

America's War on Pakistan: Death From The Skies, NATO In Search of an Enemy

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-Once we thought this one-of-a-kind American president could do great things. In his inaugural address he focused more on "soft power" and told the Muslim world that he wants "a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect". All that seems to have changed. His message for Pakistan now is loud and clear: do as I tell you, or else. This is not the way the Americans treated us or talked to us when they were wooing us. This is what happens when you have been in the harem too long.

Saturday, November 26 will go down in our history as a black day. On that day, America's "war on terror" reached Pakistan's Salala Post, in Mohmand Agency, manned by jawans of the Pakistan army. While our soldiers were sleeping, US and Nato gunships targeted the post without any provocation. Innocent blood was spilled in pursuit of Obama's ambitions and nightmares. Missiles rained down killing 24 soldiers, including two officers, and injuring many others.

The deadly Nato operation led by an American general lasted for three hours. Dead bodies lay all around the post. It was not a mistake, it was targeted. No apology from President Obama, the Secretary of State or the Pentagon. Not surprisingly, anger in Pakistan reached a fever pitch. People all over Pakistan boiled over in righteous indignation.

When the US strikes, an apology for a wrong committed is unnecessary because, of course, the United States is never at fault. America has never apologised to the Iraqi people for years of carnage carried out in the name of WMDs, weapons that were never found because they were never there. Obama dodges the need to apologise on the premise "that we are up against people who show no shame, no remorse, no hint of humanity". "The unfortunate", Mirabeau once said, "are always wrong", even when they are the victims. Our moment of truth arrived on November 26. We are at the crossroads.

On the eve of Mr Jinnah's departure, from New Delhi for Karachi, Henry F. Grady, the American ambassador to India, paid him a farewell call.

Expressing great admiration for the United States, Mr Jinnah reiterated his hope that America would assist Pakistan "in its many problems". When Grady asked whether he desired to indicate any specific matter, Jinnah replied laconically, "not at this time". It did not take him long to realise that Pakistan faced a much stronger and wily adversary,

determined to strangle it in the crib; and that Pakistan stood alone in the ring. Faced with the prospects of such a desperate situation, the Quaid-e-Azam turned to the United States for assistance. This was the beginning of our romance with the United States. What went wrong?

The alienation between the people of Pakistan and the United States has never been more intense. Relations between Pakistan and the US have never been as stormy as they are today. Relations have been steadily deteriorating ever since a Navy Seal team killed Osama bin Laden near Abbottabad in May. Matters became still worse in September, when Admiral [Michael] Mullen, [then-] Chairman Joint Chief of Staff, accused Pakistan of supporting an attack on the American embassy in Kabul. On Saturday, November 26, the relationship hit a new low when a Nato air strike killed two dozen soldiers in Salala.

On July 12, 1961, when President Ayub visited Washington, he told a Joint Session of the Congress of the US: "The only people who will stand by you are the people of Pakistan provided you are also prepared to stand by them. So, I would like you to remember that whatever may be the dictates of your commitments, you will not take any steps that might aggravate our problems or in any fashion jeopardise our security. As long as you remember that our friendship will grow in strength".

In his welcome address, President Kennedy said that Pakistan was 'a friend of immediacy and constancy', and observed that 'Americans in private and in their public life appreciate the value of friendship and the constancy of friends'. Fine words and noble sentiments but they ring so hollow today. In the real world, as every student of international relations knows, there are no permanent friends, only permanent national interests.

The Washington Times' portrayal of Pakistan as America's 'retriever dog' deeply offended the people of Pakistan and sparked a wave of protest all over the country. The cartoon clearly shows what the Americans think of Pakistan and its people. They do not appreciate the value of friendship and the constancy of friendship. They use Pakistan whenever the need arises, throwing it away when no longer needed.

Who says we are friends? We have never been friends. There can be no friendship between the strong and the weak. There can be no friendship between unequals, neither in private life nor in public life. "The strong do what they can", the Athenians told the intractable Melians, "and the weak must suffer what they must".

The farewell address of George Washington will ever remain an important legacy for small nations like Pakistan. The father of the American Republic cautioned that "an attachment of a small or weak toward a great and powerful nation dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter". "It is folly in one nation", George Washington observed, "to look for disinterested favours from another...it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character". No truer words have been spoken on the subject.

Today say "Pakistan" and what comes to mind: sham democracy, fraudulent referendum, rigged elections, a corrupt president, a rubber stamp parliament, a figurehead prime minister. Democracy in the West means a political system marked not only by free, fair and impartial elections, but also by rule of law, and an independent election commission. All these institutions are non-existent in Pakistan. So how can Pakistan resist American pressure and be secure in its independence when it is not free in its spirit; when it is not free

in its institutions?

It is a matter of deep concern that Nato has extended its military operations to Pakistan. Nato is a military alliance in search of an enemy. It had been created, in Lord Ismay's famous words, "to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down". Confronted by a Western Europe still in ruins and a Soviet Union triumphantly consolidating its conquests, Europeans joined hands, in 1949, with Americans and Canadians to create a military alliance to stem the further encroachment of the Soviet tide. Soviet Union died long ago. What is Nato doing so close to our border? That is the question.

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"The single greatest threat to (Pakistan)", Obama said recently, "comes from Al-Qaeda and their extremist allies". This is not true. All our major problems stem from American occupation of Afghanistan and its frequent intrusions into our tribal territory. It has turned our tribal area into a protracted ulcer, a quagmire - a place where Pakistan is spending blood and treasure to protect American interests.

Once we could do no wrong in the American eyes. Now we are in the dock, alone in the ring, facing all kinds of charges. We have achieved the impossible. We have the dubious distinction of alienating both the superpowers. And to add insult to injury, America has found a new dance partner in India. Today Pakistan is out in the cold, marooned, rejected, discarded. One thing is clear: the belief that Pakistan has no alternative but to slavishly obey its master's voice could turn out to be one of seminal strategic miscalculations of the 21st century.

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