

2004: A turning point for Pakistan

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The year 2004 is a turning point in Indo-Pakistan military and geopolitical history. It has witnessed the commencement of the end of whatever military resurgence was produced in the Pakistan Army since 1947.

Historically, the military decline of the Indo-Pakistan Muslims started in mid-1650s once Shivaji, the Hindu Maratha, launched a guerrilla war against Mughal Muslim rulers, initiating a process which finally led to financial and thus military ruin of the Mughal Empire.

The birth of Pakistan in 1947 enabled the Indian Muslims to organise the first Muslim army of Indo-Pakistan Muslims since Bakht Khan had led an army of sepoys at Delhi in 1857-58. This army had two kind of officers: British loyalists like Ayub Khan, and more resolute, highly decorated officers like Akbar Khan who won the DSO for gallantry in Burma in World War II.

Akbar Khan was the pioneer who championed the idea of armed insurrection in Kashmir in 1947-48. The first Kashmir War was fought by tribal Pathan volunteers, Kashmiri Muslims, and units of the Pakistan Army.

Akbar's ideas were well digested by the Pakistani military establishment and practised albeit crudely for the first time in Operation Gibraltar in 1965 in Indian Occupied Kashmir. They were also practised in Indian North East Frontier Agency in the 1960s where Pakistan aided anti Indian separatist movements.

Akbar's theories were first successfully practised in the initial Afghan guerrilla insurrection. This was initiated in Kunar Province on orders of the then Prime Minister, Mr ZA Bhutto, in 1975-76, in whose cabinet Akbar was initially a minister. This operation was later expanded into the Afghan Jihad, ironically financed, equipped, and trained by the CIA, and it became the first major Baptism of Fire by international Islamist guerrilla forces.

Meanwhile, Mr ZA Bhutto initiated Pakistan's Nuclear Programme. The 1971 War had proved the conventional disparity which was bound to widen.

The US clearly saw Mr Bhutto as a threat and financed the anti-

unnamed warriors who died in Kashmir and many other areas strengthened Pakistan's defense cause. Al Qaeda, or whatever else one may call it, was the reaction and final culmination of a process of Muslim military regeneration which started after 1947-48. During this period, Muslims saw conventional Muslim armies being humbled in battle. Afghanistan was the turning point, and nuclear weapons seen as the only guarantee against extinction.

There is no doubt that strategic defiance, a mix of armed insurrection and guerrilla war protected by a nuclear cum missile umbrella, was institutionalised in the Pakistan Army as a policy by General Akbar Khan DSO. It was practiced first unsuccessfully in 1965, and then more successfully in Afghanistan and Kashmir in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. It had been fine tuned by Generals Zia and Beg and then merely continued by Asif Nawaz, Kakar, Karamat and Musharraf till 1999. The nuclear side had been initiated by Bhutto's great vision, and aided by AQ Khan's technical acumen.

The armed insurrection in Kashmir from 1989 and the Kargil Affair of 1999 were important landmarks in this saga. The Kashmir War was fought on sound military lines, but the Kargil War of 1999 destroyed Pakistan's cause internationally. What the guerrillas had gained in Kashmir from 1989 to 1999 was destroyed in Kargil thanks to a myopic understanding of international relations and strategy.

The post 9/11 scenario, which includes USA's invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and various anti-Muslim operations conducted globally under the so-called guise of war on terror, however, constitute another turning point in the history of Islamic military resurgence.

Today the USA is convinced that Pakistan must be denuclearised, and that the only way it can be done is by forcing compliance to do so from the Pakistani military establishment.

In an article titled "Betrayal at Camp David" published in "Nation" in June 2003, this scribe had asserted that USA's main aims for Pakistan are its denuclearisation, a US-sponsored sellout of Kashmir and denial of freedom of manoeuvre to anti-US Islamic forces. The USA in all probability plans to achieve all three aims in 2004

Bhutto movement of 1977, encouraging General Zia to remove Bhutto. Ironically for the US, Zia the military usurper proved a tough nut to crack and continued Bhutto's nuclear programme. The Afghan War made the US tolerate the programme.

Under the guise of Afghan War, plans were revived to aid secessionist movements in India and to encourage the Kashmiri Muslims to fight against India since it was correctly perceived as a major military threat to Pakistan. Significant part of US aid directed to the Afghan insurgents was diverted for supporting guerrilla forces. The Indians were all set to attack Pakistan in 1984 (Operation Meghdoot). Jihad and armed insurrection were seen as a guarantee that Indians were bled white without declaring conventional war, aided by a nuclear capability that Pakistan acquired in late 1980s. Also, somewhere in the Pakistani psyche was a desire to avenge the 1971 military humiliation.

Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan the USA revived its initial geopolitical aim of denuclearising Pakistan, now that Pakistan was not needed as a US ally.

Meanwhile, the guerrilla forces became free after Soviet withdrawal, allowing the resultant regrouping in Kashmir, Chechnya, and the Balkans. All along for the Muslims fighting the Afghan War it was clear that USA was only a temporary ally.

Following Zia's demise in an aircrash possibly engineered by USA, his successor, General Aslam Beg, perfected the blue print developed in Afghanistan for use in Kashmir. General Beg had been associated with military planning including the nuclear programme and guerrilla operations as Pakistan Army's Chief of General Staff from 1980 to 1985, and as corps commander Peshawar in 1985-87, followed by a stint as Vice Chief.

Beg's policy of strategic defiance was a deliberate response to USA's anti Pakistan policies initiated after 1988. Regardless of whatever happened later, there was strong logic in Beg's policy. Pakistan was under an undeclared siege led by the US. The Americans saw India as the future policeman of Asia, and Pakistan as the trouble creator.

Major strategic decisions had been finalised by the end of Beg's tenure and it was Beg who was the guardian of Pakistan's strategic and operational plans for the longest period i.e. from 1980 to 1991. What Beg finalised by 1991 was merely followed with minor changes till 2001. Beg's ambition was national rather than personal and that was why Pakistan's second major elections based on direct elected franchise since 1947 were held under Beg's guardianship.

Meanwhile, Jihad gained a snowball momentum and thousands of

through Pakistan's fourth military junta. Whether Pakistan as a result is Balkanised or Somalised is of no consequence to USA, a Christian Crusader state which is already occupying two Islamic countries by force and one i.e. Pakistan by what US analysts term as soft power covertly applied by cultivation of key government members, some ex-employees of CITI Bank, some ex Bank of America officials, some with tenures as Pakistan government employees on postings in USA and some by choice of ambition with eyes blinded because of lust for power and wealth.

The blueprint for doing so is a mild anaesthetic administration of economic aid. This is enough to keep the sick man going, but not sufficient to make him fully healthy. Thus, the 3 Billion promised US aid package linked to secret clauses possibly agreed to at Camp David.

Finally, the Americans think that 2004 is the right time to reduce Pakistan to size. The method to do so is based on cultivation of key leaders, and a covert carrot and stick policy.

Thus the so-called 2004 thaw in Indo-Pakistan relations. What was terminated by the English East India Company in 1803 and 1849 in Muslim favour by a twist of fate is to be resumed. 2004 is the turning point in Hindu revival. Thanks to the war on terror it is probable that the USA has finally succeeded in overawing the Pakistani defense establishment.

Today there is no Bhutto who would risk the gallows and no Akbar Khan who would call a spade a spade. If all goes on as it is it would be safe to assert that the Hindu has won the war that was initiated by Shivaji in mid-1650s. The question is not whether one is a staunch or liberal Muslim. I have lived and traveled in USA, Canada, Ireland, Russia and UK, and repeatedly discovered that the non Muslims perceive the name 'Muslim' with grave mistrust and bias. There is much truth in the concept of clash of civilisations. The bigoted Hindus did not accept the liberal Jinnah in 1928 or 1947. The bigoted west will not accept whatever concessions the liberal Musharraf, has made or would offer them, based on any rationale or good motive.

The demise would be subtle - indirect but clear-cut if Pakistan surrenders its nuclear potential. 2004 is the year of decision.

The draft of the agreement that the Pakistan military junta will have their way in Pakistan aided by windbag rubber stamp prime ministers, while India will be the regional boss. We are seeing a secret alliance of Indian democracy and Pakistani higher interest groups.

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