



There is no Double Game with the US, Pakistan is its Subordinate State

For some time, Pakistan's successive regimes have been claiming that they are playing a "double game" with US, to quell anger over continual compromises of the interests of the Muslims of Pakistan, for the sake of fulfilling Washington's demands. Irate public statements by the US, scolding Pakistani officials in relation to the Afghan war theatre and the issue of the Afghan Taliban, may create this impression. However, closer and deeper scrutiny of political realities from the time of Musharraf until now, reveal that there is no double game. Pakistan is subordinate to the US in all of its critical affairs.

States put in place plans and styles to achieve their interests. Plans are a general policy put in place to achieve an objective. They are generally applicable over the long term and change less as compared to the styles. Styles are a specific policy put in place related to the details of the plan. They help accomplish the plan or strengthen it. So one outlines the goal which the state wants to achieve, whilst the other is the operational aspect of how the goal is to be achieved. The American plan for Afghanistan since 2008 has been to work towards a political solution in Afghanistan, where the Afghan Taliban are accommodated in the American-backed Kabul government in some form, whilst America is allowed to keep its military bases in Afghanistan. The military bases will be on the pretext of being requested by the Kabul government or to guarantee its survival. To achieve this goal America has altered between negotiations and military operations. In the first term of Obama, the Pentagon succeeded in convincing Obama to use military operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan to weaken the insurgency. Thus the insurgency would be forced to negotiate a political settlement, where America will have the upper hand. Thus a more favorable political settlement would be agreed.

After the failure of military operations in both Afghanistan and Pakistan to weaken the Afghan insurgency, the increasing unpopularity of American involvement in the Afghan theatre back home and increasing challenges on other global fronts, posed by the rise of China, the Arab revolutions, the global economic recession and North Korea, America changed its style in Afghanistan. America moved towards political negotiations instead of military operations as a means to achieve its goal of keeping military bases in Afghanistan, under the supervision of a pliant government in Kabul.

Successive Pakistani regimes have been loyal and responsive to American interests since 9/11 and before that as well. One of the signs of a subordinate state is that it pursues policies and actions at the behest of the great power to which it is subordinate, irrespective of the harm such a policy or action may bring to her own interests. In a speech full of Islamic references, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf announced his willingness to engage Pakistan in the American War on Terror. Openly acknowledging the strong public opinion in Pakistan against supporting the American invasion of Afghanistan, Musharraf outlined Pakistan's core interests and tried to mislead the Muslims of Pakistan, claiming that these will not be compromised. On 19 September 2011, Musharraf said, **"Our critical concerns are our sovereignty, second our economy, third our strategic assets (nuclear and missiles), and fourth our Kashmir cause."** All of these four interests were compromised in subsequent years through Pakistan following American dictation and ignoring its own interests.

The military operations launched by the Musharraf Regime and which continued under subsequent Pakistani regimes against the Pashtun Tribes active in the Afghan insurgency, wreaked havoc on Pakistan's economy. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2016-17, the Government of Pakistan estimated the losses caused to Pakistan's economy by participation in the War on Terror at 123.13 billion dollars, which is approximately 40% of Pakistan's GDP. Under a secret agreement with the US government, Pakistan's rulers allowed America to conduct a drone war against Pashtun insurgents, in violation of its sovereignty. The US then conducted an air raid against Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad with the approval of Pakistan's rulers. Pakistan's nuclear program came under severe scrutiny and criticism after Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan was accused of selling nuclear secrets to different states. America used this opportunity to put in place institutional checks on Pakistan's nuclear program. Washington demanded that Pakistan put in place mechanisms in the name of ensuring that the command and control structure of Pakistan is secure, thus allowing America detailed oversight over the program. And the Kashmir cause has been all but abandoned by subsequent regimes in Pakistan, after Musharraf proscribed Kashmiri Jihadi groups and the Pakistani state adopted the policy of normalization with the Hindu State.

Pakistan's deep involvement in Afghanistan traces its root to the American plan for Afghanistan under President Carter, devised by his National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski. Through activities coordinated by the American CIA and Pakistan's ISI, America enticed the Soviet Union into invading Afghanistan. It then used Pakistan to support the Afghan Mujahideen in a long drawn battle, against the invading Soviet forces, which eventually led to the defeat of the Soviet Union and its ultimate collapse. The American plan for the Afghan War was to delegate the war and its operations to Pakistan. The US heavily involved Pakistan's military and intelligence services in the planning, execution, logistics and ideological aspects of the war. The Afghan war against the Soviet Union required a gigantic effort for building a sustainable institutional structure. This structure ideologically prepared both the Pakistani and Afghan societies to support the Jihad in Afghanistan on the one hand, whilst on the other it trained thousands of tribal men in both Afghanistan and Pakistan to participate in the Afghan Jihad. It also established a sustainable logistical structure to supply them with arms and ammunition. The American plan for Afghanistan during this era was to outsource this whole effort to Pakistan.

American policy makers did not foresee or drastically underestimated the threat which many Jihadi groups would go on to pose to American interests in the region and beyond. This delegation of the Afghan War to Pakistan bred a generation of army officers in Pakistan's armed forces and intelligence services which began to see Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan as an institutional interest. This was something which was encouraged by America in the two decades between 1980 and 2000. It was through this deep institutional involvement of Pakistan in the affairs of Afghanistan, which helped America defeat the Soviet Union and stabilize post-Soviet Afghanistan.

It was during this era that Pakistan's military planners sought to justify their presence in Afghanistan, as a counter to India. General Aslam Baig first used the term "strategic depth" for Afghanistan. Rooted in military planning related to Pakistan's possible vulnerability to an Indian attack due to its physical thinness, the idea entailed deploying military assets in Afghanistan, as part of a defensive military strategy against India. Never operationalized as a military concept, the idea was popularized in Pakistan as a justification for Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan.

However, with the rise of neo-conservatives to power in America, America put in place a new plan for Afghanistan which involved dismantling and severely weakening the Jihadi groups and their support structures in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Pakistani regime immediately responded to American demands and moved in haste to dismantle the institutional structures put in place to support the Afghan Jihad. This started with Musharraf's purge from Pakistan's armed forces and intelligence services of all officers who were institutionally involved and invested in the Afghan Jihad. He used denial of promotions, early retirement, postings and removal from service followed by many other actions. To manage the public backlash against Pakistan's radical shift in Afghan policy from supporting the Jihadi groups there to abandoning and dismantling them, the Pakistani regime developed amongst other arguments, the idea of playing a "double game" with America. It was a game in which Pakistan was supposedly openly and actively cooperating with America in Afghanistan but covertly working to undermine it in Afghanistan.

The loyalty of Pakistani rulers to America, that establishes Pakistan's subordinate nature to America, is clear from the comprehensive institutional reforms introduced by the successive governments to dismantle the structures built to support the Afghan Jihad. Pakistan's military and civilian leadership then re-orientated the state apparatus to fight America's War on Terror. Institutional reforms which the Pakistani leadership introduced on behest of America which have changed the nature of the Pakistani state, include: proscribing Jihadi Groups, ratifying the 17th Constitutional Amendment which gave constitutional protection to actions taken by the Musharraf regime in support of the American War effort in Afghanistan, ratifying the 21st Constitutional Amendment to establish military courts in Pakistan to try suspects caught during anti-militancy operations, promulgating legal reforms to establish special civilian courts to try militants caught during anti-militancy operations, establishment of anti-terrorism courts and subsequent amendments to anti-terrorism laws, educational reforms, re-orienting Pakistan's police to fight the anti-terror war, establishment of new constitutional bodies like National Counter Terrorism Authority, establishment of the National Counter Terrorism Training Center in Pabbi, amendments in Pakistan Army's Green book by replacing India as its top enemy by the Jihadist threat, strengthening anti-money laundering and countering terrorist financing laws under pressure from the Financial Action Task Force and Asia Pacific Group.

The Pakistani state's relationship with the Taliban began in the post-Soviet era in Afghanistan, where Pakistan helped the Taliban come to power in Afghanistan in an effort to stabilize the country. This was the continuation of the American plan to delegate the management of Afghanistan to Pakistan. After 9/11, America changed its plan for Afghanistan and sought to have a direct presence in Afghanistan. It thus had to roll back Pakistan's direct management of Afghanistan. However, before America could stabilize Afghanistan, it moved on to the Iraq War where it was caught in its quagmire and hence was unable to pay attention to the Afghan Theatre. This allowed the Taliban to re-organize, regroup and launch an insurgency against the American occupation of Afghanistan, fuelled by their love for martyrdom. At the end of the Bush era, America had approximately 30,000 troops in Afghanistan, which peaked to more than 100,000 under Obama. The American plan to directly fight the highly motivated Taliban by increasing troop numbers in Afghanistan failed miserably. America was unable to crush the insurgency. American efforts through her agents in Pakistan to dismantle the support structures of the Afghan insurgency in Pakistan via military operations also did not bear fruit. Whilst dismantling the Afghan Taliban's support

structure within Pakistan, Pakistan's rulers have continued to provide support and sanctuary to some of the Taliban leadership in a hope and effort to keep some leverage and influence with the Taliban leadership. Public statements by American officials asking Pakistan to sever this relationship with the Taliban leadership is a way of America to put pressure on the Taliban leadership. It warns them of the pressure it can bring to bear upon them unless they accept American demands. After the failure of military pressure on the Taliban through military operations by Pakistan and increase in American troop numbers in Afghanistan, such public statements help strengthen Pakistan's influence with the Taliban, which America now seeks to use to reach a political settlement in Afghanistan. This was in fact a cornerstone of Trump's new South Asia Policy, which envisaged using Pakistan's influence to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table.

America sees Pakistan's influence with the Taliban as an asset which can be used to its advantage. This has been repeatedly emphasized by top American officials in recent times. After a meeting between US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in Washington on 2nd October 2018, US State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert said that the top US diplomat, **“emphasized the important role Pakistan could play in bringing about a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan.”** The recent release of Taliban leader, Mullah Abdul Ghani Barader, by Pakistani authorities is also a step in this direction. The release took place after US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalizad, met Taliban officials in Doha, Qatar to discuss various options for ending the Afghan conflict. It should however be noted that while Pakistan has some influence with the Afghan Taliban, the Taliban insurgency as a whole is not under Pakistan's control and influence. The Afghan Taliban leadership have a degree of independence. It is this independence, and lack of decisive Pakistani control over the Taliban insurgency, which is misinterpreted as Pakistan's “double game.” It is more correctly attributed to lack of decisive control of Pakistan over the Taliban insurgency.

That said, Pakistan does enjoy some influence with the Taliban leadership. America hopes to use this influence to achieve a political settlement in Afghanistan which protects its military presence there. It is upon the Muslims of Pakistan to raise their voices so that the Afghan Taliban do not fall prey to such scheming. The Muslims must encourage them to stay true in their sincerity with their Lord, so that they will not lose on the negotiating table, that which they did not concede in the battlefield. And it is upon the Muslims to work with earnest to re-establish the Khilafah (Caliphate) on the Method of the Prophethood, so that Pakistan's tremendous abilities are utilized to secure the interests of Muslims and establish the dominance of Islam. Allah (swt) said, ﴿فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلَامِ وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَبْرِكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ﴾ **“So be not weak and ask not for peace (from the enemies of Islam), while you are having the upper hand. Allah is with you, and will never decrease the reward of your good deeds.”** [Surah Muhammad 47:35]

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