakistan.
Was this map a figment of his imagination, an inspiration from or a continuation of Oded Yonin’s strategy for the ME/GMER? Is Pakistan supposed to be the ultimate culmination point of this strategy?
Nuclear Pakistan is not likely to be attacked physically by external forces because of its full spectrum deterrence capabilities. Asymmetric warfare, pitching terrorist groups against its Armed Forces, is perhaps the adopted strategy. Coupled with the employment of all other elements of 5GW it becomes a diabolical concoction. However, Pakistan has been warding it and the incessant terrorist attacks off very successfully.
How else can Pakistan be balkanized or failing which, neutralised?
It will have to be (rather already is) a strategy of the indirect approach. Pakistan’s inner front will thus continue to be the main target of hostile forces aiming to precipitate a cascading implosion. It will be a multidimensional effort, encompassing the political, economic and military domains amongst others. These three major realms once compromised would create the conditions for the possible balkanization or at the least, neutralisation of Pakistan.
At the political level, Pakistan has been never seen any prolonged periods of stability and continuity of governments in power. Truncated tenures of government have generally been the norm. A series of incompetent, at times illegitimate and corrupt leaders have been thrust upon this nation repeatedly. Some of them have reportedly stashed their ill-gotten wealth in the West giving western powers immense leverage over them. Elections have never been free, fair or transparent nor have they been ever accepted by the people at large. Weak, malleable, self-centered, compromised and unimaginative political leaders suit the interests of the powers-that-be and their strategic designs for the region. They will continue to symbolise the single most serious, sensitive and weakest fault line of Pakistan that can potentially create existential threats for it!
At the economic level, Pakistan has always been maintained in a near-insolvent state. Its annual exports have rarely gone beyond USD 25 Billion. Its economy is ever stuttering at the brink of a default; there is a massive brain drain, the coming generations are poorly educated, ill-prepared and ill-equipped to take on the challenges of the twenty-first century. People are groaning under the twin burdens of extremely high inflation and an unbearable cost of living. All governments have failed to set the course of the country’s economy on a firm, steady and progressive course. The tax regime is unfair and biased towards the elite classes. There is rarely any continuity in policy. The bureaucracy is largely politicised and thus compromised. The IFIs have a stranglehold over Pakistan and have now started literally dictating terms/policies to the government. This perennially weak state of the economy gives the powers-that-be enormous leverage over Pakistan. They can precipitate economic crises at will to deny it the fiscal and economic space to fund military campaigns against terrorism and external aggressions. A perennially bankrupt economy overly reliant on loans and grants from international donors, is the second most serious fault line that can constitute an existential threat for Pakistan.
Thus, the worst-case scenario for Pakistan would be when all three existential threats are made to converge at the same point in time. However, a realistic analysis will show that the balkanization of Pakistan is just not possible. In times of crises, the Pakistani nation has always come together, united to ward off all threats. The independence and territorial integrity of Pakistan are unimpeachable red lines for all shades of political opinion and thought. Balochistan, KP and GB-AJK all have vast majorities who see their futures within a unified Pakistan. The dissidents operating in Balochistan and KP are all fringe elements who have been sponsored and employed by RAW and other hostile agencies to destabilise Pakistan and attack the BRI-CPEC. They have utopian ideas of a free Balochistan and an Islamic state, however they lack popular support and the capacities to make it happen. The terrorists have not achieved much beyond random suicide bombings or hit-and-run firing incidents. Furthermore, it is beyond the Indian military’s capacity and capability to ever capture GB-AJK, something the Indian political and military leaders are wont to propagate, come election times. Realistically speaking, any military misadventure against nuclear Pakistan will entail unbearable political, economic and military costs for India!
It thus becomes imperative for Pakistan to be aware of the existential threats. It must engender political stability, elect a competent, visionary and popular national leadership, evolve a vibrant, prosperous economy and maintain an ever-ready strong military to deter all notions of aggression against it.