

Endless Imbroglia

The situation Pakistan faces-The situation the whole sub-continent faces –cries out of change. While Pakistan is burning, Bangladesh, yet another not-so friendly neighbour of India is passing through a critical stage of covert military rule. And things are continually getting worse in Sri Lanka. For ordinary people, a different—a better—world is not in sight. The invasion of Afghanistan by America has set off what could be the worst identity crisis of Pakistan in its six-decade-old existence. Pakistan as a nation-state is in deep trouble, thanks to Uncle Sam and his trusted lieutenants in Pakistani junta.

Jinnah's Pakistan is dead. So is Gandhi's India. Whatever remains of original theocratic Pakistan gets threat of further disintegration from within. In truth the ruling elites of the sub-continent witness the musings of their own making. Sub-nationalism, not nationalism is the defining political momentum in shaping so many ethnicity-based separatist tendencies plaguing the sub-continent. The religion based nationalism has failed but the fundamentalists refuse to call it a day. The Islamic nation state of Pakistan is now under attack from the very Islamists who thought religion would unite about a dozen nationalities and sub-nationalities with unequal development and conflicting cultural interests.

The rulers of Pakistan, both civilian and military, have been utilising India card, rather threat from 'enemy India', for the last six decades to pacify the aggrieved. And it worked well so long it was the bi-polar world for the sub-continents. And Kashmir, the easily digestible staple food for the politically naive has been a good source of diversion since the 1960s. But the collapse of Soviet Union and almost simultaneous India's entry into American orbit led to shift in Washington's calculated South Asia policy as well denying Pakistan of diplomatic advantage it used to enjoy in the Soviet days. Afghan jihadists who were America's footsoldiers, rather cannon-fodder in the anti-communist (or anti-Soviet) campaign lost their relevance and utility in American strategy. And they became enemies facing Bush's 'war on terror' syndrome in no time. Also, Pakistani Generals led by Musharraf, had no option but to refashion their domestic and foreign policy orientation giving the fundamentalist hardliners a tough time. But the Islamists have a global project and that project remains incomplete without a strong theocratic Pakistan. But the Musharrafs, pressurised by Washington can ill-afford to oblige the hardliners any more, even if it means loss of political space otherwise created with painstaking diplomatic efforts globally and 'proxy-war' regionally, in the Kashmir tangle.

The Taliban fought for Islamic Afghanistan against 'communist' Soviet Union but they are now fighting against anti-communist America to reach the same goal—Islamic Afghanistan. The hard reality is that Americans are not winning in Afghanistan despite initial Taliban setbacks as they are losing in Iraq these days. Suicide-bombers are now threatening even the elite security establishment of Musharraf. The Generals of Pakistan never realised that the global strategic scenario could not remain static. Nor could they imagine in their wildest imagination that they were digging their own grave by promoting religious fanatics against their adversaries. As long as jihadists remain engaged with

Pakistani troops New Delhi may heave a sigh of relief because it has created new opportunities to stabilise Kashmir policy into its advantage. The hawks in Delhi have reasons to enjoy the moment of truth in Pakistan. What they failed to achieve through their low-intensity war against the insurgents backed by the Pakistani security apparatus during the last four decades is now being delivered by the anti-Musharraf jihadists—tranquility in Kashmir and breathing space for Indian Security Planners.

But the identity crisis of Pakistan is likely to get further worsened if so many sub-nationalisms continue to dominate Pakistani polity. Pakistan's tough stance against the jihadists is an anachronism that is designed to avoid resolving immediate dilemmas.

Disintegration of Pakistan at this stage is not in the best interest of America as Afghan cauldron may have spill-over effect destabilising the entire region. Also, America won't like to lose a counter-weight to Iran under any circumstances. But if balkanisation serves the purpose of America; it won't hesitate to dismember Pakistan as it has done in Yugoslavia. In truth downsizing of Serbia is not yet complete as Kosovo is likely to secede under the baton of Uncle Sam, to compound the woes of Serbia. Pakistan began as a theocratic movement but it now faces a dilemma as to how to make a compromise between theocracy and democracy. □□□