

Scenario 79

PAKISTAN UNDER US ATTACK:

PAK – AFGHAN RELATIONS IN WOT:

On 18th July 2010, a **Transit Trade Agreement** was signed by Afghanistan and Pakistan to open up multibillion-dollar Asian markets and build trust between the two countries at a key juncture allegedly under US efforts. Its main aim was to allow Afghans to transit goods through Pakistan to markets in India – seen as vital to ending the Taliban insurgency and allowing US and NATO forces to leave Afghanistan.

That most significant bilateral economic treaty was signed in Islamabad, watched by the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ahead of a conference in Kabul looking to steer the country to peace and independent leadership. Pakistan called the agreement an “important milestone” in economic relations which was likely to increase trade between the two countries from \$1.5 b to \$5 billion a year by 2015.

Almost 50 percent of Afghanistan’s trade traditionally goes with its five neighbours — Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The deal was expected to create jobs in trucking, shipping, freight forwarding, brokerage services and banking, and cut trading delays. However, Islamabad had refused to let Indian trucks cross Pakistan into Afghanistan. Kabul was left holding out for future amendments as the Afghan Commerce Ministry wanted to bring Indian goods via Pakistan to Afghanistan.

Under the US pressure Pakistan later agreed to provide transit trade between Afghanistan and India through its air space. The Pakistani populace resented taking it as **‘damaging to Pakistan’s security as well as its economy’**. India had successfully attained Pakistani air space for trade with Afghanistan by coaxing the US to put pressure on Pakistan. Most Pakistanis got agitated that why the US was interested so much in promoting India’s cause and interest.

[Transit rights to India for trade with Afghanistan were already available under the Pak-Afghan Transit Trade Agreement of 1965, which was in force then. The need for negotiation of a new transit trade agreement was not understandable. The problem might be of ‘effective implementation’ of the agreement on the part of Pakistan.]

It was pertinent to note that **India for security reasons had never allowed transit facilities to Pakistan’s exports to Nepal and Bhutan** through its land routes. It was also a fact that Afghanistan was recommended to be included in the SAARC to justify India’s designs to extend its domain beyond Afghanistan.

The ruling PPP government of Pakistan was widely criticized for taking an important decision overnight by approving and signing the deal **without consulting the parliament**. What was the difference between a dictator and a democratic government then? It was said that Afghanistan would facilitate Pakistan a transit trade route to Central Asian States – which Pakistan never asked for because of China at its north always ready to extend all related facilities need for trade.

One cogent reason for involvement of the US in the business interests of this region, perhaps, was that the USA's oil was depleting fast; it was likely to knock it off as a global leader. The Taliban government in Afghanistan was never an enemy of the USA. Its removal from Afghanistan was decided much before 9/11 of 2001. It fell out of favour because it had put terms and conditions on the pipelines that the USA's oil giants then planned to run through the Afghan territory.

AFGHAN WAR DIARY OF SIX YEARS:

On one side Pakistan had signed pact with Afghanistan to facilitate India and to please America but just a week after, **on 25th July 2010**, Wikileaks released 75000 pages on Pak-Afghan War with eye-opening treatise; see details:

The Afghan War documents consisted of 91,731 documents, covering the period between January 2004 and December 2009 out of which only 75,000 were released to the public. It was considered to be one of the largest break in the US military to dig out information on the deaths of civilians, increased Taliban attacks, and involvement of Pakistan and Iran in Afghan War. Leaked data was directly sent to three outlets in advance namely The New York Times, The Guardian, and Der Spiegel.

'The New York Times' dated 25th July 2010 described the said exposure as *"an unvarnished and grim picture of the Afghan war"* AND concluded that:

"Pakistan allows representatives of its spy service [ISI] to meet directly with the Taliban in secret strategy sessions to organize networks of militant groups that fight against American soldiers in Afghanistan, and even hatch plots to assassinate Afghan leaders."

An article on ISI's role published in **The NYT** on the same day provided a wide range of information focusing on coalition successes, and at the same time excerpting sections that highlighted coalition failures - mostly illustrating American frustration quoting that ***"glimpses of what appear to be Pakistani skullduggery contrast sharply with the frequently rosy public pronouncements of Pakistan as an ally by American officials."***

In an interview with the **UK's Channel 4 in June 2010**, Wikileaks founder Julian Assange said that:

"..... other journalists try to verify sources; we verify documents. We don't care where it came from."

"We don't have a view about whether the war should continue or stop – we do have a view that it should be prosecuted as humanely as possible."

The Toronto Sun wrote that *"this material shines light on the everyday brutality and squalor of war."*

According to **Der Spiegel**, *"the documents clearly show that the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI is the most important accomplice the Taliban has outside of Afghanistan."*

The Guardian dated 25th July 2010, however, *"..... did not think there was a convincing smoking gun for complicity between Pakistan intelligence services and the Taliban"*.

The said newspaper called the material *"... a devastating portrait of the failing war in Afghanistan, revealing how coalition forces have killed hundreds of civilians in unreported incidents,*

Taliban attacks have soared and NATO commanders fear neighbouring Pakistan and Iran are fuelling the insurgency”.

On the same aspect **'the Guardian'** of the same day [referring to Declan Walsh] stated:

'But for all their eye-popping details, the intelligence files, which are mostly collated by junior officers relying on informants and Afghan officials, fail to provide a convincing smoking gun for ISI complicity. Most of the reports are vague, filled with incongruent detail, or crudely fabricated.

The same characters – famous Taliban commanders, well-known ISI officials – and scenarios repeatedly pop up. And few of the events predicted in the reports subsequently occurred.

*A retired senior American officer said ground-level reports were considered to be a mixture of **"rumours, bullshit and second-hand information"** and were weeded out as they passed up the chain of command.'*

Issues that Iran had also been providing extensive assistance to the Taliban were discussed at length in Wikileaks documents. Afghan spies and paid informants tried to justify their work by alleging that Iranian involvement in Afghanistan steadily widened from 2004 onwards and constituted armaments, money, and physical deployment of anti-NATO militants; Iran, however, denied supporting the militants and condemned the American pointing fingers towards them.

Once a **journalist Jeff Stein of the Washington Post**, during the same days stated that Hezb e Islami [HI]'s leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Amin al-Haq, allegedly the financial advisor of Osama Bin Laden, both flew to North Korea on 19th November 2005, and purchased remote controlled rockets to be used against American and coalition aircraft. Subsequently, no corroborating report or evidence ever surfaced from any intelligence agency or the media showing North Korean involvement in armaments dealing with Taliban.

Blake Hounshell wrote in **Foreign Policy** that, after reading leaked documents, he believed that there was less new information in the documents than leading newspapers had already disclosed. Commenting on the significance of the documents:

'I'd say that so far the documents confirm what we already know about the war: It's going badly; Pakistan is not the world's greatest ally and is probably playing a double game; coalition forces have been responsible for far too many civilian casualties; and the United States doesn't have very reliable intelligence in Afghanistan.'

Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari announced that allegations about ISI's involvement had been heard and analyzed which represented low-level intelligence reports and did not represent a convincing picture; there was no convincing evidence. The documents circulated by Wikileaks did not reflect the WHOLESOME on-ground realities.

Politicians and defence analysts critically commented on leaks and that why the western media tried to malign the ISI more while NOT highlighting most of the civilian casualties resulting from bombing of NATO forces like how US special forces dropped six 2000 lb bombs on a compound where they believed a *'high-value individual'* was hiding, after *"ensuring there were no innocent Afghans in the surrounding area"*. In fact, 300 civilians had died in those attacks.

On 28th July 2010, Britain announced that it would launch two new inquiries into the country's role in the war; the launching of the inquiries had nothing to do with the Wikileaks documents.

White House National Security Advisor James Jones issued a statement to the media reporters that the leaks were *'irresponsible and would not impact US strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan'*. However, the Democrat Representative Dennis Kucinich of Ohio said:

"These documents provide a fuller picture of what we have long known about Afghanistan: The war is going badly. We have to show the ability to respond to what's right in front of our face: This war is no longer justifiable under any circumstances."

Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Senator John Kerry had to admit:

"However illegally these documents came to light, they raise serious questions about the reality of America's policy toward Pakistan and Afghanistan. Those policies are at a critical stage and these documents may very well underscore the stakes and make the calibrations needed to get the policy right. All of us [are] concerned that after nine years of war ... the Taliban appear to be as strong as they have been."

Taliban spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid [*actually belonging to Haqqani group – later killed in Islamabad during 1st week of November 2013*], had replied the above comments that:

'They are inspecting the leaked documents which contain the names, tribes, and family information of Afghan informants who were helping the US. We know about the spies and people who collaborate with US forces. We will investigate through our own secret sources whether the people mentioned are really spies working for the US. If found correct, then we know how to punish them.'

Later the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission [AIHRC] published figures showing that during the first seven months of 2010, 197 persons, who supported the Afghan government, or their family members, or who might have come into contact with the US or NATO, were brutally killed by the Taliban.

On 12th August 2010, the international press watchdog **Reporters Without Borders** (RWB) accused WikiLeaks of 'incredible irresponsibility' because their release to open media went highly dangerous, particularly when it named Afghan informants.

AFGHAN CONTRACTOR'S SAGA:

The **US Senate Report of October 2010** clearly stated that *'US funds for private security contractors in Afghanistan have flowed to warlords and Taliban insurgents, undermining the war effort and fuelling corruption'*. The investigations done by the Senate Armed Services Committee found that the government had failed to vet or manage those hired to provide security under contracts worth billions of dollars, with disastrous results and set back.

Carl Levin, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, worriedly mentioned that:

"Our reliance on private security contractors in Afghanistan has too often empowered local warlords and powerbrokers who operate outside the Afghan government's control and act against coalition interests. This situation threatens the security of our troops and puts the success of our mission at risk."

One US Air Force subcontract for an Afghan air base Armour Group [under the British firm G4S] recruited security guards including 'Taliban supporters'. One of the warlords was killed in a US-Afghan military raid 'during a Taliban meeting being held at his house'."

The US Defence Secretary Robert Gates had acknowledged the problem in a letter addressed to Levin, the Committee's Chairman.

But there prevailed another viewpoint in US-Afghan policy related circles that the US itself allowed subcontractors to pay the Taliban protection money to avoid a higher degree of risk of attacks. The Karzai government, in August 2010, had condemned the role of private security contractors and finally formally banned eight foreign firms, including the controversial company called BLACKWATER; giving four months to cease operations in Afghanistan.

However, the historians believed that the corruption within the Afghan administrative departments had become the hallmark since President Karzai had taken over; might be the Karzai's officers continued to mint money more than the Taliban contractors while going in between.

Commenting upon the then British PM Mr Blair's efforts to win back the lost hearts and minds of Pakistan & Afghanistan, the **'Independent' of 20th November 2006** had said:

*'Five years after the Taliban were toppled [in 2001], the infrastructure in many places [of **Afghanistan**] is still in ruins, the opium poppy is back and corruption is endemic. The rights of women are being steadily diminished, while popular dissatisfaction with the Karzai government is high.*

The distressing truth is that, having helped oust the Taliban, Britain did precisely what it promised not to do: we "walked away" from Afghanistan and chose to fight a war in Iraq. The situation in the region now is too reminiscent of six years ago for anyone's comfort. Until this truth is acknowledged, we fear the deterioration in security will only continue.'

CONSPIRACY THEORIES [2010 -12]:

Despite the whole set of conspiracy theories; every Pakistani seriously believed two things during 2010-12. **Firstly**, that the America would quit Afghanistan till 2014 and **secondly** that America needed Pakistan for its safe exit. Both issues got hot debates as the Pakistanis mostly kept wishful thinking based on the opinions of their beloved columnists and not on factual analysis of their own.

A very cogent question remained that would America militarily attack Pakistan as its next target. Many people believed it was not the case; based on America's invasion history during the past decade; it launched the military attacks on countries where the 'take over' was otherwise not possible. Pakistan was already in US pockets through its successive Generals and politician rulers.

Iraq was a case study in that respect: Saddam Hussain's later years of dictatorial rule had bare minimum relationship with America. Iraq was supplying oil to the whole world but having no business with the US. No American was allowed to enter Iraq even as the tourist or media correspondent. If some American was given visa under compulsions, he had been constantly kept under disguised security check till he left its borders. If some Iraqi exchanged good wish with that American, he was brought to the interrogation centre the same evening. Even diplomatic meetings with Americans were secretly supervised by 'three tier' control strategies.

Iraq did not need dollars from them; it had sufficient resources for Iraqi public. There was no influx of religious terrorists, saboteurs, secret agents in Iraqi lands nor could any dollar aid be

floated or offered. So when America wished to take over Iraq in 2003, it had no other option except to attack directly on the pretext of '**weapons of mass destruction [WMD]**'.

Consider Afghanistan: It was a devastated, internally wrecked and tribally torn out land with no economic or administrative pedestal. There was no social cohesion so there was no chance of conspiracy. There was no industry or monetary structure to which America could influence or penetrate in. Extremists from all corners of the world were having their group bases there in the name of Islamic renaissance and revitalization. Those groups could only be equipped with mortars, automatic rifles and ammunitions plus some dollars for their daily needs; but all without any auditable returns.

So when America wished to establish base in Afghanistan for its future '**New World Order**' designs in 2001, it had no option except to directly attack it militarily in the name of '**eliminating Al Qaeda**'.

However in Libya, the US applied opposite strategy - when Col Qaddafi decided to end embargo on the Americans and tried to earn their favours, he re-established the business relationship with Washington. Americans got free access into the Libya and quickly recruited the local desperate youth as their secret agents. All the people who were once pushed out of Libyan borders as 'rebels' by Col Qaddafi were managed to come in side. When the two factions; secretly paid American agents and rebel opponents of Col Qaddafi, were made to join hands, uproar cropped up.

Thus when America wished to change leadership in Libya, it asked NATO bombing planes to help the rebel opponents in the name of '**ending tyrannical rule**'. Col Qaddafi's armed strength was directly attacked till he was killed by his own junta and dragged through the streets of Tripoli.

Consider Pakistan having another scenario - most of the intelligentsia kept an opinion that:
'If America would wish to conquer this country, it does not need to attack it directly as had been done in Iraq; nor does it need to send NATO planes to level the Pakistanis down. In fact the US has already done its work; has taken over the country to the extent it needed.'

Necessary home work had already been done through:

- CIA's secret agents by getting 4000 visas issued for Americans in one day; recall 2010.
- CIA's viceroys in Pakistan; recall dubious actions of Gen Musharraf, Rehman Malik & Hussain Haqqani and others alike. Consider Mr Zardari's certain acts too.
- Influencing Pakistan's monetary policy by allowing India's imports open and barring Pakistan to trade for Iran's oil, gas, & electricity.
- Creating insurgency in Balochistan through terrorist attacks on Shias and Punjabis by their paid Raymond Davis like agents & kidnapping Balochis through their paid elements in the Pakistan Army and intelligence units.
- Compelling Pakistan Army to launch direct attacks in Northern Waziristan to keep Pakistan in a state of constant war with its own people; forget colossal losses by drone attacks.
- Helping India in getting civil nuclear technology but refusing Pakistan to avail any such facility so that shortage of power could ruin its industrial and commercial infrastructure.

Many more sub-heads could be added to this list but the cogent question remained that did Pakistani rulers, civil & military, really love Pakistan. What was their priority: devastated Pakistan, killings, and arsons through religious extremism or American interests?

Historians would remember 2nd May 2011's US attack on Abbotabad; the Pak-US relations started taking negative turn. At a news conference held at the White House

during early October 2011 to mark the 10th anniversary of the US invasion of Afghanistan, President Obama claimed having '*pushed the Taliban out of its key strongholds*' and also pointed a finger at Pakistan for complicating Washington's war strategy. It was quite contrary to the reality on ground in Afghanistan.

President Obama's views also included that:

- '*Despite possessing the required might, the Americans were ending the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in a responsible manner;*
- '*The US proved the point that it was not fighting against Islam anywhere in the world.*
- '*Raymond Davis had diplomatic status.*'

The international community present there was much surprised at the utter falsehood of Mr Obama's dubious remarks. The reality was otherwise which made the US uneasy and that Obama wanted to hide. In addition to an admission of failure made by the German Gen Harald Kujat [the man who planned the Bundeswehr's mission in Afghanistan], the US own former in-charge of the war Gen McChrystal said:

'Most of us – me included – had a very superficial understanding of the country and history.'

The conclusion was obvious.

During the same days [of May 2011], Pakistan's corps commanders meeting at GHQ firmly held that, '***no more [US] operations***', the political leadership wholeheartedly sided with the armed forces. A meeting of the Troika – President Zardari, Prime Minister Gilani and the COAS Gen Kayani – insisted that they would implement the all parties' conference [held in PM House on 30th September 2011] decisions. Time had revealed the chicanery of the superpower and the truth behind its words. Under no circumstances, Pakistan could compromise its own interests for the sake of maintaining such a fake friendship; ***but the metaphor lasted hardly for six months.***

What happened with those myths and aspirations after the then on-going Raza Rabbani's gimmicks? '***Some Pakistanis cannot live without dollars***', the Americans knew it well. [A LEAD story published at www.pakspectator.com on 3rd April 2012 is referred]

In a joint report prepared by the Sherry Rehman-led Jinnah Institute in Pakistan and the US Institute for Peace (USIP), titled as '***Pakistan, the US and the End-game in Afghanistan***', published ***in October 2011***, it was wrongly projected that a genocide process of the Pakhtuns was on cards since three decades. Basically, the report was aimed at justifying Pakistani establishment's long-standing Afghan policy which brought nothing but created religious bigotry in Pakistan. They perhaps used the name of the Pakhtun nation to camouflage the Taliban terrorists. The report was basically a 'liberal' cover-up of an essentially fundamentalist state policy of Pakistan.

The question, therefore, remained that could there be Taliban without Talibanisation, especially when they continuously emerged from the conflict as 'victors'? What about the thousands of Pakhtun killed by the Taliban? In the above report, the composers expressed anti-Pakhtun, pro-establishment and Talibanian views and then assembled their voices in one chorus and tried to float the American future plans from various angles but leading to the same convergence.

WESTERN MEDIA ATTACKED ISI:

Under the title '**Secret Pakistan**', BBC2 released a **documentary on 26th October & 2nd November 2011** on how Pakistan's ISI trained and armed Taliban. The two episodes [Dou-

ble Cross (part 1) & Back-lash (part 2)], tried to reflect the alleged role of Pakistan's ISI in training Islamo-fascist terrorists (TTP, LeJ, SSP, JeM etc) for attacks in Afghanistan. The whole script was apparently written by India's secret service RAW to apprise the world that **'Pakistan's ISI provides weapons and training to Taliban insurgents fighting US and British troops in Afghanistan'**.

Through this documentary, the UK in fact openly conveyed the message of US intelligence to the whole world alleging that Pakistan had been playing a double game, acting as America's ally in public while secretly training and arming its enemy in Afghanistan.

The whole story was fabricated in a prison cell near Kabul, where the Afghan Intelligence Service was holding a young man who was shown recruited by Pakistan's ISI, then trained to be a suicide bomber in the Taliban's intensifying military campaign against the Western coalition forces – and preparations for his mission were supervised by an ISI officer in a camp in Pakistan. After 15 days training he was sent into Afghanistan but he changed his mind at the last minute and was later captured by the Afghan intelligence service.

As per documentary, the America's suspicions started as early as 2002, just only a few months after formal inauguration of War on Terror in September 2001, when the Taliban began launching attacks across the border from their bases in Pakistan, but they became more widely held after 2006 when the Taliban's assault increased in its ferocity against the British forces in Helmand.

The final turning point in American policy was the 26th November 2008's alleged attack on Mumbai when 10 gunmen rampaged through the Indian city, killing 170 people. Despite Pakistan's claims of playing no part in the said attack, the CIA was convinced that the ISI were directly involved in training the participating gunmen in that massacre.

It was the moment when President Obama had ordered a review of all intelligence on the South Asian region by a veteran CIA officer, Bruce Riedel, who later reported that:

"Our own intelligence was unequivocal. In Afghanistan we saw an insurgency that was not only getting passive support from the Pakistani army and the Pakistani intelligence service, the ISI, but getting active support."

Pakistan repeatedly denied the claims but the BBC's media team had spoken to a number of middle-ranking – and active – Taliban commanders who provided detailed evidence of how the Pakistan's ISI had rebuilt, trained and supported the Taliban throughout the War on Terror [WOT]. One Taliban commander named Mullah Qaseem was shown telling that:

"For a fighter there are two important things – supplies and a place to hide; Pakistan provided both. First they support us by providing a place to hide and then they provide us weapons."

Another commander, Najib was shown saying:

"Because Obama put more troops into Afghanistan and increased operations here, so Pakistan's support for us increased as well. His militia received a supply truck with 500 landmines with remote controls, 20 rocket-propelled grenade launchers with 2000 to 3000 grenades... AK-47 machine-guns and rockets."

Bruce Riedel [*a former CIA analyst and counter-terrorism expert, served in the Agency for 29 years until his retirement in 2006, later joined White House's National Security team*] in his 2009's papers alleged that **'insurgents are allowed [by the Pak-Army] to cross the Pak-Afghan borders at will'** but his home work was so weak – he did not know that 2200 miles long Pak-Afghan border was never manned by any, not even by Afghan Army since

centuries, due to tribal and hilly terrains all over and the tribes around were always free to move in either country.

Bruce Riedel's report of March 2012 went disturbing, of course, when he reported that:

'...the US had to make the recent drone attacks in Pakistan more effective as intelligence has been withheld from the Pakistanis.

At the beginning of the drone operations, we gave Pakistan an advance tip-off of where we were going, and every single time the target wasn't there anymore. You didn't have to be Sherlock Holmes to put the dots together.

Osama Bin Laden's capture and killing followed this same model – the Americans acting on their own, to the humiliation of Pakistan. Trust between the two supposed allies has never been lower.'

Earlier, in **February 2010**, Mullah Baradar, the Taliban's second-in-command, was captured by the ISI from Karachi because he had secretly made contact with the Afghan government to discuss a deal that would end that Afghan war. He had allegedly done so without the ISI's permission thus was detained *'to bring him back under control'*. On 21st September 2013, Mulla Baradar was unconditionally released by Pakistan government without any investigation, charge or trial.

In ending 2011, one Hawa Nooristani, a member of Afghanistan's High Peace Council, was called to a secret meeting with a commander of the Haqqani network; to her astonishment Haqqani's rep wanted peace talks. Hawa also held that:

"He [the commander] said that Pakistan's intelligence knew nothing of the meeting - so not to disclose it because Pakistan does not want peace with Afghanistan and even now they are training new Taliban units. He was also scared that the Pakistanis will arrest him because he lives in Pakistan."

Allegedly the whole peace process, talks with the Taliban, collapsed after its chief negotiator, former President Rabbani, was killed by a suicide bomber purporting to be a Taliban envoy. The American policy advisers like Bruce Riedel had got the clear message that *'the ISI did not want to bring Taliban to the negotiating table; they could certainly spoil any negotiations process – AND perhaps Pakistan was not interested in a political deal.'*

General Athar Abbas, chief spokesman for Pak-Army had denied links to the Taliban and insisted that Pakistan was doing no more than what any country would do in similar circumstances; while adding that ***'we cannot disregard our long term interest because this is our own area.'***

This was the moment when US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had to say during her visit to Pakistan: ***"The Pakistanis have a role to play; they can either be helpful, indifferent or harmful."***

Bruce Riedel had also concluded then: ***'there is probably no worse nightmare, for America, for Europe, for the world, in the 21st Century than if Pakistan gets out of control under the influence of extremist Islamic forces, armed with nuclear weapons... The stakes here are huge.'***

2010-US TOLD TO QUIT HONOURABLY:

Various cogent deliberations from American think-tanks like Benjamin Barber and Melissa Roddy [*Director of **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**, a documentary film focused on unreported issues regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan*], had been appearing in western media in which their intelligentsia had framed and forwarded tens of reasons to the White House urging that **'the US cannot win war in Afghanistan'**.

For instance *'The Public Record' dated 21st May 2010*, pointed out some "jingoistic reasons", the summary of which is placed below:

1. **'Afghanistan is not a country but only an amorphous collection of warring tribes, factions and clans.'** The country was organized as a nation-state in 1747, more than 30 years before the American colonies won their independence from Great Britain; and 200 years prior to Pakistan into being.

Afghanistan came into being when a group of elders from around the country got together in *'jirga'* [council] and chose a king from among the group. At that time, the Indian subcontinent was under the colonial control of Britain which, over the following 150 years, exerted constant military pressure on India's western boundary but could gain nothing except humiliation.

Finally, in 1893, Sir Mortimer Durand negotiated a treaty with the Afghan ruler, establishing what was later known as the **Durand Line** – a line so arbitrarily drawn that it not only divided large swaths of Pashtun and Baloch ethnic regions, it actually ran through the middle of towns and even properties. When the British were leaving India in 1947, the Afghans eagerly asserted that it was time for reunification of their country. Instead, Pakistan got the major chunks.

Since many of Pakistan's Pashtun were inclined towards reunification with their brethren in Afghanistan, the Pak-Army and its ISI believed for the last six decades that it must keep Afghanistan either unstable or under Pakistani control.

2. Afghanistan's successive governments went deeply corrupt and unable to control its own divided country. Much of the leaders, including President Hamid Karzai, were virtually controlled by ISI for various reasons. Afghan leaders, who did not avail themselves of Pakistan's influence, got threatened and were mostly assassinated. Unfortunately, the US and NATO did not comprehend this dynamic until fairly recently.

Most of the Afghan tribal leaders were based in Pakistan during the 1980s war against the Soviet Union thus could never go free from ISI influence any time. This was evidenced in 1988, when Sayed Majroo, Director of the Afghan Information Service, published a survey taken among Afghans in the refugee camps in Pakistan.

3. President Karzai, the US ally, on whose behalf the US got agitated, would prefer that the Americans should leave the soil at the earliest. He was unduly influenced by Pakistan which country always kept the policy that Afghanistan must be kept weak and unstable. The policy was misleadingly known as "strategic depth." It was misleading; the strategic depth was actually aimed at Karzai's reputed desire for the US and NATO to withdraw from the Afghan soil to please the ISI.

4. Since President Karzai was, for all practical purposes, little more than the Mayor of Kabul – the statement was not the whole truth. It described a complex situation influenced by not only Pakistan and the corrupt Afghan warlords it controlled, but also Karzai's own ability, to the extent he was interested, to effect change and nurture development in his country. What's more, the US owed this support to the Afghans, because the Americans enabled Pakistan's demolition during the 1980s and 90s.

One could see the candid remarks of a veteran journalist Selig Harrison and former UN Special Envoy Diego Cordovez in that respect:

"The Soviet Union began expressing its desire to withdraw from Afghanistan as early as 1981. It was American support for the Islamic fundamentalist militias [in CIA & Pentagon's documents they were called 'freedom fighters'] organized by Pakistan, which prevented them from doing so."

5. The only thing that united those non-state Afghan fractious tribes who despised one another, hate foreigners even more. It was Pakistani propaganda to convince the world that 'Afghanistan is not much of a country, and Afghans would be better off under Pakistani dominion' whereas the most deeply scorned foreigners in Afghanistan were the Taliban from Pakistan.

6. Foreign forces, whatever be their intentions, would always be seen as occupiers and hence, the enemy.

In the autumn of 2009, a group of US women, organized by the well-known anti-war group - Code Pink, travelled to Afghanistan. Simply put, every Afghan woman with whom they met expressed the firm belief that the US / NATO forces were the only thing standing between them and the abject misery of life under the Taliban. Much to their astonishment, the women on that Code Pink trip came home with a very different perspective than what they had anticipated.

Many believed that a premature exit of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan was not likely to bring peace for the Afghan people - it would result in a repeat of the horrors of the 1990s. It boggled the planners that people who generally took pride in their sense of compassion, had not only succumbed to memory loss, but also seem completely immune to the vivid reminders of that period as demonstrated by the Taliban upon the people of Swat Valley in ending months of 2007.

7. The British and the Russians all tried to 'win' in Afghanistan, and they failed; it would be an exaggeration to say their futile attempts brought down three empires. Afghanistan had not been conquered in the near past centuries though earlier paraded through the Greeks under Alexander; by the Persians, the Mongols, and the Tartars.

[Ghengis Khan conquered Afghanistan, which remained part of the Mongol Empire for about 150 years. The British could claim a partial success through the Durand Treaty of 1893, however, the US apparently tried to 'win' or conquer Afghanistan in the name of reconstruction. Later, the US started propaganda that they would be leaving Afghanistan strong enough to defend itself against the ongoing threat from its neighbor, Pakistan.]

8. The US should have remembered the age's old and tested slogan that **'you can't win wars when you're killing civilians'**; and in Afghanistan the boundary between combatants and civilians was positively blurred. Many catastrophic mistakes were committed by the US and NATO allies; world media reports published many tragic confessions made by the fighters themselves, still available on record.

Since 2001 [till mid 2010], about 16,000 civilians were killed on record but the figure should be high as many events might have gone un-reported. Upon taking command in the summer of 2009, Gen Stanley McChrystal issued new rules by which US and NATO soldiers were ordered to hold fire if pursuit of the enemy put civilians at risk; the fresh policy brought the toll of civilian deaths 28% less till the end of that year.

The western press, however, continued to propagate that *'there were no Afghani Taliban at all; the Taliban is a Pakistani paramilitary force. They come from Pakistan and go back to Pakistan after fighting events'*. [Melissa Roddy's observations of **21st May 2010** are quoted below verbatim:]

'Since 2003, the Taliban has assassinated hundreds of Pashtun tribal leaders in Pakistan and destroyed hundreds of schools in the Khyber PK, so that families have no choice but to send their sons to JUI madrassahs, i.e., Taliban training centers.

In the past year, they have blown up bazaars in the region and even the UN Food Program. This is a direct assault on Pashtun women and children; no one makes friends with a group that targets their children.'

9. The places, where Muslims live and where they die at the hands of US & NATO forces, would always be seen as a war against Islam rather than a war against terrorism. That was why the majority of the Afghan populace [and the residents of tribal regions of Pakistan] viewed the Americans as conquerors and not as defenders or their allies.

10. Absolute power can't make people free at the barrel of gun; a historical truth it remained.

11. ***'There was no better way to create terrorism than to make war on Muslims in the name of fighting wars against terrorism.'*** However, the western press continued to blow their trumpets that the US and NATO were not creating the terrorists - Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were doing that; the Saudis provided funds and Pakistan provided trained manpower.

12. America was mistakenly confident that it could save the world; such risky steps had proved the US policies wrong in the past. Jumping into other's affairs without analyzing the historical facts of that region normally ends in disasters as the US & the NATO forces were facing [in Afghanistan].

13. The US & NATO's military forces and overwhelming firepower applied in Pak-Afghan regions patently undermined the development of democracies in Afghanistan and Pakistan - totally an opposite theory what the western super powers usually propagate amongst their own societies.

14. The White House and other US establishments knew well that Al Qaeda was not ruling Afghanistan and it was not the Taliban either; it was a militant NGO aimed at winning Afghanistan. Defeating the Taliban might not be able to vanquish al Qaeda whatsoever. Though Afghanistan at that moment was a safe haven for Al Qaeda but the menace of global terrorism, if at all it was spread by Al Qaeda, was not being controlled from Afghan soils at least.

15. The American taxpayers were not supposed to pay for questionable wars abroad while suffering from social injustice and economic downfalls at home. It was widely propagated that the cash, weapons and training provided by the US to Pakistan in the Afghan War with Russians during the 1980s were utilized elsewhere. The American people held that in the first decade of 2001, it was not at all required for the White House to extend the same treatment to Afghanistan itself in the name of fighting terrorism.

The above 15 points concluded from Benjamin Barber and Melissa Roddy's documentary ***'CONFLICT OF INTEREST'*** was enough to open the eyes of American public and of White

House, too. Though the main theme of 2009-11's media stories was that the ISI had twisted the Afghan situation but the US was timely warned to **'make no mistake'**.

Barber and Melissa's last message was also clear that staying there or partial withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan was not supposed to fetch peace for the Afghan people. It would result in a repeat of horrors of the 1990s, when, according to Human Rights Watch, over 400,000 Afghans were killed.

THE ENDING TALK:

While the western media remained busy in attacking Pakistan's ISI, labelling them for sponsoring the Taliban or at least terming them the major handling tool in the milieu of Pak - Afghan War, the Pak - Army itself was upset by certain odd trends developed in its own ranks and files. See one major news item in that context:

Five Pakistan Army officers were convicted for links with a banned religious outfit after the Field General Court Martial (FGCM) completed its proceedings; an ***ISPR press release issued on 3rd August 2012 is referred***. The officers court - martialled included Brig Ali Khan, Maj Inayat Aziz, Maj Iftikhar, Maj Sohail Akbar and Maj Jawad Baseer. The FGCM awarded five-year rigorous imprisonment (RI) to Brig Ali Khan while Maj Sohail Akbar was handed a three-year RI and Maj Jawad Baseer sentenced to two-year RI. The remaining two officers were awarded one-year and six-month RI respectively.

'This was the first time that senior army officers were convicted and jailed over associations with banned religious organisations in Pakistan on the frontline of the US-led war on al-Qaeda and fighting Taliban insurgency. The officers were having contacts with Hizb ut Tahrir. Brigadier Khan was detained days after the US Navy SEALS found and killed Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad on 2nd May 2011.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir is not banned in Britain, but has been outlawed in Pakistan and lies on the fringes of Western concerns about links between the military and terror groups.'

In short; whether you blame the ISI or President Karzai or the Afghan history, the Americans do admit that it was their fault to step into this region especially when they had 200 years Afghan history in sight. President Obama had been rightly advised within his initial years of statesmanship that **'America cannot win this [Afghan] war....'**; and Mr President himself was convinced with that conclusion.

Reference of **'Washington Post' & 'NYT' dated 2nd December 2009** may be considered relevant here [while quoting President Obama's speech of a day before at the US Military Academy West Point, New York and comments there upon] which wrote:

'..... President Asif Ali Zardari, who is so weak that his government seems near collapse..... Zardari's political weakness is an additional hazard for a new bilateral relationship [but even then] we can't succeed without Pakistan; you have to differentiate between public statements and reality..... Changing the nature of US-Pakistan relations in a new direction, you're not going to win in Afghanistan and that will make Afghanistan look like child's play.....

Everyone understands this is a complex, nuanced, critical relationship.'

The rest is the truthful history we all have witnessed.