

Scenario 14

Pakistan: ISI Rigged Elections:

Now a day much proclaimed news in the media from Prime Minister of Pakistan, Yusuf Raza Gilani that **'we are with our ISI; their functions and operations have government backing'** (Ref: media news of 28th April 2011). Till the recent past it was not the case. PPP had series of grievances with the ISI (Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence, a military organ) though it could not be ascertained whether it was the ISI's role which caused complaints or PPP's own wrong choice of team selected at nepotism and not on the basis of their professional skills and competency. Let us go through some facts of our past history.

An American broadcaster Mark Corcoran presented his report in late 2001 describing that:

'Pakistan's feared Inter Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) is a maker and breaker of governments. As the Americans and their allies venture further into the quagmire of Afghanistan, they are dependant on the ISI to be their "eyes and ears" on the ground. The only problem is the ISI was until September 11, the Taliban's closest ally - in fact the agency was instrumental in bringing the Taliban to power.'

'While General Musharraf has signed up on the side of the US, the ISI has other ideas. Already Musharraf has sacked his ISI boss (Lt Gen Mahmood Ahmed) for encouraging the Taliban to resist the US. (Former PM Benazir Bhutto tells Mr Mark that) the ISI is "a state within a state", and blames it for her own political demise. According to experts, the ISI has a track record of political assassination, state-sponsored terrorism, and drug running.'

Starting from fifty years back; it has been generally perceived that the PM Z A Bhutto dragged the ISI in the politics. It is widely spread that it was Bhutto who had first time assigned political tasks to the ISI in Pakistan. It is not the whole truth. Actually it was the Field Marshal Ayub Khan who had used ISI to seek political motives during his presidential rule in the backdrop of his growing distrust in the Intelligence Bureau due to the presence of Bengali officers. When war broke out in Kashmir in mid 1965, Ayub Khan had started feeling a collapse of the operations of all the intelligence agencies including ISI because the agencies were concentrating on the surveillance of possible domestic political activities against him.

In the words of Wajid Shamsul Hassan:

'The covert infiltration plan in the Indian-occupied Kashmir, codenamed Operation Gibraltar – a brainchild of GHQ and ISI turned out to be an intelligence fiasco. According to analysts ISI had overestimated so-called "local support" to Pakistani commandos in Kashmir and underestimated the Indian response to the plan. The ISI's colossal failure got exposed when Operation Gibraltar met reverses and the Indians, in order to teach Gen Ayub Khan a lesson, broadened the theatre of war beyond Kashmir into Pakistani territory.'

'What added insult to Gen Ayub Khan's injury was the failure of ISI to locate the Indian armoured division that had sneaked into a position when Lahore could have fallen to the Indian Army without much upheaval; as per authentic secret reports.'

In a top brass meeting, Gen Ayub Khan pulled up the then ISI chief Brig Riaz making him responsible for ISI's utter failure to locate a whole Indian armoured division that caused loss of hundreds of army commandos in the *Operation Gibraltar*. Brig Riaz flatly told that *'it was busy keeping surveillance on his political opponents'*.

Wajid Shamsul Hassan adds that:

'This was a slap on Gen Ayub Khan's face and he appointed a committee headed by Gen Yahya Khan to examine the working of the ISI and other intelligence agencies. The Committee found that ISI had been deeply involved in domestic politics and, had been devoting its time and energy in monitoring the activities of Gen Ayub Khan's political opponents.'

Since its first day of independence, the army intelligence units including ISI used to report to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army (C-in-C) as it was natural. After 1958's Martial Law all the intelligence agencies including Intelligence Bureau were made answerable to the President and Chief Martial Law Administrator. The intelligence agencies then started competing to demonstrate their loyalty to Gen Ayub Khan. All the agencies tried to over take each other in giving Ayub Khan a rosy picture of the country. They kept him in the dark about the freedom movement in former East Pakistan which ultimately disembarked.

ISI's role during Gen Ziaul Haq's rule is quite evident in Benazir Bhutto's autobiography '**Daughter of the East**' on how the martial law regime sought to suppress the PPP. The ISI not only kept tabs on the Bhutto family when they were in the country but also during their stay abroad. In one instance a Pakistani surveillance team attempted to keep track of Benazir Bhutto even while she was in political exile in London. She then telephoned Scotland Yard and complained about some men waiting outside her house. On their interception the intimidation ceased.

Benazir Bhutto had, however, known that the ISI had once lost its political importance when her father Z A Bhutto assumed power in 1972. He was very critical of its role during the 1970-71 general elections, which triggered off the events leading to the break up of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh. [*Of course, she had also kept the knowledge that it was his father Z A Bhutto who had injected new blood in the ISI in 1975 and made it flag bearer secret organization for all future politico-armed moves taking place in Pakistan.*]

In early seventies ISI's Chief Gen Jilani gained confidence of the then PM Z A Bhutto by secretly telling him about the alleged conspiracy by Gen Gul Hassan to overthrow his government. This information, true or false, brought Gen Jilani nearer to Z A Bhutto and he had ensured that his confidante Gen Ziaul Haq succeeds Tikka Khan as Army Chief. Gen Ziaul Haq was given rapid and unprecedented promotions by Mr Bhutto thus had himself signed his death warrants.

[Gen Ziaul Haq instead of remaining loyal to his benefactor decided to bite the hand that had fed him fat. He used his ISI to conjure an alliance of different political parties; got PNA formed and ignited a fake movement that looked real to topple the Prime Minister Z A Bhutto's government.]

The same Gen Ghulam Jilani, being Governor Punjab later, had expressed apprehensions about being under surveillance by his own ISI, during Gen Ziaul Haq's regime. Gen Jilani had asked Brig Syed Ali Tirmazi, who was then serving as the Director in ISI Directorate, whether he was under surveillance. Gen Jilani was a father figure credited with nurturing the ISI rise from a peripheral to a powerful organisation in Pakistan. He had served as DG ISI in three regimes beginning with Gen Yahya Khan, PM Z A Bhutto and Gen Ziaul Haq. Like his predecessors, Gen Ziaul Haq too did not hesitate to use ISI for his political interests and provided a guide for future military dictators.

Gen Ziaul Haq became all powerful following his coup against Bhutto in July 1977. He expanded its role and made this organization responsible for collection of intelligence about the PPP, with a special focus on organizing ethnic and religious groups in order to divide Sindh's political power. A golden opportunity then cropped up for both Gen Ziaul Haq and ISI to become the sole arbiter of power in the region following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. He had Washington and London on their toes to help him to carry out their jihad.

However, with the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan his utility was over but leaving behind a new class of 'wealthy politicians' like Humayun Akhter and Ejaz ul Haq whose fathers had minted billions of dollars from American ammunition received for operations against the Russians in Afghanistan. Ojhri Camp episode is a case study in that respect which also has lessons for many.

Another father figure of the ISI, Lt Gen (Rtd) Hameed Gul, according to his confession, formed IJI to deny Benazir Bhutto an absolute majority in elections after air crashed death of Gen Ziaul Haq, to avert what he called 'democratic dictatorship'. Two sons of a pseudo industrialist Mian Sharif were selected to rule over Punjab. His accomplice, of course, was his boss Gen Aslam Beg who had conceded later before the Supreme Court of Pakistan on 16th June 1997 that he had distributed 140 million Rupees, secretly amongst the Bhutto's opponents to help PPP's defeat and ensuring IJI's victory in elections.

Air Marshall (Rtd) Asghar Khan was not the only voice challenging the role of ISI in the Supreme Court of Pakistan on the pretext of those Rs: 140 million scam. Benazir Bhutto had also made a committee to ascertain and review the role of Intelligent Agencies under the chair of AM (Rtd) Zulfiqar Ali Khan. When recommendations of the said Committee surfaced, Ms Bhutto was no more in her office of the PM. Later, when Lt Gen Hamid Gul, the then ISI Chief, was questioned about his involvement, he said that:

'If I had not formed the IJI, there would have been no general elections in the country because the smaller parties have been fearful of taking on the PPP individually.'

On 4th January 2010, Hamid Gul the former DG ISI, while speaking on a live TV program admitted that:

'He played a role in forming the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) and any accountability of the issue should be started from him. The former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was against self accountability; the Saifur Rehman Accountability Cell was one sided. The people had hoped that the then president Farooq Laghari would do justice through accountability, but he gave protection to journalists, Generals and judges. When he would be probed about the IJI formation, he would reveal the names of those politicians who requested the military leadership not to hold elections.'

To move further, let us first have some glimpses of Lt Gen (Rtd) Hameed Gul through scripts available in media at occasions.

Lt Gen Hamid Gul used to call Gen Asif Janjua [who was the Army Chief next to Gen Aslam Beg] as his senior and friend but they were not at good relations with each other for at least two reasons. Firstly; Gen Asif Janjua once, during a Corps Commander's Meeting at the GHQ, said in Punjabi language that '*now we should roll back our nuclear program, we'll see it later,*' to which Gen Hamid Gul had instantly refuted by saying that '*what the hell are you talking about.*' The tone might have pinched more than words especially in a hall full meeting.

Secondly; the two Generals were having different views on the status of Northern Areas of Pakistan. Gen Asif Nawaz wanted to motivate politicians to take some decision on the status of the Northern Areas whereas Lt Gen Hamid Gul held the opinion that '*any such decision may extend loss to our stand on Kashmir Cause.*'

Referring to '**The Nation' of 15th December 2008**, the President Zardari had once described former ISI Chief Lt Gen Hamid Gul as 'more of a political ideologue of terror rather than a physical supporter' while giving an interview to the Newsweek in New York. He clarified that:

'Hamid Gul is an actor who is definitely not in our good books. Hamid Gul is somebody who was never appreciated by our government. He has not been accused in the Mumbai incident but he is more of a political ideologue of terror rather than a physical supporter. Pakistan's intelligence agencies are no longer backing outlawed

groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba. The links between the ISI and the LeT were developed in the old days when dictators used to run the country.

The government led by his PPP had always maintained a certain position that the intelligence agencies (should) have nothing to do with politics. Since the PPP in government, we held a stated position that ISI has no political role anymore.'

Referring to the '**Daily Times' dated 1st February 2008**, Gen (Rtd) Faiz Ali Chishti, who was heading the Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Society, which issued a blunt open letter signed by about 100 senior officers in early 2008, calling on Gen Musharraf to quit, should be taken in accounts first for being a willing and core partner in the military coup of Gen Ziaul Haq in July 1977. Gen Chishti once came on TV to explain why the army did not educate the nation. His answer was: *'if the roof is leaking why put good furniture in the room.'*

[Gen (Rtd) A Majid Malik [who was a major in 1956 when he drafted a resignation by which Gen Ayub Khan forced President Iskandar Mirza to resign] should apologise for siding with Gen Musharraf when he took over the government in October 1999 and split the PML betraying Nawaz Sharif. He should be followed by Gen (Rtd) Mirza Aslam Beg for his role in the famous Mehran Bank scandal and misuse of ISI's huge and secret funds for electoral & political manipulation.

Gen Beg should have apologised for bringing the Supreme Court in contempt when he admitted that he had influenced the chief justice. When confronted with challenging an army General, the Supreme Court under Justice Zullah got cold feet and let Gen Mirza Aslam Beg walk away free proudly and smilingly.

The biggest crime to which many retired Generals like Lt Gen Hamid Gul must confess, and then apologise for, is the policy of seeking 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan because the end results of this policy are now threatening the existence of Pakistan's unity on many counts.'

Nevertheless AM Zulfikar's findings were based on public admissions and statements by Generals Mirza Aslam Beg, Asad Durrani and Hamid Gul which were available to the people through media but no government considered them worth implementation.

Former President Ghulam Ishaq Khan (GIK)'s dismissal of the then PM Benazir Bhutto using his powers under Art 58(2)(B) on 6th August 1990 was a significant development highlighting the role of an intelligence agency in national politics. The reasons officially stated were charges of corruption, failure to work with the provinces and attempts to question the powers of the armed forces. Ms Bhutto contended that the ISI was involved against her government. The ISI as the 'eyes' and 'ears' of the military had influenced the President, the Supreme Commander of Armed Forces to take a decision against Benazir Bhutto.

The game had started from Benazir Bhutto's first day on political arena in September 1988, when the ISI then headed by Lt Gen Hamid Gul had paved together the opposition parties in Pakistan and formed the IJI in order to defeat PPP from coming to power. The then Chairman Senate and caretaker President GIK and the COAS Gen Beg were not keen on Benazir Bhutto's success in elections and they used all the available sources like ISI, the MI, the IB and the police special branches to keep her away from gaining political power. She was young and inexperienced thus was compelled to stick to certain conditions of the military leadership before taking oath as PM. Those conditions included:

- To continue the late Gen Ziaul Haq's Afghan policy, by keeping former Foreign Minister Yaqoob Ali Khan intact in the cabinet.
- Allow Gen Mirza Aslam Beg and Lt Gen Hamid Gul to continue in their appointments as Chief of Army Staff and Director General ISI respectively.
- Not to cut or depress the defence budget.

- Not to initiate any accountability proceedings against army personnel, serving or retired.

Benazir Bhutto, after taking over office of the PM, started feeling psychological problems carrying on the ISI and the IB with her because till a day earlier they were working against her person and party. Due to them her father was taken to the gallows against the people's wish. In tune with this mindset one of her first moves was to sack Brig Imtiaz from the ISI and close down its political division in early 1989. Lt Gen **Asad Durrani, a former Chief of ISI, held** a specific view on this act:

'In Operation 'Midnight Jackals' there was no role of ISI as such as an organisation. When Brig Imtiaz had performed that operation, the ISI had not allocated this task to him. Brig Imtiaz was in the ISI but he had performed that act in an independent capacity. In those days Benazir Bhutto was in power and Gen (Rtd) Kallue was the DG ISI.

Brig Imtiaz had done a wrong job by betraying his organisation in which he was serving. He was sent back to his parent army unit from where he was punished later and was prematurely retired.'

Secondly, she appointed Major (Rtd) Masood Sharif, a close friend of her husband Asif Zardari as the Director IB, who was otherwise an incompetent and inexperienced later proved to be total failure to hold such an important and responsible assignment.

Benazir Bhutto soon developed serious differences with the ISI over its Afghan policy in early 1989 resulting a rift between the PM and the ISI leadership. The DG ISI Lt Gen Hamid Gul was relieved from office and a retired Lt Gen Shamsur Rehman Kallue, happened to be a close associate with Z A Bhutto, was appointed as new DG ISI. The COAS Gen Mirza Aslam Beg had transferred all the dossiers on political leaders and other records related to political intelligence from the ISI HQ to the MI. This move neutralised the appointment of Lt Gen Kallue as DG ISI and also taken away the effectiveness of ISI in political field.

[This exercise was once again repeated in the Pakistan's history in 1999 when Nawaz Sharif appointed Gen Ziauddin, an officer from Engineering Corps, to take over ISI as the DG. The then Army Chief Gen Musharraf had taken out all functions and record concerning the 'political surveillance' & the Afghanistan related Operations from the ISI for onward placement at the disposal of MI Directorate in GHQ.]

Benazir Bhutto then focussed on strengthening the role of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) for intelligence gathering within the country in order to marginalise the participation of the ISI but miserably failed. IB's budget was increased to four times the previous figure, 20 senior positions at the joint director level were created and subordinate level staff was increased thrice to strengthen the management structure but all resources went in vain because the Director IB, Masood Sharif, a young retired major, was lacking all the management and professional skills who misused the huge budget on re-employing young retired captains and colonels with zero experience of intelligence work.

IB under the command and control of Maj (Rtd) Masood Sharif became another organisation of army but of retired and redundant young lads. Naturally, they were not in a position to see eye-in-eye towards their seniors who had once sent them home when they were not found fit for promotions beyond the ranks of captains or majors.

IB under Masood Sharif's charge had gone so lethargic that on 17th July 1989 an army intelligence wing under COAS had clandestinely recorded the conversation between Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi while the latter was on a state visit to Pakistan. The room was bugged by the army intelligence agency. The transcriptions later disclosed that the two leaders in the course of their private meeting at Islamabad had discussed, among other issues, the possibility of mutual troop reduction in India & Pakistan.

Benazir Bhutto had agreed in principle to the proposal of reducing the respective army ranks. Soon after the Chief of Army Staff Gen Aslam Beg and President GIK met each other on 24th

July 1989 and decided to topple the Benazir Bhutto's government. In order to convince the Opposition and obtain their backing for the need to destabilise the government the recorded tapes were played to them. The IJI, after hearing tapes, opted to plant a no-confidence move in the Parliament against Benazir Bhutto.

Masood Sharif's IB kept sleeping and they could not get even the air of the whole episode. When the news of no-confidence motion caught air in media, Masood Sharif's IB planned another disgusting 'operation' to keep Benazir Bhutto on their positive side.

In this backdrop, Masood Sharif's IB had planned their '**Operation Midnight Jackals**', a much trumpeted affair in the history of IB. The said operation had started with one Arif Awan a PPP activist and MNA from Shiekupura district, who pretended to offer him for sale in order to penetrate into the group of decision makers of the IJI. MNA Arif Awan became a PPP 'plant' aimed at neutralising the hostile strategy of the IJI. The IJI pushed their team comprising of Malik Naeem, Senator Gulsher Khan, Brigadier (ret'd) Imtiaz, Major Aamer and Arif Awan's nephew in FIA Malik Mumtaz into the game who initially contacted PPP's Arif Awan.

Soon MNA Arif Awan started attending IJI's meetings. Mr Awan also got initial success in recording conversations between members of the group from 28th September – 6th October 1989 at his nephew Malik Mumtaz's residence. The plan of action was for Arif Awan along with three other PPP MNAs to offer to become '*lotas*' and a deal was clinched against Rs 5 million. On their part the PPP MNAs promised to vote along with the Combined Opposition Parties MNAs in forthcoming no-confidence motion. The deal also assured that one of the '*lotas*' would be made a Federal Minister if the IJI proved successful in its venture.

In the proposed no-confidence move of 1st November 1989, the attempt failed but both the teams decided to remain intact for next years move. Benazir Bhutto accused the ISI and unknowingly attributed the blame to them for this move of no-confidence. She might not know the actual number game being manipulated by her own IB team. In the meantime, the details of the said 'Operation Midnight Jackals' were picked up by the media, possibly through a Peshawar based correspondent, thus causing another blow to PPP's cause.

Amidst all these rifts and misunderstandings, ultimately, President GIK had opted to send Benazir Bhutto home on the flimsy charges of corruption and mal-administration which were never proved. There were well documented stories in news media that the President GIK had taken that decision on the advice of the GHQ since coming in pipeline from the days they had caught conversation of Benazir Bhutto with Rajiv Gandhi as detailed earlier. Lt Gen Asad Durrani, the former ISI Chief, in his interview published in daily '**Jang**' dated **7th March 1999** had dispelled that impression saying that:

'Benazir Bhutto's first government was dismissed by the President himself and army had no contribution in it. Even the army could only get air of it about 10 days earlier through secret means. When he came to know about it being incharge MI, he had immediately rushed to the Army Chief Gen Beg and told him about the source report. Gen Beg had said: it was in his knowledge that the President was not happy with BB but astonishing that GIK would go so hard against her.'

ISI's play in general elections of Pakistan was not ended with Benazir Bhutto's political demise in 1990, it continued thereafter too.

Referring to an interview published **on 24th February 2008 in The News**, a daily English newspaper of Pakistan, Maj Gen Ehtesham Zamir, the head of the ISI's political cell in 2002, admitted manipulating the elections of 2002 '*at the behest of President Musharraf and termed the defeat of the King's party, the PML(Q), this time a reaction of the unnatural dispensation (installed in 2002).*' He categorically emphasized that the ISI together with the NAB was instrumental in pressing the lawmakers to join Gen Musharraf to form the government and to help the military dictator stay in power.

Looking down back into the memory lane and recalling his blunders which, Maj Gen Ehtesham admittedly pushed the country back instead of taking it forward, later felt ashamed of his role and conduct. He was massively embarrassed because he was the one who negotiated, coerced and did all the dirty work for PML(Q) on orders of Gen Musharraf.

Another reference pointing towards (mis)deeds of ISI was published on 24th February 2008, in SUN of India, under the title **'Major General who rigged Pakistan 2002 polls, spills the beans'** written by Sahil Nagpal, in which Gen Zamir was quoted confirming that corruption cases were used as pressure tactics to change the loyalties of the lawmakers but:

"This tool was used not only by the ISI. The NAB was also involved in this exercise [of arm-twisting the politicians]."

[General elections held on 10th October 2002 were stolen and rigged in favour of PML(Q) on the orders of Gen Musharraf. The history would remember that Gen Musharraf's Principal Secretary Tariq Aziz was given the assignment to deliver a pro-Musharraf parliament. To fulfil this assignment, Tariq Aziz made blanket use of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the rogue National Accountability Bureau (NAB). Gen Musharraf's aides, as well as PML(Q) leaders, termed the opposition leaders' statements as baseless and a lame excuse not to admit their defeat in those black dotted general elections.

Despite the 'riggings' in the 2002 elections, PML(Q) could bag only 69 out of 272 general seats. Therefore, Gen Musharraf had suspended for three days the constitutional clause pertaining to floor-crossing with the result that PML(Q) was able to form the government in the centre with Mir Zafrullah Jamali, a gentle politician from Balochistan, as Prime Minister of Pakistan.]

The fact remains that the intensity of anti-Musharraf vote did not give the government machinery and the Chaudhrys of Gujrat [Ch Shuja'at Hussain & Ch Pervez Elahi] enough space to carry out massive rigging, however, the ISI managed to do it selectively and a bit more discretely to give some respectability to PML(Q), the friends of Gen Musharraf.

Later, Lt Gen Jamshed Gulzar Kiyani had also disclosed that majority of the corps commanders, in several meetings, had opposed Musharraf's decision of patronising the Chaudhrys. Gen Musharraf was repeatedly told that the PML(Q) leaders were the worst politicians who were thoroughly involved in co-operative scandals and writing off loans but he never heard their advice. One of Gen Musharraf's colleagues, who were Chief of the NAB at that time, had even sought permission to put dog collar around the necks of Chaudhrys but he was always refused permission to proceed against them despite his insistence.

The disclosures made by Generals Gulzar Kiyani and Ehtesham Zamir should serve as eye openers for the nation and future planners of the Army rule in Pakistan. Though the elections of 2008 were described as fairer than 2002, Gen Zamir could not rule out the possibility of 2008 polls being rigged. According to a generally held view, COAS General Ashfaq Kiyani had ensured army's non-interference in polls that is why there was comparatively less institutional interference of intelligence agencies in 2008 as compared to the last time in 2002.

The tragedy remained that the PPP was found repeating the same mistake by going on nepotism, favouritism, bias, partiality and discrimination ignoring merit and more.

On 2nd May 2011 evening, PPP ultimately joined hands with PML(Q) and offered them 18 slots in executive allocating them different assignments, mostly carrying ministerial perks. The young generation knows them little from days of Gen Musharraf when they remained in shared power with a military ruler but more after assassination of Ms Benazir Bhutto who had nominated them as her 'killers'. However, PML(Q) has its own history; who brought them in power and how were they favoured, is altogether a different scenario. What has been the role of ISI in that political manoeuvring can be understood from various archived essays.

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