

# The new phase of Pak

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Nation  
22-12-04

On December 17, Mr Bush signed the "Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act" of 2004 relating to the overhauling of the US intelligence gathering system in the light of 9/11 Commission's recommendations. It deals with the strategy of combating terrorism and the role of key countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. It inter alia includes a framework for Pak-US cooperation, and spells out a wide range of US goals and a long-term strategy to achieve them. Pakistan has been assured of aid "at current levels" beyond 2009 to dispel the impression that Pakistan is an "ally of convenience".

The chequered history of US Pak relations during last 50 years has seen many ups and downs, alternated with frustration and elation and at times apprehensions and sanctions. Even during Afghan crisis and Pakistan's, critical role and support to US the Pressler and Glen amendments remained in force.

The current relationship is primarily governed by issues of terrorism, nuclear proliferation and Islamic fundamentalism. It is also pertinent to underscore the fact that Pakistan's cooperative response on these issues was made in a particular context of time. Bush's doctrine - "you are with us or against us" left Pakistan with little option to react otherwise. Pakistan faced with threat from India and need to secure its nuclear assets had no other choice. Prior to the current relationship, Pakistan had received epithets - 'rogue state', 'failed state' and at one stage, even being 'considered as' a "Terrorist state".

During Mr Bush's first term there have been moments of tension between Washington and Islamabad. The A.Q. Khan saga created severe strains and had Musharraf not defused the situation by taking appropriate disciplinary action against those responsible for the alleged activity, it could have developed into a major crisis. Similarly US had been leaning heavily on Pakistan to stop infiltration into Held Kashmir and did not rest until India confirmed that such activity has largely stopped.

There is growing appreciation of Pakistan's critical role in combating terrorism, however some straws in the wind suggest that there are factors that may impinge on the current relations and they may face tension if not crisis. Couple of recent resolutions and legislative actions by Congress reflect the cautious even skeptical view of US lawmakers towards Pakistan.

The Act under section 4082 captioned "United States Commitment to the future of Pakistan" recommends that the "US should help to ensure a promising stable and secure future for Pakistan". It further requires stipulates that "not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall transmit to Congress a detailed proposed strategy for the future, long term engagement of the United States with Pakistan. The strategy required by this subsection may contain a classified annex".

The section 2845 provides that the Secretary of State submit a report to Congress within 90 days, to report on the education reform in Pakistan, and the US strategy to assist Pakistan to achieve this objective, and to provide information on the funding

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"obligated and expended by Pakistan and the US for education reforms since January 1, 2002".

The broad framework of the Act entitled "Foreign Operations Export Financing" Related Programme Appropriations Act 2005 defines education reform as "efforts to expand and improve the secular education system in Pakistan and to develop a moderate curriculum for private religious schools in Pakistan."

The interstate relations are always based on mutuality of interest and inter action, and while in technical sense there may not be a 'score card' but the principle of reciprocity is universally recognized. Bilateral relations are never a one-way street, nor are they entirely altruistic. The nations make a cool, calculated assessment of pros and cons of a policy and in determination of bilateral relations the concept of equality and reciprocity generally holds the balance. Pak-US relations suffer from a huge asymmetry, and this imbalance would always determine the parameters of 'friendship' and 'partnership'.

The issue of non-proliferation has become an obsession with the US policy planners and lawmakers. The activities of Dr. A.Q. Khan have created serious concern in the American minds and despite all assurances and actions by President Musharraf, the issue remains a flash-point. Bush raised the issue with Musharraf in his recent Washington meeting and though he did not ask for direct access to Dr. Khan - an oft-repeated demand from various official sources, an official insisted that "we need to go back and make sure we have gotten every nook and cranny." In the context of current controversy about Iran's nuclear program, the issue has acquired a new urgency, with mischievous allegations that Dr. Khan provided weapon graded highly enriched uranium to Iran and that Iran received nuclear weapons design from Khan's black market network.

The gravity of this issue has, regrettably, not dawned upon our authorities. Mere denials of purported reports and refusal to hand over Dr. Khan to any foreign agency or giving access to any outsider is considered enough. This posturing reveals a lamentable lack of understanding of US public concern on this issue. The apprehensions of US public were fully articulated in the Intelligence Authorization Act FY2005, passed by the House of Representative in June 2004. The section 304 of the Act requires Director C.I.A to report to the Con-

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gress "1) efforts of any Pakistani entity or individual to acquire or transfer weapons of mass destruction, 2) Pakistani steps to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them, 3) Pakistan's steps to ensure that their own nuclear weapons are secure, 4) An estimate of the size of the Pakistani fissile material stockpile, 5) Efforts by Pakistan to fight Al.Qaeda, the Taliban and other terrorist networks, and 6) Efforts by Pakistan to establish and strengthen democratic institutions."

These provisions clearly lay down the limits of US Pakistan partnership and the pressures on Musharraf to conform to the requirements of the US legislation, discussed above. These bills clearly demarcate US concerns stretching from fundamentalism in Pakistan and the role of Islamic seminaries to the nuclear proliferation network. The future policies of Pakistan would remain subject of sharp overseeing by the concerned appropriation Committees of the Congress and the Senate. Any deviation or dereliction will directly impact on the release of the promised aid.

This is not a far-fetched scenario. On June 24, 2003 a highly placed State Department official in his press briefing said: "This is a multi-year programme. Congress has to approve it, we have to make sure that it makes sense. That is where - I'm not using the term conditionality, but basically you've heard me raise major issues, as I was talking earlier. And for Congress to appropriate the funds - and indeed for the government to seek funds - I think we're going to have to be satisfied that Pakistani is indeed working vigorously with us in the war against terrorism, is working vigorously to ensure that there is no onward proliferation and is moving smartly towards democracy. I'm not calling those conditions, but let's be realistic, three years down the road, if things are going badly in those areas, it's not going to happen. We're not going to request it, congress won't appropriate it. And that is a bargain that the Pakistanis are entering into with their eyes wide open."

We need to put the relations in proper context and face the stark reality that the US aid and its close relations are directly tied to the meeting of US concerns on nuclear proliferation and the war against terror. The significance of these legislations is that in return for US assistance, Pakistan has been placed on probation, and to qualify for continuing aid our future policies must conform to American wishes. Pakistan's determined and successful action against Al-Qaida has won President many friends in the Administration, but once this factor is out, US will not be so solicitous of Pakistan, and will press it hard to pass the test on Dr. Khan and Madressah issue, or else forfeit US largesse.

Given this background, there is little justification for rosy assessments of future US-Pakistan relations. We need to fashion our foreign policy with greater realism. Today Pakistan and US may be moving in the same direction, but in the near future their national interests may determine different goals. Prudence demands that we reckon these factors and put minimum reliance on US aid in our future planning.

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