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## **Pakistan's Deep Frustrations on Afghanistan- Analysed:**

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Pakistan's deep frustrations in March 2019 on Afghanistan stand manifested by Pakistan PM Imran Khan calling for installation of an Interim Government in Kabul. United States needs to evidently note that Taliban has no capability to over-run Afghanistan and Pakistan is seeking in 2019 a back-door entry for Taliban in Afghanistan's governance.

The United States has for two decades been fighting the "Wrong Enemy" in Afghanistan. The real enemy that continues to destabilise Afghanistan is the Pakistan Army which to achieve its strategic designs uses its creation, the Afghan Taliban, as the cat's paw. United States should tickle its memory as to how Pakistan Army ISI refused to remove Taliban regime in Kabul until the United States had to rely on its airpower with the Northern Alliance speedy advances in ground offensives to liberate Kabul

If sustainable peace and, security and stability have to be restored in Afghanistan then the United States faces the stark challenge of chastising the Pakistan Army on its disruptive strategies in Afghanistan. In 2019, the United States would also have to factor-in the China Factor, the Great Wall with which China underwrites Pakistan Army's strategy of state-sponsored terrorism against Afghanistan and India.

The United States should see the writing on the wall of the China-Pakistan Axis in place with China declaring that it has convergent views on Afghanistan with those of Pakistan. And that is having a Taliban Regime in Kabul. It also needs to be recalled that China was the only country which had diplomatic links with the Taliban Regime in Kabul till 2001.

Pakistan is seeking for the back-door entry into Afghanistan's political space as the Afghan Taliban has been unable to wrest that space on the military battlefield for nearly two decades now. United States should not repeat the mistake that the previous Indian Government did in

respect of Nepal by facilitating giving political power to Nepal Maoists, something that Maoists could not win militarily on the battlefield. India thereby lost Nepal to China's strategic orbit.

United States would be close to losing its strategic perch on Central Asia if it exits prematurely from Afghanistan or it compromises by bringing a Taliban inclusive Government in Kabul.

The United States facilitated putting into Afghanistan's political space a democratic Presidential regime. It has successfully stood the test of time, however imperfect it may have been.

What the Pakistan PM is seeking is the replacement of President Ghani and the Government on grounds that peace cannot return to Afghanistan otherwise. Pakistan's PM opines that no headway can be made in US-Taliban peace talks with an Afghan National Government in place.

The underlying rationale for Pakistan PM to throw his habitual cricket googlies is that Pakistan is frustrated that all Afghanistan Governments post US military intervention in 2001 have been India-friendly and that India has repaid the Afghan trust in billions of dollars of infrastructure projects to revive Afghanistan's economy.

Implicit in the above assertion of Pakistan PM is that with an Interim Government in place which evidently implies that Pakistan's protégé, the Afghan Taliban would be a part of the Kabul Government then US-Taliban peace talks can gain impetus.

The United States should be wary of such rhetorical flourishes of the Pakistan PM and his voluble but unconvincing Foreign Minister that they sincerely wish for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

The United States should genuinely ponder as to how the inclusion of Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan's political governance can bring peace. The United States should also question Pakistan PM to advance reasons for his recommendation for an Interim Government.

In effect what Pakistan is seeking is 'regime change' in Kabul and it wants the United States connivance in doing so. Surely the policy establishment in Washington should be able to see through Pakistan's machinations when others can do so clearly

The United States has to realise that what stands in the way of peace, security and stability is the Pakistan Army's fixative obsession that the Kabul Regime governing Afghanistan has to be one of Pakistan's choosing and not a Kabul Government elected by the people of Afghanistan of their free choice.

Despite unceasing and unrestrained terrorism strikes and suicide bombings by Pakistan Army's ISI Jihadi terrorism outfits afflicting Afghanistan and Kabul pointedly, for nearly two decades resulting in thousands of innocent Afghan lives needlessly lost, the brave Afghan

people have stoically borne it all.

Pakistan could get away with the above mayhem because successive US policy establishments were implicitly permissive so as not to stamp on the sensitivities of the Pakistan Army Generals sitting in Rawalpindi GHQ.

Highlighted in my writings was the reality of United States strategic denouement setting in from sometime in the latter half of the previous decade. However, the climax of US denouement seems to have reached its peak under US President Trump's being in office. President Trump had issued timely warnings to Pakistan from last year but it had no effect. Pakistan continued merrily with its generation of mayhem in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's obliviousness to United States cautionary advisories fundamentally arose from a mix of geopolitical factors which Pakistan Army – the architect of Pakistan's Afghanistan policy, surmised were operating in Pakistan's favour.

Pakistan Army concluded that political and combat fatigue over US embedment in Afghanistan was setting in and therefore United States would be forced to exit Afghanistan. A lot has to do with US policy establishment sending mixed signals over its firm intent to stay-put in Afghanistan delinked from any timelines as President had initially asserted.

Pakistan Army's obdurate intransigence was further stiffened by the advent of Chinese President Xi Jinping in power. Chinese President Xi Jinping's emphatic switch to 'Hard Power' strategies and realisation of the Great China Dream was focussed on according Pakistan a centrality in the Chinese strategy and ensnaring Pakistan Army already in a concubinage relationship with China into a virtual colonial bonding. The Chinese weapon was the CPEC---China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

China's expanded strategic stakes and investments in Pakistan furthered by a collusive Pakistan Army for its own vested corporate interests has emboldened Pakistan Army that China would be forced to standby Pakistan in case of any United States retribution over Afghanistan.

United States mixed signals over Afghanistan as reflected in my writings of the last five years prompted China to rig-up the China-Pakistan-Russia Trilateral which started playing geopolitical games over Afghanistan side-lining the United States, the Ghani Regime in Kabul and other regional nations having a legitimate security stake in Afghanistan, like India.

Emphasised by me many times over has been the fact that Pakistan Army cannot hold the United States hostage over American dependence on Pakistan's logistics routes for US Forces in Afghanistan. Alternative options bypassing Pakistan are existent.

In 2019, the United States should look back retrospectively and recognise the futility of engaging the Afghan Taliban in peace negotiations and reconciliation in Afghanistan. It has been a strategic blunder by US policy establishment in Washington and needs to be undone. Contemporaneous factors weigh heavily against United States continuance of the charade of 'engaging the Afghan Taliban' as an escape

route from exiting Afghanistan.

More than the United States, in 2019 it is Pakistan and China that are deeply frustrated at United States belated holding out against Afghan Taliban dictates at the Peace Talks in Doha.

Pakistan PMs Interim Government in Kabul proposal aired recently stems from fears that with hopes of United States not caving-in to Afghan Taliban demands time may run out for Pakistan Army to effect a back-door entry for Taliban in Kabul's governing structure. The latter would enable Pakistan Army to wreck the Kabul Government from within if so placed. Afghan Taliban's insistence not to sit in power-sharing with Ghani Regime in Kabul is only for optical purposes for Taliban's constituency.

China also desperately wants a pro-Pakistan Government in Kabul as such a government under dictates of the Pakistan Army would ensure that the Eastern Flank of the CPECE is secured without any wavering. Hence, Chinese initiatives as a standby to induce Afghanistan also to join in an extension of the CPEC to cater for Afghanistan needs.

In passing it also needs to be stressed that despite some Indian strategic analysts advocating that India should engage the Taliban as a fall-back option are defeatist in content. Besides letting down the lawfully elected Ghani Regime in Kabul, such a step would be a stab in the back of the Northern Alliance which is decidedly pro-Indian and is a strategic asset which India should not fritter away on grounds of tactical expediency. India on no account should be seen as engaging the Taliban.

The United States vital security interests in Greater South West Asia dictate imperatives for the United States military embedment in Afghanistan to continue with increased surges if required, till such time the Kabul Government and the Afghan National Army's combat effectiveness is built up to protect Afghanistan's sovereignty and also to defeat the Pakistan Army-generated insurgency in Afghanistan spearheaded by the Afghan Taliban--- creation of the Pakistan Army.

Concluding, it needs to be emphasised for the benefit of the Washington policy establishment that should the Afghan Taliban have enjoyed mass Afghan peoples support they would have overrun the whole of Afghanistan by now and forced an inglorious withdrawal of US Forces from Afghanistan. The reports that Afghan Taliban has control over more than fifty percent of Afghanistan are erroneous and misleading. The Afghan Taliban's control of such areas is due to their strategy of terrorising the Afghan people, and hence their inability to marshal widespread support to overthrow the Kabul Regime.

The United States has to exploit this vulnerability of the Afghan Taliban by cutting of the Pakistan Army jugular vein which sustains militarily, financially and with military advisers, the Afghan Taliban insurgency in Afghan areas adjoining Pakistan. The United States also needs to caution China that the United States too has options to repay China in their same coin in Xinjiang and Tibet.

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