



Raheel Sharif's Kashmir Policy

The Director-General Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Lieutenant-General Asim Bajwa, quashed all rumors regarding an extension in General Raheel Sharif's tenure as Chief of Army Staff, with his tweet of 25 January 2016, stating: "speculations about extension in service of COAS are baseless. (The) COAS said; "Pakistan army is a great institution. I don't believe in extension and will retire on the due date. Efforts to route out terrorism will continue with full vigor and resolve."

As usual, there is blind irrational praise from some quarters for his supposed sincerity in not seeking an extension, especially when his predecessors sought extensions. Raheel Sharif's intentions for not seeking an extension will become apparent over the next few months, yet what is quite clear is that the legacy he leaves behind is more damning than his predecessors. It has been discussed in the past how the Musharraf period was about reversing the Afghanistan policy, whilst the Kiyani period was about shifting the India centric focus of the army to internal terrorism. The Raheel Sharif period has been characterized by:

1. The PTI/Minhaj-ul-Quran protests that were designed to pressurize the Nawaz Sharif government into seceding foreign policy to Raheel Sharif – an effective coup without a coup.
2. The despicable Peshawar Army Public School massacre that laid the basis of the end of the good Taliban/ bad Taliban policy.
3. The National Action Plan that was used as a cover for the shameless arrest, torture and imprisonment of sincere carriers of Islam.

The opportunity to become independent of US control was so great, and yet so easily bypassed that it only leads to the conclusion that Raheel Sharif is a committed agent of the West and specifically the US.

The US draw down in Afghanistan has been on the cards since 2011, when President Obama first mentioned the troop draw down plan. The US, being unable to find a political solution to the Afghanistan quagmire due to the sincere mujahideen of the Afghan Taliban, had begun looking for alternative solutions. The US had already lured China through mining contracts.

In November 2007, the China Metallurgical Group Corp., a state-owned conglomerate, signed a \$3 billion contract with the Afghan Ministry of Mines and Petroleum to mine copper from a barren, mountainous region southeast of Kabul. The mine sits atop the ruins of an ancient Buddhist city in Logar Province. The area is also a Taliban stronghold, but despite this, it would make the Chinese from promising what would be the largest foreign investment in Afghan history. After a war that has cost the lives of more than 2,200 Americans and over 17,000 Afghans, not to mention a bill of upward of \$642 billion for support of the Afghan government, the US was prepared to sacrifice this for a greater commitment in the security field.

But in parallel, the US had been disappointed at the lack of Chinese commitment to the Afghan imbroglio from a security perspective. S. Frederick Starr, Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, put it bluntly, "We do the heavy lifting, and [China] picks the fruit." <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/30/world/asia/30mine.html> In an article published on 6th October 2009 entitled "Beijing's Afghan Gamble" in *The New York Times*, Robert Kaplan stated: "The problem is that while America is sacrificing its blood and treasure, the Chinese will reap the benefits...."

In the same article, Robert Kaplan stated, "But what if America decides to leave, or to drastically reduce its footprint to a Counterterrorism strategy focused mainly on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border? Then another scenario might play out. Kandahar and other areas will most likely fall to the Taliban, creating a truly lawless realm that wrecks China's plans for an energy and commodities passageway through South Asia. It would also, of

course, be a momentous moral victory achieved by radical Muslims who, having first defeated the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, will then have triumphed over another superpower.”<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/07/opinion/07kaplan.html>

The notion was very simple. Let the Chinese contemplate the consequence of a radical and uncontrollable Taliban in Afghanistan, without the security umbrella of the US. The idea to draw the Chinese into a more involved role is predicated on the potential ingress of insecurity and instability into Chinese territory, Xinjiang being the obvious location.

Xinjiang is a region on the westernmost edge of northern China. It is home to a Muslims called Uighurs, a Turkic-speaking people who have long suffered under Chinese rule and have protested the steady influx of ethnic Chinese into the region. Aside from religious differences causing strife, China fights for Xinjiang because it has China's largest oil and gas reserves. In addition to that, it borders the Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan, and hence is a possible route for Islamic influence.

Whilst tensions have always existed in Xinjiang for years, things escalated around 2008, with large-scale ethnic rioting in the regional capital, Urumqi. Some 200 people were killed in the unrest, most of them Han Chinese, according to officials. About the same time, a group called the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) hit the airwaves making threats to the Olympic Games that were due to be held in Beijing later that year. Security was increased and many Uighurs detained as suspects. But violence rumbled on as right wing groups increasingly pointed to tight control by Beijing.

On 30 July 2011, two knife-wielding men hijacked a truck and drove it into groups of people at a busy Kashgar night-market before jumping out and stabbing pedestrians. The following day, a group of twelve Uighur men attacked a restaurant in “Gourmet Food Street”, a Han Chinese area, throwing explosives into the crowded eatery. One of the men involved had supposedly confessed to receiving explosives and firearms training in ETIM camps in Pakistan. It was sufficiently serious for the ISI Chief, Ahmed Shuja Pasha, to fly to China to discuss the situation and five Uighurs were subsequently arrested in Pakistan and deported to China. The TTP claimed responsibility for the attacks and confirmed that they were operating from a Waziristan training camp.

All of these incidences were attributed to the ETIM, and pressure on the Pakistan to rein in the so-called terrorists operating from the tribal areas. On Friday 24 August 2012, two US Hellfire missiles struck a militant training camp in the Shawal Valley, near the border of North and South Waziristan. The target of the drone strikes was Abdul Shakoor Turkistani, the chief of al Qaeda’s forces in FATA, who was killed along with three of his commanders. His predecessor was similarly killed two years ago in 2010.

The signal to the Chinese from the US was clear, if they do not take a vested interest in a wider role in Afghanistan, it would potentially destabilize their Xinjiang region. The US had done enough and China finally committed to a wider role. The developments took a multi-pronged approach.

In November 2011, the “Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process” had been initiated. The Istanbul Process provided: “Agenda for regional cooperation in the ‘Heart of Asia’ by placing Afghanistan at its center and engaging the ‘Heart of Asia’ countries in sincere and result-oriented cooperation for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan, as well as a secure and prosperous region as a whole.” <http://www.heartofasia-istanbulprocess.af/>

This region-led dialogue was launched in November 2011 to expand practical coordination between Afghanistan and its neighbors and regional partners in facing common threats, including counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, poverty, and extremism. The United States and over 20 other nations and organizations serve as “supporting nations” to the process.

The key 2014 and 2015 Heart of Asia ministerial meetings were held in Beijing and Islamabad respectively, indicating the political focus of the process, and making the Heart of Asia meetings a vehicle in the resolution of the Afghan conflict.

The US also dangled the prospect of a potential land route from Gwadar to Xinjiang, providing the Chinese with a deep sea water port and access to the Arabian Sea, and a much shorter land route for transporting goods instead of the long sea route via the south China sea. The Chinese commitment to CPEC was reflected in the fact that they made it as part of their 13th five-year economic and social development plan for the year 2016-2020.

In parallel, the Pakistani leadership, specifically the military leadership had been facilitating talks between the Chinese and pro Pakistan Taliban leadership. Since November 2014, the Chinese and the now pro-Pakistan Taliban leadership met over ten times.

It is also rather interesting that the despicable APS massacre, and its timing became the *raison d'être* for the end of the good Taliban bad Taliban policy, cajoling the Afghan Taliban further towards the peace table. This culminated in the first meeting between the Afghan and pro Pakistan Afghan Taliban leadership in Murree in July 2015. Whilst the second meetings were suspended after the revelation of the death of Mullah Omar two years before, the pressure for the peace process has continued.

Hence, the US used the threat of the ETIM movement in destabilizing Xinjiang to draw the Chinese into playing a wider security role in Afghanistan. The potential of large commercial contracts, coupled with CPEC was enough to suggest to the Chinese that the benefits far outweighed the potential hurdles. And finally, the pressure on the Pakistani leadership to bring the Afghan Taliban to the peace table indicated to the Chinese that this was viable.

From a policy sense, it indicated to the Chinese that for Raheel Sharif, the US interests were Pakistan's interests. Hence it would make no sense for the Chinese to try and align with Pakistan against the US.

This represents the treachery along the Western border where the US desperation for peace in Afghanistan has led them to draw China into the region, and fundamentally using Pakistan. The implications along the Eastern border are far more sinister. In an article entitled "Chinese Pressure sees Pakistan Mull status of Gilgit Baltistan" published in the *Express Tribune* on 7th January 2016, stated: *"Pakistan is mulling upgrading the constitutional status of its northern Gilgit-Baltistan region, which is also claimed by India, in a bid to provide legal cover to a multi-billion-dollar Chinese investment plan"....a third top government official from Gilgit-Baltistan said the move was in response to concerns raised by Beijing about the China Pakistan Economic Corridor ...China cannot afford to invest billions of dollars on a road that passes through a disputed territory claimed both by India and Pakistan," the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said.* <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1023s23/chinese-pressure-sees-pakistan-mull-constitutional-status-of-gilgit-baltistan/>

So now under Chinese pressure the need to stabilize the CPEC route has led the Pakistani leadership to consider incorporating Gilgit Baltistan into the Pakistani constitution. This will make the line of control the *de facto* border, which is what the Indians have been wanting for years. The implications are clear, that the Kashmir liberation struggle is over. Any anti-Indian activity across the line of control, that could cause problems for the CPEC, will draw the ire of China.

Hence, the blind commitment to the US has now lead us to influence the Chinese to define a pro Indian Kashmir policy. If the funding for CPEC is part of the Chinese Five Year Plan, how will they take to Pakistani hostilities across the LOC? And as mentioned above, the Chinese have seen the sincerity of Raheel Sharif to the US (who are now aligned with India), so why would the Chinese consider taking a position on Kashmir that is anti-Indian?

It raises a more fundamental question. Has Raheel Sharif made the Afghan policy also the Kashmir policy? That is, by supporting the Chinese involvement in Afghanistan and the CPEC development, let Kashmir be “solved” by default? Would this explain why, despite the many provocations of the Indians on the Eastern border, Raheel Sharif has opted not to retaliate. In an article published in the Dawn Newspaper on 24th September 2015, stated: “Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif on Thursday said the continuous ceasefire violations by Indian forces along the Line of Control (LoC) is an “unsuccessful attempt” to distract Pakistan from its own anti-terror war.” And this was not the first time that this reasoning has been used, even as late as January 2016, Asim Bajwa, addressing the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) stated that India is attempting to divert Pakistan’s attention from war against terrorism through unabated border violations.

Thus, like Musharraf and Kayani before him, Raheel is acting in betrayal of the Muslims of Kashmir and thus committing treason against the Islamic Ummah. Kashmir is to be left to a fate where according to the American plan, based on the Andorra model, it will be divided and Hindus granted shared autonomy even though Allah (swt) forbade the Kuffar from any authority over Muslims. ﴿وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا﴾ “**And never will Allah grant to the disbelievers a way (sabeel) over the believers.**” [Surah An-Nisaa 4:141]

The correct solution to the Kashmir issue is not to grant India authority, wholly or partially, over any part of it, but to liberate all of it from the rule of the Hindu Kafir; instead of aiding the ‘divide and rule policy’ of the Kuffar, Muslims should work towards re-unifying all Muslim lands under a single leadership. For Allah (swt) said, ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ مِنْ﴾ “**O you who believe! Fight the Unbelievers who gird you about, and let them find firmness in you: and know that Allah is with those who fear Him.**” [Surah at-Tawbah 9:123]

Pakistan's weakness is only its leadership who refrain from fighting the cowardly Hindus, who were present in their hundreds of thousands in the Kashmir Valley, but were unable to dispose of a few thousand, poorly armed mujahideen. Pakistan has a strong and effective military machine; it has nuclear weapons, and has been blessed with vast natural resources in terms of fertile agricultural land, coal and gas; it also has a large and resourceful population. But the most valuable asset possessed by the Muslims of Pakistan is the Islamic Aqeedah, which in the past has demolished superpowers like the Romans and Persians. Allah says: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ﴾ “**O you who believe! If you help (in the cause of) Allah, He will help you and consolidate your foothold.**” [Surah Muhammad 47:7]

The problem of Kashmir is only one consequence of the problems that have plagued the Ummah since the end of Islamic rule, at the hands of the Western imperialist Kuffar. They replaced Islamic rule in all our lands with systems modelled on Western concepts - systems that created generations of leaders with loyalties to Western ideas and Western interests. So it should not be surprising that all the present leaders have sided with the American plan against the interests of the Ummah. Muslims must look beyond simply replacing one Westernised leader with another Westernised leader. What is needed is a return to the Islamic system by re-establishing Khilafah (caliphate) upon the methodology of the Prophethood, which will create generations of leaders whose sincerity lies only with Islam and the Muslim Ummah.

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