**An Unfriendly Ally**

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October 4, 2023

Needless to say, the US has been an unfriendly ally of Pakistan. It has never exhibited respect for our sovereignty or helped us out of adverse situations like a friend. Rather, it has used Pakistan as a pawn on the chessboard to advance its global interests. Our relations with the US have always been tactical, designed to serve US interests. The nature of our relationship with the US is best explained by this couplet “barey logon sey milney mane zara tum fasla rakhna miley darya samundar sey tow who darya naheen rehta.” The English rendering of the couplet is that one should keep a proper distance from the mighty because when the river falls into the sea it loses its identity.

We lost our identity and sovereignty when we entered alliances like SEATO and CENTO in the mid-fifties against a neighbouring Superpower, an ill-advised move that caused incalculable harm to us. The US almost jeopardized our security by flying a U2 spy plane over Russian territory from a base near Peshawar without the knowledge of the government. It helped India start its nuclear programme, which eventually enabled her to explode a nuclear device in 1974. It refused to help Pakistan when India attacked Pakistan in 1965 and put an embargo on the shipment of military hardware and spares to its ally; its sixth fleet never turned up to save the dismemberment of Pakistan when India attacked former East Pakistan; it fiercely opposed our nuclear programme and used sanctions to prevent Pakistan from pursuing the nuclear path which was India-specific due to the security threat that it posed; it used Pakistan against USSR in Afghanistan and at the end of the war left Pakistan in the lurch to face the consequences.

Our coerced participation in the war on terror as a front-line state tells a story of high-handedness by the mighty.

Before proceeding with the litany of US betrayals, I would like to mention that we paid for our alliance with the US and annoyed the USSR in the shape of dismemberment of Pakistan as the latter signed a defence pact with India before it attacked East Pakistan in 1971 which eventually culminated in the creation of Bangladesh. In 1978, when I was training at the Administrative Training Academy Lahore (former Civil Service Academy) the then foreign secretary Mr. Shahnawaz came to deliver a lecture on the foreign policy of Pakistan. During the question-answer session, I asked him that given the traumatic history of US-Pak relations and the role that the USSR played in the dismemberment of Pakistan did he not think that our decision to Join alliances with the US was wrong. Instead of recognizing the realities, he said that I had asked a stupid question. Such was the mode of denial from which our policymakers suffered.

Our coerced participation in the war on terror as a front-line state also tells the same story of high-handedness by the mighty. It pummeled our sovereignty at will. The Ramond Davis episode, Salala attack, Operation to take out Osama Bin Laden and continued drone attacks were ranting testimonies of the tortured relations between the two countries.

The US, despite the sacrifices Pakistan made in the war on terror which were often publicly recognized, clandestinely worked to undermine our strategic interests. It persistently looked askance at Pakistan’s commitment to the war on terror and accused it of double-dealing. The Jewish-dominated US media also made incessant and relentless efforts to malign Pakistan as a hub of terrorism. Pakistan’s economy suffered a loss of $ 150 billion during two decades of war on terror besides the loss of more than seventy thousand human lives but the US provided $20 billion in aid to Pakistan.

When the US after two decades of failed adventure in Afghanistan finally felt the need to pull out from there it again used Pakistan to facilitate an agreement with the Taliban. When Kabul fell to the Taliban unexpectedly Pakistan helped in the pull out of thousands of US and other nationals. Unfortunately, Pakistan has not benefited from these efforts and is left with no choice at the moment but to rake the mess created by US adventure in Afghanistan with all its debilitating effects.

Ever since the launch of CPEC which Pakistan considers a transformational project in regards to regional connectivity, changing the economic profile of the country by making it a hub of economic activity and also serving the commercial and strategic interests of its iron-brother China, the US and India have been making persistent efforts to sabotage it through overt and covert means. Given the foregoing facts how somebody can consider the US as an ally and a strategic partner of Pakistan?

The reality is that the US never had a friendly posture towards Pakistan and instead, it wanted to keep Pakistan destabilized to achieve its strategic interests. Daniel S. Markey who held the South Asia portfolio on the Secretary’s Policy Planning Staff at the US Department from 2003-2007 and 2007-2015 was a senior fellow for India, Pakistan and South Asia at the Council on Foreign Relations from 2007-2015 wrote a book titled ‘ No Exit From Pakistan’ in 2013. He explained the nature of the relationship between the US and Pakistan and the compulsions for the former to maintain it. He said that the US could not leave Pakistan alone because of its extensive nuclear missile programme which needed to be continuously monitored. The second reason is that Pakistan had very deep relations with civilian and military leaders of China which required constant surveillance of the development of relations between them. The third reason is that it had the biggest Army in the region which could destabilize the entire world. Therefore, according to him, the US had decided 72 years ago that it could not allow Pakistan to develop and lead the Islamic World and therefore it was imperative to keep it destabilized. That should have been an eye-opener for our architects of foreign policy and led them to recalibrate relations with the US keeping in view its strategic interests.

It is an undeniable reality that our security and economic prosperity are inextricably linked to our region. This reality necessitates building regional alliances and mending relations with neighbours as dictated by the changing regional and global realities. This will not only help us in countering some of the negative consequences of the US policies in the region but will also enhance our ability to overcome internal challenges.

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