



SITREP: Pakistan

January 2018

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ABOUT COMMANDELEVEN

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past few months, Pakistan has been placed under the microscope again. While the reasons are significantly more than past episodes, the standard mantra/doctrine continues its refrain – do more.

With this SITREP, we will be looking at the change in dynamics around Pakistan democratically, militarily and diplomatically. While many analysts will begin their summary from President Donald Trump's ill-informed tweet of 4th January, we believe that the firecracker was triggered around the time of Nawaz Sharif's disqualification as Prime Minister.

It is well-known that [Nawaz Sharif was Saudi Arabia's man in Pakistan](#), as Prince al-Waleed bin Talal admitted in an interview with the Wall Street Journal. There are also many unsubstantiated rumors that Nawaz Sharif is also close to the Indian government.

BACKGROUND

Understanding the complexity of Pakistan's environment is very difficult for those who are not part and parcel of the nation. Many foreign-based analysts will attempt to describe the situation in Pakistan, but they have neither the context, nor the first-hand experience, to assimilate with what the average Pakistani deals with daily.

This is essentially why so many foreign analysts get Pakistan wrong. You cannot understand Pakistan without feeling what Pakistanis feel.

But this raises another issue – vested interests of individual Pakistanis that may be averse to the interests of the State of Pakistan.

There is a regularly circulated, not fully unsubstantiated rumor that circles in Washington, DC and Riyadh that Nawaz Sharif, unable to implement the agendas given by both capitals, made former Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Raheel Sharif, the scapegoat and demanded assistance to remove him, and his influence from Pakistan.

[General Raheel Sharif is credited with:](#)

- averting any serious incident between the government and the combined protest of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI) and Tahir-ul-Qadri's Pakistan Awami Tehrik (PAT) during their 120-day sit-down strike in Islamabad
- the swift and measured response after the vile attack on Army Public School (APS) Peshawar, and the implementation of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, which cleared the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) of insurgents and terrorists. Those same insurgents and terrorists returned to Afghanistan, where they had been receiving safe haven and support from the Afghan government, military and intelligence service since 2007, according to a comprehensive analysis by the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN)

- the Karachi Operations, under the direction of now retired Lt. General Rizwan Akhtar, which eliminated militants and insurgents from Karachi's metropolis
- assembling a top-notch team of Corps Commanders that took the Pakistan Army's fight against terrorism and insurgency to a level of success that hadn't been previously achieved
- serving as a defacto Foreign Minister for the government, since Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif chose to keep the portfolio himself, rather than allot it to a qualified individual

While General Raheel Sharif was entering his final year as COAS, [rumors of an extension](#) were circulated. General Sharif quietly ended those rumors by simply stating that he would [retire at the end of his term and there would be no talk of extensions with him](#).

Simultaneously, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif used all the influence that he could to minimize the General's influence in the country, ending with Saudi Arabia offering the Commander-in-Chief position of the newly formed 39 country Islamic military alliance to counter terrorism. As soon as he retired, his entire team was moved to positions that had little to no influence in the on-going military command under General Qamar Bajwa.

Yet, even while the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) was investigating Nawaz Sharif's family connection to massive corruption uncovered in the Panama Papers, foreign newspapers were [circulating "judicial coup" stories](#), implying that General Raheel Sharif was [working with the Supreme Court of Pakistan](#) to have [Nawaz Sharif and his entire family disqualified](#) from public office.

Again, an unsubstantiated rumor that gained traction due to the fragile relationship between democracy, the people of Pakistan and the Pakistan military.

Once Nawaz Sharif was disqualified by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, he took to the roads to protest his removal, claiming a conspiracy from both the armed forces, who he has regularly challenged, and the judiciary, who according to him – didn't have the power to remove him from office.

Since then, Pakistan has been struggling with internal matters related to political stability, threats from India, insurgent attacks from Afghanistan and continuous repeats of the refrain "Do More" from the US administration, along with threats to suspend all aid to Pakistan.

Let's talk about each individually.

POLITICAL UNREST

Nawaz Sharif is no stranger to massive protests, having used them against former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto during the 1990s. In 2007, he hijacked the Lawyers Movement to restore Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry to the Supreme Court after the Supreme Judicial Council removed him on grounds of corruption and abuse of power.

During the 120-day sit-down strike in Islamabad, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif rebuked pressure from both Imran Khan and Tahir-ul-Qadri's political parties to tender his resignation over massive election tampering and the Model Town massacre. Neither issue has been resolved to the satisfaction of the parties or the people of Pakistan.

The Karachi Operation, started by Lt. General Rizwan Akhtar, former DG-Sindh Rangers, is a comprehensive attempt to eliminate/arrest the militants and insurgents that are interested in upsetting the peace in Karachi. This includes political parties known for their affinity for violence, like MQM, and terror groups/cells operating in the city. This became a problem for Nawaz Sharif's government when the Sindh Rangers began to target political figures in acts of terrorism, corruption, extortion, and kidnapping. The Sindh Rangers, who operate in Sindh under the invitation of the Sindh government, were threatened with their powers being curtailed, and the potential of being removed completely from the province.

When the Supreme Court of Pakistan issued its verdict removing Nawaz Sharif from the Prime Ministership, the tirades began both on the streets and in the media. From cursing the military and the courts to claiming that he had been disqualified on "questionable" reasons, Nawaz Sharif sent Pakistan into turmoil that affected the economy, foreign policy and judicial reason. Nawaz Sharif's mantra became "Mujhe qui nekhal de hai (Why did you disqualify me?)" in both the domestic and international media, singing the same song from political rally rostrums across Pakistan.

In his place, Nawaz Sharif nominated Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, owner of private airline AirBlue, to become Prime Minister in his place. Even though many felt this appointment would only be for a short time, until Nawaz's brother could win a National Assembly seat and take over, it seems that Prime Minister Abbasi has cemented his place in government. He was previously Federal Minister for Petroleum.

The political unrest took a grave turn when Nawaz's Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) passed legislation allowing a disqualified individual, barred from holding public office, to lead a political party.

In many cases, Nawaz Sharif has turned to political juggernaut, Asif Ali Zardari, for advice and assistance, further demonstrating the coordination between both the PML-N and Zardari's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to cover up each other's corrupt activities. Zardari's latest advice was to hire a US based lobbyist to make Nawaz Sharif's case to the US and other foreign governments, believing they could restore him to office by bringing pressure on the Pakistan Army leadership and judiciary.

Pakistan, politically, stands at this juncture today.

THREATS FROM INDIA

For many years, Pakistan has claimed that India and Afghanistan have been working in tandem against Pakistan's security interests. Whether it be the border regions in FATA or the provincial unrest in Baluchistan, Pakistan has always pointed the finger back towards its neighboring countries.

India, Pakistan's declared enemy in the region, has stepped up its offensive actions in Kashmir, causing greater division and the weaponification of the resistance fighters. The weaponification has long been a desire of the Indian Army, as stated by Indian COAS General Bipin Rawat. This has led to increased unrest and fighting between the Kashmiri freedom fighters and the Indian Army.

Simultaneously, India's Border Security Force (BSF) has increased their unprovoked firing into Pakistani territories, killing both soldiers and civilians alike. Pakistan deployed specialist sniper teams able to counter the firing into Pakistan's territory.

India's military leadership, along with various think tanks and media outlets, have also attempted to challenge Pakistan's nuclear readiness, threatening to scrap the Cold Start Doctrine. Under the Cold Start Doctrine, India and Pakistan have both agreed to suppress the use of nuclear weapons as a first strike option, choosing conventional weapons instead. India's threat of abandoning the Cold Start Doctrine would mean that either country could use nuclear weapons as a first strike option.

[Pakistan's political and military leadership reacted harshly to the suggestion](#), while media outlets and think tanks questioned the sense of making such a claim in light of the current tensions between both nations.

India, as it has done every year before, [backed down from its suggestion](#).

Lastly, India has worked tirelessly through its diplomatic offices, media outlets and political leadership attempting to diplomatically isolate Pakistan as an "exporter of global terrorism," demanding that all civilized nations end their ties with the country until they reform their ways. Troubling for India has been that China and Russia, a long-time Indian ally, have sided with Pakistan, not allowing attempts to be successful in any international capital or institution.

INSURGENCY FROM AFGHANISTAN

As we said previously, the Afghanistan Analyst Network (AAN) published a massive study uncovering the Afghan government, military and intelligence services involvement in [providing safe haven to the terrorists that were attacking Pakistan from 2007-2014](#). Their analysis clearly proved that Afghanistan was using the terrorists from their soil to attack Pakistan under the guise of "strategic depth."

Strategic depth, for those unfamiliar with the term, is the same phrase used by Western analysts in describing the relationship between the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistan Army.

This is where the relationship cuts for Afghanistan.

While they continue to believe that Pakistan is wholeheartedly supporting the Afghan Taliban, they fail to realize that their own support for insurgents has allowed all the terror groups that were in FATA prior to Operation Zarb-e-Azb to move into Afghanistan, establish their training camps and continue to operate without any cessation of hostilities. Additionally, due to the weak security policies of the country, they have also been able to attack Afghanistan National Army, NGOs and civilian posts because they have never had any loyalty to any nation. Yet, the Kabul government continues to take a soft position on Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), Laskhar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), and Jamaat-ul-Dawat (JuD), allowing them to base in Khost, Nangarhar and Patika. They have also engaged in what we term the “militant civil war,” which has splintered various groups into what is now the Islamic State – Khorasan (ISKP), who is rapidly gaining influence both in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Afghan government’s weakness on securing their own borders has allowed the Baluch separatists to also find a base of operations in their country, crossing into Pakistan to attack Pakistan Army outposts and civilians.

US – PAKISTAN RELATIONS

Since the election of Donald Trump as President, US-Pakistan relations have taken a significant decline. President Trump has made bold claims without any real on ground action. From his [Afghanistan policy](#) to [threatening Pakistan](#) with [cutting aid](#), the Trump administration has again proven that they are like previous administrations in repeating the [Do More mantra for Pakistan](#), while doing nothing themselves to bring the Afghan conflict to a close.

When President Trump took office, we provided a primer, available on our website, on how to [improve US-Pakistan relations](#), which is a good read for anyone unaware of the dynamics of the two countries.

It is key to understand that blaming Pakistan for the failed US mission under Bush and Obama, rather than accepting the US's own failure to [establish achievable objectives](#) in a country with no synergy among its own people, isn't going to win any friends in this region. Rather, it has pushed Pakistan closer to China and Russia to find peace in the unending regional conflict.

"The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit. They give safe havens to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan...No more," said President Donald Trump in his first tweet of 2018.

Factually, the statement is incorrect. First, it's not \$33 billion in aid, a mistake that has been made by numerous Presidents. The "aid" breaks down as follows:

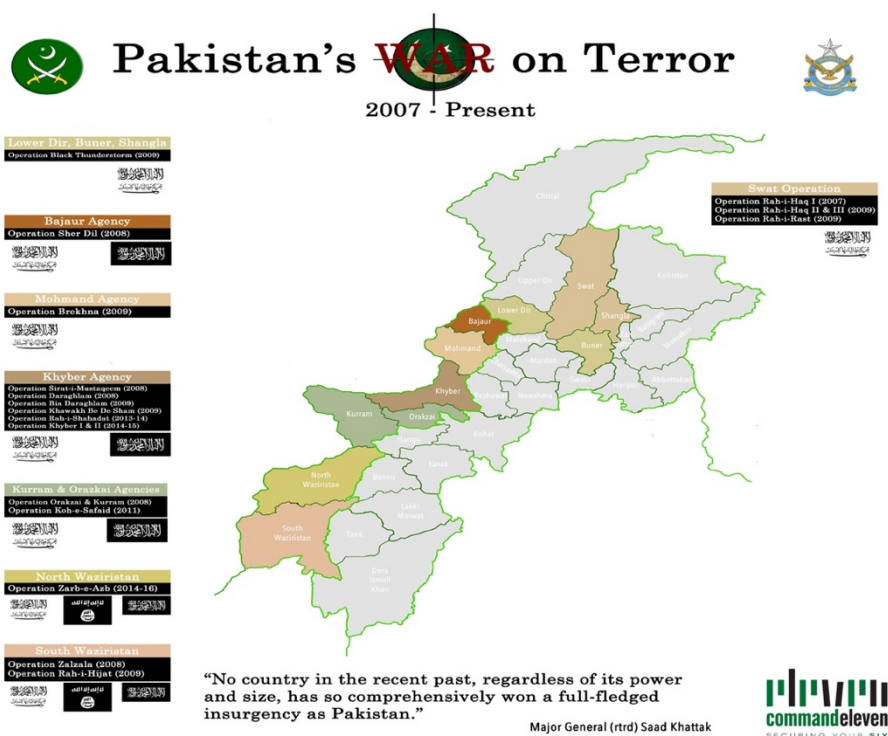
US "Aid" To Pakistan over the last 15 years

NOT AID	
Coalition Support Fund (CSF) Reimbursement <i>Reimbursement of Pakistan's money spent on supplies to US forces</i>	\$14.5 billion
Anti-narcotics fund to stop Afghan narcotics from reaching US	1.3 billion
Anti-Terrorism war fund	2.5 billion
Financing to upgrade the Pakistan Army CT efforts	4.0 billion
Total Not Aid	\$22.3 billion

"AID"	
Food aid for 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan for 15 years	\$0.6 billion
Afghan Refugee Assistance	0.25 billion
Disaster Fund	1.0 billion
Economic Support	8.5 billion
Total "Aid"	\$10.35 billion

In response to President Trump's statement that *"they (Pakistan) have given us nothing by lies and deceit,"* we reference a map of the FATA region post Operation Zarb-e-Azb to demonstrate the sheer success of the Pakistan Army in clearing its own territory of

terrorists and insurgents, while the US continues to lose more ground to the Taliban and ISKP each day in Afghanistan.



It would make a logical person wonder, who actually needs to do more?

While the President would like to make Pakistan the scapegoat for the failures in the US mission, it is simply incorrect. The US has repeatedly over-reached in its objectives for Afghanistan, from believing that they could bring democracy to a habitually undemocratic country to believing that they could defeat the Taliban with the under-trained, ineffective Afghanistan National Army. With the massive corruption initiated during the government of Hamid Karzai and continued in Ashraf Ghani's coalition government, Afghanistan doesn't have the funds to pay its own armed forces causing them to either align themselves with the Taliban or another terrorist group, or sell their own weapons and equipment to cover the salaries they are not receiving from the Afghanistan government. Neither presents a win-win option for the US mission.

Additionally, while the Trump administration continues to believe that they don't need to negotiate with the Taliban for peace in the country, the Taliban continue to carry out [massive horrific attacks in Kabul](#) without any respite. Since the launch of ISKP in Afghanistan, the attacks have become multipronged with [both groups attacking Kabul seeming at will](#).

Scapegoating Pakistan while Afghanistan continues to shield itself from the blame will not win any battles. The problem in the region is Afghanistan, as Pakistan has repeatedly proven its success against terrorism and militancy, whether the US chooses to accept it or not.

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