



Pak-US coalition against terrorism: a critical appraisal

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It has been rightly said by an American weekly that Pak-American relations have been "going through a cycle of boom and bust". The reason being that the relationship has been almost always based on expediency rather than on principles.

The ongoing coalition against terrorism between the US and Pakistan is based almost entirely on the requirements of expediency. At the relevant time President Musharraf was internationally isolated and domestically vulnerable and, therefore, like a drowning man he clutched at the straw of the American offer, whatever it might have been.

The United States, too, at that time was in desperate need of military collaboration by Pakistan, the most crucial and strategic neighbour of Afghanistan. Besides, Pakistan was then the closest ally of the Taliban and, as such, held the key to all their strategic and logistic secrets. This coalition, like previous pacts, is completely bereft of any sustainable commonality of interest and objective between Pakistan and the US, without even so much as the common perception of terrorism and the common objective of fighting the war on terror.

Whereas the United States considers those engaged in armed struggle in Kashmir and Palestine against foreign occupation as terrorists, Pakistan considers them freedom fighters. The 9/11 Com-

Pentagon still insists that Osama is hiding in South Waziristan.

The Musharraf government has been laying great store by the grant of the non-NATO ally status, which it thinks would pave the way for the bonanza of long awaited military cooperation with the US. Already there is a news report that on protest by India, the United States has gone back on the promised delivery of the F-16s to Pakistan and has assured India that the matter is still under consideration.

The Musharraf government has been congratulating itself for coming out clean from the A.Q. Khan nuclear scandal and claims that Pakistan's nuclear programme and arsenal have been saved from US intervention. But alas, this self-congratulation might soon evaporate into thin air in view of the pernicious move already made by introducing into the House of Representatives an anti-Pakistan bill that calls for sanctions against this country if it fails to get from the US president a clean chit on the nuclear issue.

The bill also makes all future assistance to Pakistan subject to the US President certifying that Pakistan was fully sharing all information pertaining to A.Q. Khan's proliferation network. The bill further insists on Pakistan providing full access to its scientists and their associates. If, as claimed by the Musharraf government, the United States already stands fully satisfied

mission so widely hailed in the US identifies the on-going terrorism as Islamist terrorism originating from the doctrine of Jihad as propounded by Ibn Taymiya and Syed Qutb, whereas Pakistan considers Jihad as a sacred religious duty of every Muslim. The Commission, however, not only swept under the carpet of expediency the findings of the German court that Osama had nothing to do with the 9/11 attack but it also glossed over the galaxy of terrorist groups belonging to other religions.

Whereas Allah in the Holy Quran has proclaimed Islam to be the perfect eternal and final religion, Daniel Pipes, recently appointed by Bush as director of the prestigious American Institute of Peace, dared declare that "The ultimate goal of the war on terror is to modernize Islam". With this end in view he has been seeking funding for a new organization named Islamic Progress Institute, with the object of reforming Islam "into a democratic moderate and pro-American religion." He further made it clear that "Islam in America must be American Islam".

Deputy Secretary Defence Wolfowitz, just before the invasion of Iraq, went so far as to say that "what we need is the reformation of Islam and the capture of Iraq would serve this purpose very well". Lt. General Boykin, who holds a very important position in the Pentagon, committed sacrilege against the Allah of Islam by dubbing it as not the real God but an idol. Such being the hard facts, America's war on terror is, in fact, a war on Islam. As against this, President Musharraf has been haranguing the nation that it is a war on terrorism that Pakistan is fighting.

No wonder President Bush and Secretary Powell have been so lavish in extolling the role of Pakistan, specially that of President Musharraf, in the war on terror; so much so that the United States has been pleased to confer upon Pakistan the status of non-NATO ally. The 9/11 Commission has underpinned the crucial importance of Pakistan in conducting the war on terror and has recommended to the US government to go for a long-term and stable relationship with Pakistan.

The Musharraf government feels elated about Pakistan occupying the exalted position of a frontline state in the ongoing war on terror that in return it has launched massive military operations against its own people in the tribal areas of South Waziristan.

No wonder the US Secretary of State Collin Powell has extolled the role of Pakistan in the war on terror thus "We have government of Pakistan playing a much more aggressive role in their frontier areas to go after the Taliban and Al-Qaida remnants". What is distressingly intriguing, however, is that even in the face of Mr. Powell's praise, the

about the nuclear non-proliferation from the Pakistan side, where was the need for such an anti-Pakistan bill to be introduced in the House of Representatives? This bill, if passed into law, will render Pakistan's nuclear programme and arsenal extremely vulnerable to US intervention.

Whatever financial assistance has been rendered by the US to Pakistan, namely, the writing off of \$1 billion and the grant of a loan of \$3 billion over a period of 5 years, has all been made subject to Pakistan's continuous collaboration in America's war on terror. The Pentagon's insistence that Osama is still hiding in South Waziristan is tantamount to distrusting the relentless massive military operation by Pakistan throughout South Waziristan. This lack of trust by the Pentagon of Pakistan's military efforts may have sinister implications for Pakistan.

The US betrayals in the past are very well known. In complete disregard of the Pak-US Treaty of 1959, by which the USA was bound to come to Pakistan's assistance in case of aggression against it, and despite the so called tilt towards Pakistan of President Nixon, it not only refused to come to Pakistan's rescue during the 1971 war but also imposed an arms embargo against Pakistan.

It is, therefore, natural to guard against such betrayals in future. As soon as the US succeeds in stabilizing the puppet regime of Karzai in Afghanistan and finds it expedient to withdraw from there, or if it finally fails to put down the insurgency in Afghanistan and makes up with Al-Qaida and Taliban on their terms, the US will cease to have any abiding interest in Pakistan and will leave it to fend for itself against the infuriated Taliban and Al-Qaida.

Furthermore, if those now engaged in armed struggle against the US occupation in Iraq succeed in driving out the US from there and are left free to engage in Jihad elsewhere, particularly against the pro-American regime in Pakistan, which ditched the Taliban, how will the Musharraf government be able to stem off the triumphant march of the Taliban and Al-Qaida and the freedom fighters from Iraq when it could not put down the arms apprising in South Waziristan with all its military might?

President Musharraf and his pro-US government should sit up and think the unthinkable thought of American being defeated in the war on terror. General Musharraf would do well to give his most earnest thought to Gen. Aslam Beg's prophetic statement: "the global resistance forces of the Muslim world have proved to have been cataclysmic agents in history, which have brought the US power to its knees and this pan-Islam should be reckoned as the miracle of the 21st century. Jihad is an instrument for restoring harmony and balance in the world."