

Scenario 113

PAKISTAN DISGRACED BY AMERICA:

PM GILANI PRICED IN LONDON:

On 1st May 2012, Secretary Hilary Clinton threatened that drone attacks would not be contained rather may be launched excessively. In her speeches at Delhi and Dacca she openly blamed Pakistan that 'Aiman ul Zawahiri is hiding in Pakistan so another attack would be there'. American Congress passed amendments to curtail foreign aid for Pakistan. The Presidency and the GHQ both went upset and the Parliamentary unanimous resolution was once again buried under compromises.

Additionally, **on 2nd May 2012**, during President Obama's visit to Kabul, President Hamid Karzai was offered \$4 billion dollar per year to be finally stamped at Chicago Conference on 20th instant. Strategic partnership treaty was also signed then – as has been detailed earlier.

In the **2nd week of May 2012**, the convicted prime minister of Pakistan, Mr Gilani, paid a sudden visit to London with his entourage of about 70 people, mostly belonging to media and office bearers of selected Union Councils from his constituency in Multan, to hit two targets with one bullet.

PM Gilani was called to London to have a 'nice' but bullying message and Pakistan immediately opted to work on the same pay & allowances. Look at the ultimate deal:

- Mr Zardari would be called to join NATO Conference in Chicago on 20th May 2012 [*which was on original agenda*].
- NATO supply would be opened but containers would not be allowed to take arms & ammunition.
- Foreign security establishment would be reduced.
- Pakistan would be paid \$1500 for each consignment **entered in Afghanistan.**

[Why NOT while un-loaded at Karachi port – one could feel the difference – indicating that some containers would be deliberately declared lost in the way to Afghan borders].

The agenda was clear. ***PM Gilani was summoned by the British PM David Cameron to convey the US stern orders for opening of NATO supply routs in Pakistan against some dollar bags,*** mostly in the name of military & civil aid, which was happily 'negotiated'.

On his return after 5 days hilarious stay in London with his electioneering team, the PM Gilani immediately called Cabinet Defence Committee's meeting in Islamabad and ***decided to open the supply routs declaring the deal beneficial for Pakistan*** which was blocked on 26th November 2011 after ***Salala*** Check Post episode.

If the Pakistan government was serious in having restored its lost honour of 2001-10, it could have taken a concrete decision within a week or two based on hard facts and national interests. The regime remained constrained to issuing the press statements only. Once an All Parties Conference was called; once the Parliamentary Committee on Defence was agitated; the longest joint parliamentary meeting in the history of Pakistan was held on 13th May 2011

to get another joint resolution passed. Drone attacks were condemned, **Salala** event damned and the US was asked to come with apology but then - '*tain tain fish*'.

The disqualified PM Gilani cooked up astonishing logic for taking the said decision. They tried to hoodwink the Pakistan's populace and media by saying that NATO supplies were being opened because:

- **Pakistan's friend Turkey was in NATO so how could Pakistan block their supplies** [as if it was not known to them earlier].
- **About 48 countries were included in NATO so how Pakistan could make all of them angry** [again, as if it was not known to them earlier].

But who would reveal that how many bags of Sterling Pounds were annexed with these carefully [& cunningly] coined hints.

Soon after, Mr Gilani packed up and left the PM House for good.

While taking this one sided decision alone by pushing the parliamentary resolution under the carpet, the Cabinet's Defence Committee forgot that when the Americans had started their direct negotiations with Taliban they had not even consulted either Pakistan or Afghanistan. The US had reverted back to these two affected countries only after getting diplomatic defeat in '**Qatar Process of 2011**'; US Ambassador Mark Grossman's open confession was on the record.

Secondly, the American elites were trying to win scores for 2012's US elections and as the time passed the Afghan issue subdued slowly and gradually; perhaps automatically too.

Pakistan's Defence Committee also failed to bear in mind that America was going to formally announce for '**Taliban's Office**' in Doha during December 2011's Bonn Conference but could not do so because US - Taliban deals were in doldrums due to internal friction amongst the Taliban's Command on the question of negotiations and certain agenda items with the US.

The so called strategy of '**confidence building measures**' between the two factions, the US & the Taliban, had miserably failed and the US were going furious day by day **as the world's only super power was being defeated even on the negotiation table**. Till March 2012 there was a complete deadlock; mud slinging on each other and was noticed by all.

[The US-Taliban failure got momentum when in January 2012 Taliban asked the US to release their five companions, including Taliban's former Governor & Interior Minister named Khairullah, from Guantanamo Camp and bring them to Qatar.

As a process, the US Congress needed to be served a 30-days notice for each release from the Camp. The Americans delayed it because they wanted a worldly announcement from Taliban to shun terrorism and opening of meaningful dialogue with Karzai government. Both sides refrained thus their negotiation process halted.]

Pakistan's Cabinet Defence Committee also disregarded the then prevailing facts about smuggling of high spec arms from Helmand province into Quetta and Karachi which had raised Pak-army's suspicions; CIA and British MI-6 had no answer for those known transactions. These arms included 8mm and 9mm calibre pistols of the US make, which were primarily under the CIA supervision, [made] stolen during Helmand Operation of 2010, launched by the British troops, but transported to Pakistan through Afghan security officials.

Those US-made used [not new or packed] arms were available in all over Pakistan but abundantly in the local markets of Karachi and Quetta to be used by the alleged Baloch dissidents, Lyari's law breakers, and some of the misguided sectarian groups. The small arms of the European make had also found sale outlets in other areas of Pakistan which were mostly been sent there through Afghani Taliban.

Security analysts knew that the US-NATO forces were intentionally going ignorant about that dirty game to destabilise Pakistan under a settled conspiracy program. At the same time, one should admit that the PPP government and the Parliament both were impotent. They knew the above facts but were not able to launch offensive hand on those sale points nor could they amend the laws to give exemplary punishments to the stockists. Those were probably the Lyari gangsters backed by Parliamentarians themselves.

OBAMA'S AGREEMENT WITH KABUL:

To mark Osama Bin Laden's first anniversary, the US President Obama paid a surprise visit to Kabul **on 2nd May 2012**. There he signed a '**Strategic Partnership Agreement**' with Afghan Chief Executive Hamid Karzai thus entered perhaps the most complicated phase of its decade - long war in Afghanistan. Beating the [practically non-existing] dead horse again at a military base near Kabul, President Obama said that:

*'We have a clear path to fulfil our mission in Afghanistan. The goal that I set, **to defeat Al Qaeda and deny it the chance to rebuild**, is now within our reach. **Our goal is to destroy Al Qaeda**, and we are on a path to do exactly that.'*

Then President Obama, during that speech had not laid down any detailed timetable for withdrawal of the US forces from the region. President Obama had earlier announced his new program for Afghanistan **on 1st December 2009** in New York Army Centre. As per plans, Chicago Conference of 20th May 2012 was expected to be the final round. The players were there but the participants were having different goals in their minds.

On the other hand, President Obama's new agreement with Afghanistan dated **2nd May 2012** ensuring the presence of American 'experts' even after **NATO leaving by the end of 2014**, blinked to another suspicious scenario. The US bases at Bagram, Kandahar and Kabul would remain operational much beyond 2014. When historians pondered beyond 2014 plans those days, they could imagine the well trumpeted:

"...geography of the new South Asian region, a part of the new world order game - comprising Tribal areas of Pakistan, the adjoining areas of Afghanistan, the territory of southern Bahawalpur till Gwadar and the Indian Ocean."

All bits & bobs were pointed out as linked to the US plans for WOT.

President Obama's visit to Kabul was retaliated just hours after Obama left the capital. On the same day of **2nd May 2012** the Afghan Taliban launched an attack [detonating a car bomb, allowing four assailants disguised in *burqas* and armed with hand grenades] on Green Village in Kabul's outskirts killing seven civilians and wounding about twelve - a clear message to Obama not to think about permanent bases in Afghanistan.

As per Afghan-US agreement, 'some' US troops were to remain in Afghanistan to pursue the essential missions: train, advise and assist Afghan forces, help Kabul defend its sovereignty, and conduct counter - terror operations in the region, **especially against Pakistan**.

Obama's message to the Afghan people was that **'as you stand up, you will not stand alone.'** Perhaps the Americans learnt a lesson from the history that they had to fight the longest war of the US history here because after Soviet's expulsion from the region in 1980s, they had left Pakistan alone to suffer the after effects and miseries of war. Recalling the catastrophe of Pakistan, Obama had to assert that:

'I am confident that the Afghan people will understand that the United States will stand by them.'

The later developments denied even that second promise.

Obama's new Afghan accord became a big challenge for the Taliban and Pakistan, which assumed that time & tune was on their side and that Karzai regime would collapse around 2014 or earlier. Obama also knew that Afghanistan's sovereignty would continue to depend upon cooperation from Pakistan; which was not available to them in those particular days.

As against the original American plans of withdrawal from the South Asian Region [*announced in West Point Academy address on 1st December 2009*], this accord pledged enhanced US financial and military support beyond 2014, overtly displaying to the world that it owed no intentions to quit Afghanistan for another decade at least. During the next one year both governments worked out exact features of a long-term military partnership keeping Iraq agreement in sight but Karzai expected more than that. Although in his speech, Obama made it clear that:

'The US will not seek permanent military bases in Afghanistan. We will not build permanent bases in this country, nor will we be patrolling its cities and mountains.'

At this moment, Afghanistan's Strategic Partnership Agreement with India, signed in October 2011 at New Delhi should be kept in mind; also that on 20th May 2012, the Chicago Conference to reinforce Obama's commitments for Afghan security. Given the inability of Afghanistan to support a large armed force, the US and its allies were expected to pledge an annual payment of nearly \$4 billion to Afghanistan. In July same year [2012], the world powers again assembled in Tokyo and made financial pledges to Afghanistan's development in the coming years.

Pakistan, however, could not ignore US envoy in Afghanistan Mr Crocker's policy statement that **'... if we or Afghanistan are threatened or attacked by countries outside of Afghanistan, we have the right of self-defence.'** Taliban's attack events were of course included in that scenario too. Pak-Army took a serious note of it as the statement was openly directed towards Pakistan.

Both Afghan and US officials celebrated that 2nd May 2012's US-Afghan Accord calling it a historic bilateral commitment; a new beginning in the US-Afghan relationship but for Afghan people it was not a point of jubilation because, as per White House's fact sheet, ***'the Strategic Partnership Agreement itself does not commit the United States to any specific troop levels or levels of funding in the future'***, thus the actual decision was with the US Congress; like Kerry Lugar Bill.

Simultaneously, Karzai was quick to remind his Interior Ministry that ***'if you have any doubt about any US intelligence report, do not conduct any operation based on it'***, reminding of Karzai's vision of a sovereign Afghanistan. Afghan government had already blocked NATO's notorious night operations and had also demanded control of the sole US military prison including its detainees. The US officials had expressed concern about both prospects.

The same like fears were felt by the American intelligentsia; see **Anthony Cordesman's** essay published at website of **Centre for Strategic and International Studies Washington**, saying that:

'None of the tensions between the US and the Karzai government have gone away. The broader problems with Afghan governance and corruption are not diminishing. Progress in creating effective Afghan forces is increasingly questionable, the insurgents are clearly committed to going on with the fight, and relations with Pakistan seem to take two steps backward for every apparent step forward.'

A wide gulf of mistrust prevailed amongst the two; one could recall the events of burning of the Holy Qura'an at Bagram Air Base in February 2012; murder of 16 men, women and children by an American sergeant in southern Afghanistan in March 2012; killings of Westerners by rogue Afghan security forces and sharp rise of Taliban infiltrators accounting for 20% of NATO casualties that year.

The fact remained that the US & NATO had operated in the Afghan region under United Nations Security provisions but then Kabul sought to negotiate a '**Status of Forces Agreement**' with Washington defining legal terms and conditions under which the US forces wanted to operate further. Nearly 50% of the country had already become the responsibility of Afghan security forces but Afghan government aspired to take the full charge by 2013; though Obama had another one year in mind while saying that:

'Our troops will be coming home. Last year, we removed 10,000 US troops from Afghanistan. Another 23,000 will leave by the end of the summer [2012]. After that, reductions will continue at a steady pace, with more of our troops coming home. And as our coalition agreed, by the end of 2014 the Afghans will be fully responsible for the security of their country.'

For many in America, it was the start of presidential campaign from Obama. Afghanistan was also heading towards a new presidential election; but looking for a suitable moment. The American military drawdown was highlighted for the forthcoming election scenario in both countries. Ponder about Obama's key deliberations trumpeted high everywhere in media, local & foreign, then:

*'I recognize that many Americans are tired of war but we must finish the job we started in Afghanistan, and end this war responsibly. The goals are limited. **To build a country in America's image or to eradicate every vestige of the Taliban would require many more years, many more dollars, and most importantly, many more American lives.'***

President Obama had aspired to kill two birds with one cartridge.

But this bonanza of relationship could not last more than a year. See '**Foreign Policy**' [FP]'s **Situation Report dated 9th July 2013:**

".....Frustration, accusations, and a bad VTC - the US may accelerate the drawdown of forces in Afghanistan in part due to the souring relationship between President Hamid Karzai and President Obama. The NYT reports this morning that Obama has become increasingly annoyed, especially after the prospect of peace talks stumbled out of the gate last month.

A video teleconference between the two, aimed to defuse tensions, only worsened them. Now the "zero option" for a residual force, long thought to be a negotiating tactic, is back on the table.

The idea of a complete military exit similar to the American military pullout from Iraq has gone from being considered the worst-case. The officials cautioned that no decisions had been made on the pace of the pullout and exactly how many American troops to leave behind in Afghanistan.but the hardening of negotiating stances on both sides could result in a repeat of what happened in Iraq."

PAKISTAN HUMILIATED MORE:

However, Obama's visit to Kabul and signing of an accord in May 2012 was an adequate answer to Pakistani and Afghani Taliban which thought that the Americans were leaving the region much before than 2014; apparently they, or some of them, were going to stay for another decade at least.

While signing that **'Strategic Partnership Agreement'** on **2nd May 2012**, instead of thanking Pakistan that day, the US preferred to launch another drone attack in FATA killing ten civilians and leaving about the same number injured. Additionally the US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton paid a 'deep tribute' to Pakistan by revising his determination that **'the US would increase drone attacks on Pakistan side of Afghan border to keep Kabul safe'**.

Why this anger, hatred and humiliation from a strategic partner; the US, for whom Pakistan slipped into the so-called 'war on terror' in which the later lost its 42,000 civilian lives and about 5000 of its army troops in addition to sustaining \$67.925 billion [as per GoP's official declaration] loss of economy during WOT years. Due to NATO's supply vehicles Pakistan's 4046 kilometre roads were severely damaged and Pakistan's National Highway Authority (NHA) made a demand of Rs:123 billion in 2011 just for minimum repair of that infrastructure back but the US & Pakistani governments both refused.

Both partners were okay till **January 2011** when the issue of Raymond Davis suddenly cropped up. The Pakistani people felt that issuance of more than 6000 visas to Americans without scrutiny and security clearance during 2009-10 had in fact brought a secret brigade of CIA's army in the country. Then Osama's episode of **2nd May 2011** occurred which the US SEALS accomplished single handedly which made most Pakistanis more critical of the US. The two countries moved apart. The last strike on their mutual relations was seen when the **US attack on Salala**, on **26th November 2011**, caused death of 24 Pak-army troops including officers.

No compensation, even no regret or remorse from the US, so the temperature of Pakistani people continued rising. The US drone attacks went on increase instead. Army stood by the general sentiments. The PPP regime was not in a position to make angry any of the two. The NATO supply routs were blocked in November 2011 but the Parliament remained in doldrums to take any decision thus America went more furious, too.

The US exit strategy from Afghanistan could not go smooth either. Direct US negotiations with Taliban in Qatar failed; joint efforts of Pak - US - Afghan Commission could not bring Taliban on negotiation table in Kabul thus direct attacks on the capital increased day by day.

US wanted to follow its December 2009 exit plan but had to announce on 2nd May 2012 through Obama - Karzai pact that US would stay in the region for another one decade. Contrarily, there was enormous pressure from the American public for **'calling back of troops'** and Obama also wanted to avoid this pit fall in [then] up-coming US elections but had to make an open announcement that **'Afghanistan would not be left alone'**.

Pakistan's policy makers were fantastic. Two years back, the US asked Pakistan to help them bring Taliban on negotiation table. Immediate conclusions were drawn that the US got defeated and so would quit soon; thanks to TV live analysis made by celebrity anchors on defence and foreign affairs. The Pakistan could not come up with facts; it could have dissociated itself from the whole game.

When the disappointed America had opted for direct talks with Taliban to get a way out, Pakistan could have stayed aloof; arresting Mulla Brother and putting him in the jail was misinterpreted on both sides.

That was the reason the US ultimately decided not to include Pakistan or Taliban in the negotiation and thus the Obama - Karzai pact of 2nd May 2012 [**Strategic Partnership Agreement**] was signed; exit plans were simply extended for another decade.

Very cogent questions emerged; what the US would do here even if it stayed here beyond 2014. What had the US achieved in eleven years war so far; what progress had it made in achieving its objectives – zero. The US had plundered its wisdom, budget, honour, its military's morale, and popular will of its public up till that moment and lost more with time.

During the year 2012, two odd events took place in Afghanistan; firstly of **burning the Holy Qura'an** in Bagram Cantonment and secondly of **killing of 16 Afghan civilians** by an American Officer on duty. The US government offered formal apology to Karzai government for both events but refused to show similar behaviour for Salala Post killings despite Pakistan's repeated 'requests'.

On 20th May 2012, US and its allies assembled in Chicago and announced \$4 billion yearly aid for 'rehabilitation & development of Afghanistan' but what **they had given to Pakistan [recall \$1.5 billion of Kerry Lugar Bill]** and what they allocated for Pakistan's development; not a penny.

Earlier, another most important event in Afghanistan; **Taliban attacks of 15th April 2012** had almost shaken the country. Seven bomb blasts simultaneously at the Afghan Parliament & NATO HQ campus; the American, British, German and Russian embassies and high ranking hotels rocked Kabul. In Jalalabad, suicide bombers attacked the airport building. In Gardez, the Police HQ building was brought to trashes. In Logar province, the Governor's office was taken hostage.

In Hamid Karzai's Presidential palace, the on going negotiation sessions with *Hizb e Islami* were shifted to a safe house. The delegation of Pakistan's lady Parliamentarians had to hide in Pakistan Embassy. Six attacking Taliban were killed and dozens got injured.

What did the whole scenario speak; that the Afghan Taliban had not gone weak despite the American's war strategy to crush them. Ultimately, the US again resorted to sit on negotiation table with Taliban but with a changed agenda. The Taliban were also secretly induced to launch a forceful fight with Anti - Taliban groups in Northern Afghanistan. Again the same old tactics of 'divide & rule'; but did not work well this time.

Despite such hostile situations in the region, the US & Pakistan expected normalcy in their mutual relationship; an astonishing phenomenon. Both had the parallel demands. Pakistan wanted that:

- *The US should end Drone attacks unless Pak-Army consulted first for each attack.*
- *The US should include Pashtun Afghan Taliban in the negotiation process. It was because the Eastern and Southern Afghanistan parts were controlled by Pashtun Taliban and Karzai government had no writ there.*

The US at the same time demanded that:

- *Pakistan should open NATO supply rout immediately and without any prior condition.*
- *Pakistan should use its influence to bring Afghan Taliban on negotiation table in Kabul.*

The civil & military heads in Pakistan wanted to perform the said functions on their part without hitch but this time both were looking at the public anger in Pakistan. The PPP government did not want to take risk at the moment but ultimately bowed its head to seek dollars in aid. To please the general populace, the leadership started releasing 'secret news' that Osama's killing operation was done by the US **'with cogent help from Pakistan's civil & military bosses'**; Defence Minister Ahmed Mukhtar's media interview of those days is referred in that context.

Intelligence guided media reports kept on building general public opinion in Pakistan that **'the US would bow down within a month if NATO supplies blocked'** but then six months passed. Neither the US offered apology for **Salala** attacks nor the drone attacks could be subsided. Estimations went wrong; future assumptions in Pakistan and media's hue & cry both were taken as mockery.

Another development on internal front took place in Pakistan.

The Rangers and security forces, in pursuit of criminal gangs and ammunition in Lyari, Karachi, got 3 police officers killed & 58 injured during those few days. Earlier the army's security dons were unaware of terrorist's attack plans on Dargai [Malakand] & GHQ and got senior officers hostages.

Simultaneously, the Khyber PK police were ignorant of buses full of armed men breaking the Bannu jail and got 382 convicts escaped. Even the media guru reporters could not find clues of such big events but they knew well about plans of the US & Taliban and were able to discuss their minds in their daily talk shows. The general populace was frustrated, in short.

What could Pakistan do then; ***simply to stick to the nationalist approach*** - to concentrate on the security of Pakistan's own people especially in border regions, their welfare and rebuild. A big NO to the American plans should have appeared on cards; however, Pakistan's political elite did not think so; they forgot what was happening in Afghanistan; Afghan Taliban and Karzai and the US were making out their own way.

The Pakistani military and political leadership were advised that:

'Let the dust settle down. Old philosophies of by-gone Generals [that there should be pro-Pakistani rule in Afghanistan] have outdated now; we have already suffered a lot on this count.

Let the Afghan people decide their fate; the world community laughs when we try to be 'their guides'; on what basis – while their own country Pakistan was burning and falling into rocks due to those old myths.'

It was the need of the time to ponder into the assertions seriously then.

CHICAGO CONFERENCE OF 2012:

A two-day NATO summit kicked off in Chicago [USA] on the future of Afghanistan **on 20th May 2012**. It was the 25th NATO summit, the largest-ever, with participation from 61 countries, and the first hosted by the US since 1999. It was intended to discuss the strategy agreed upon in Lisbon in 2010 which had called for:

- *renewed commitment to fight in Afghanistan;*
- *a robust agreement on missile defence; and*
- *more integral cooperation in emerging threats like cyber security.*

The next conference was planned in Tokyo to firm up financial commitments for the \$4.1 billions annual budget for NATO's presence in Afghanistan till 2024 and Afghan development projects. The two issues which dominated the talks were:

- *Reopening of NATO's supply route through Pakistan, and*
- *New French President's upholding his election pledge of withdrawal from Afghanistan by the end of 2012.*

On NATO's supply routes through Pakistan, the Americans were visibly irritated at not being successful in arm - twisting Pakistan after months of engagement in negotiations; especially when Colin Powell could do this with just one phone call [***how badly Pakistanis were treated in the past***].

Everyone in Chicago Conference termed Pakistan distasteful describing **Salala** attack on Pak-Army as an accident – ***which was a blatant lie***. No one was there to tell the participants that it was a pre-mediated, unprovoked and well planned murder of 24 Pakistani soldiers, spread over two hours where each one of them was picked and targeted.

In a spirited show outside the venue, the anti-war crowd dubbed NATO as militarised extension of the global expansionism; some termed it ***'US sponsored terrorism'***. The US administration had signed a multibillion - dollar drone contract with Northrop Grumman; but was disliked by 99% of the "Wall Street investors". A group of Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans also attended the rally to return their medals; a gesture signifying how deeply disenchanted the Americans were with the war.

Russia had declined the invitation to attend that Conference as its relations with NATO were tempered by US plans to deploy anti-missile equipment in Romania & Poland region. The major cause of summit's shallowness was the financial crunch all over the Europe and in America itself. During UN-backed operations in Libya, only eight out of 28 members participated. The US had itself planned to cut down defence expenditure; by over \$800 millions for that year.

All the above indicators added up in NATO's weakness of political, financial and military stamina for any Iraq - style re-intervention, should the Taliban appear to recapture political power in Kabul. If NATO had any contingency plans for such an eventuality, the said aspects of war were not discussed in Chicago, at least not for the public.

President Zardari was the only participant to state at the summit that ***'there can be no military solution to the war in Afghanistan'***; sadly, no other leader took this theme seriously. Zardari knew that Pakistan was not in a position to take another wave of millions of refugees. One Taj Khatak, referring to an essay available at media **on 24th May 2012**, opined that:

'The US should know that there can be no stability, progress or peace in any country where over 40 percent of its population is sidelined and considered an enemy, and Afghanistan is no exception to such historical situations.'

*The problem gets complicated as **Pakhtuns** have been in power in Afghanistan since decades, **Tajiks** dominated army, cabinet occupied by **non-Pakhtun** and major population [Taliban] declared as enemy; how the outsiders could bring peace there.'*

PEACE TALKS AMIDST ALLEGATIONS:

During the **2nd week of May 2012**, legislation was introduced in the US Congress that would deduct \$50 million from the aid to Islamabad for every American killed by terrorists operating from the safe heavens in Pakistan; given the name '**Pakistan Terrorism Accountability Act of 2012**'. The said deducted amounts were to be reserved for '*the victim's family*'. Rohrabacher, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Oversight and Investigations Sub-Committee said that:

'For too long America has funded the Pakistani government, giving it free money, while elements of the ISI and Pakistan's military operated radical Islamic groups that are actively murdering Americans. Americans will not accept this.'

'Pakistan helped to create the Taliban and Pakistan's intelligence service hid Osama bin Laden from the US for years. Today, one of the most dangerous and sophisticated groups killing American troops in Afghanistan is the Haqqani Network, which is closely operated by the Pakistani government through its ISI.'

Pakistan's army commanders and the PPP government were aware that earlier former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, had also maligned Pakistan's ISI by saying that:

'It [ISI] had directed the Haqqani network to plan and conduct assault on our embassy (in Kabul in September 2011) ... We also have credible evidence that they were behind the June 28th attack against the Inter-Continental Hotel in Kabul. The Haqqani network acts as a veritable arm of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency.'

During the first week of February 2013, the British PM David Cameron held talks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Asif Zardari, Pakistan's President. After a few sessions spread over two days at Chequers, the British PM hoped that Afghan presidential and parliamentary elections in April 2014 would draw moderate elements of Taliban into the democratic process before the departure of NATO troops.

The discussions, the third between the countries to be hosted by the UK, felt the dire needs for closer co-operation between the two governments as indispensable in preventing a collapse of Afghan authority after NATO & American's exit.

Historically, the Afghans used to accuse the Pakistani security services of backing the Taliban but this time the two leaders had agreed "an unprecedented level of co-operation", including a new strategic partnership in the autumn. The dynamics between the two had visibly improved. The most concrete outcome of the talks was that the two sides had agreed to the opening of an office in Qatar's capital, Doha, for negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan High Peace Council.

[The Council is assigned to handle the Taliban and is chaired by Salahuddin Rabbani. He replaced his father, the former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was assassinated in September 2011 by a suicide bomber.]

Earlier, in December 2012, PM David Cameron had announced to withdraw 3,800 of the country's 9,000 troops from Afghanistan during 2013. Before the talks, Karzai had desired to call the 'external elements involved in creating instability and fighting in his country' to join the peace talks. In an interview with '**the guardian**' in London on **3rd February 2013**, Karzai said that:

- **'The exit of foreign forces [referring to NATO, Americans & others] will not bring more violence for them to perpetrate against their own people, but a serious, strong, good reduction in violence will occur.'**
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- **..... whether western troops were "fighting in the wrong place" during their decade - long mission in Afghanistan, saying **security was better in southern Helmand province before the arrival of British forces; so they should discontinue doing that and leave Afghanistan.****
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- **..... the greatest long-term threat to the country was not the insurgents but meddling by foreign powers.**
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- **..... the neighbouring country, has provided sanctuaries for the Taliban for years, and [he accused] Islamabad's military intelligence of manipulating the insurgents.**
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- **The trilateral meetings follow moves by Pakistan to build confidence ... which would be almost impossible without Pakistani support.**
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- **As a pullout for the Nato-led mission draws closer, the focus on peace talks is gaining ground.**
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- **Afghans were not concerned whether the west felt it had succeeded or failed in their country; because they were focused on trying to recover from 30 years of war. He expects fighting to diminish after most foreign troops have gone.**
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- **In 2002 through 2006, Afghanistan had a lot better security; when we had our own presence there, with very little foreign troops, schools were open in Helmand and life was more secure.**
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- **I don't want to be interpreted as saying that the arrival of foreign troops brought less security or worsened security for us. Whatever happened was the past; now we are looking forward to the future.**

Daily '**the guardian**' observed that President Karzai had shown strong nationalist sentiment then, forged through years fighting the Soviets and then the Taliban, which brought him into conflict with western countries supporting his government financially and with troops;and Karzai earned a reputation as erratic, emotional and prone to believing paranoid conspiracy theories, according to leaked US diplomatic cables.

Afghan vs West ties were perhaps irretrievably damaged during the 2009's Afghan elections, which were marred by allegations of massive fraud, when Karzai felt western allies were trying to remove him from power.

Karzai's critics described him as an obstructive protector of corrupt relatives and cronies, pointing to his one brother in the southern city of Kandahar who, before he was assassinated, was alleged to have links with drug traffickers, and another who was a shareholder in a bank that nearly collapsed under \$900m (£560m) of bad loans. Karzai's wife was a doctor who once worked in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan.

Afghanistan in 1989 was a simpler proposition but in 2013 was transformed into a place infinitely more complicated and dangerous...not just for itself but for its neighbours, too. In 1989, it was a country contained within its borders but 24 years later, it stretched across the Durand Line. Two simple propositions:

- *The Taliban based in FATA of Pakistan went more loyal to Mullah Omar than to Pakistan.*
- *North Waziristan, in real terms, became more loyal to Afghanistan geographically though being a part of Pakistan.*

The Afghan 'mujahideen' in 1989 rejoiced over the circumstances that they had defeated a superpower [Russia]; in 2013 they were able to lay claim to a far bigger victory.

The Americans, out of utter degradation and dishonour, tried to make hell of the situation through buying of Taliban, both on Pak-Afghan border and within Pakistan. **The US made life difficult for all by coming to Afghanistan in 2001, even more knotty and thorny by leaving the job half-done or just less than that.**

The PML(N), JUI & JI or other stalwarts amongst politicians proposing talks with the Taliban were not apprising the likely settlement. No one could spell the expected goal or outcome. If they were so blank, thinking not beyond the slogans, then they should not have encouraged the Taliban and confuse the Pak-Army contingents risking their lives in the killing fields of Tribal Area.

Taliban had rejected both Imran Khan and Maulana Fazalur Rehman as mediators; lollipops were pushed far away, rather thrown out.

Nevertheless, there were elements in Pakistani society next to friendly with the Taliban; no shortage of sympathies for them but the Taliban kept confusion in that regard. Like Swat was under Mullah Fazlullah in 2007, their support network in the form of 'madrassas' and friendly religious parties were available to them throughout the country.

The MQM had started crying well in time that spreading areas of Karachi had gone Taliban - dominated, with their own *jirgas* to settle local disputes. Allegedly, the Taliban had set their stepping into the shoes of the Awami National Party [ANP], and the MQM was seen much disturbed; their decade's old monopoly and monarchy was at stake, too.

Ayaz Amir, in '***the News' of 15th February 2013*** rightly commented that:

'Afghanistan is only living up to its reputation of being the graveyard of empires. But who told us [the Pakistanis] to play with fire there? Now it's just not our fingers that are being burnt but much more.

.....through our folly we are reversing 200 years of history. Our military commanders talk strangely of training Afghan troops. Our own house in disorder, we have the hubris to offer free advice to others.

And as the Americans prepare to leave...the Taliban are dreaming of duplicating in Pakistan their victory that side of the Durand Line.'

Thus, Pakistan continued to remain in dilemma. Internally the government writ stayed at constant stake since long. On external affairs it did not know that how the US or Afghanistan would behave in the coming years. Pakistan's Military was constantly facing hardships both

financially and on technical grounds; some vital spares of jet fighters and artillery's arsenal had gone out of stock, for instance.

Let us try to read the message on the wall, if not learning from history.

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The Tail piece: In fact, the end game in Afghanistan had taken start in 2008 after Gen Musharraf's loud [& denouncing] deliberations but it continued with little ifs & buts. Gen Musharraf had suffered on that count because in August 2008, he was ousted from the Presidency and Mr Zardari sworn in. In America, President Bush also departed and Obama was welcome in White House. In both the countries, the rulers changed but the war on terror continued as before.

Then it was going to be the second stint of President Obama there in America [2012]. In Pakistan, the PPP regime was also near end; the next elections were to be held a year after [2013].