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## Pakistan Army Pushes Pakistan to Existential Cross Roads:

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Pakistan Army which tightly controls Pakistan's foreign policy and security formulations has endangered Pakistan's survival as an independent Nation-State with a looming critical existential crisis that emerges from what I would term as "Pakistan Army's mythical obsession of geopolitical and strategic equivalence with India".

Pakistan Army stood emboldened in this delusionary belief earlier by United States transactional rental of Pakistani State and currently by China which has clasped Pakistan in a concubinage gridlock. In both cases, Pakistan was impelled into such external relationships by the Pakistan Army willing to rent itself out in the belief that its strategic aims of military parity with India would receive much needed strategic ballast. Pakistan today does not seem to have been the recipient of that much needed advantage.

Pakistan today in August 2019 stands characterised as being in virtual geopolitical isolation over Pakistan Army's main foreign policy plank of Kashmir; strategically neutralised by India in terms of its nuclear weapons threats; and in terminal economic collapse brought about by Pakistan Army's ill-affordable defence expenditures impelled by mythical fixations of geopolitical and strategic equivalence with India. Pakistan in 2019 can therefore be termed to be at critical existential crossroads.

Contextually therefore Pakistan today has only two options available to it. The first and most desirable option for Pakistan would be to undergo a radical transformation of its strategic culture and fixations mythically fostered by Pakistan Army. Pakistan has to get out of its 'state of denial' and adapt itself to the changed geopolitical and strategic realities that in global and regional perceptions India comparatively is an Emerged Power and that Pakistan is virtually a 'Failing State' if not a 'Failed State'.

The second option for Pakistan, and most likely to be stuck to by Pakistan Army is to rigidly adhere to its fixative obsessions of geopolitical and strategic equivalence with India. This course preferred by Pakistan Army to ensure its hold over Pakistan's foreign policy and governance can be termed as 'Pakistan's Self-Destruct Option'. Pakistan Army cannot be a winner in this unequal confrontation with India despite use of its low-cost strategy of terrorism and suicide bombing strikes.

Contextually therefore, a brief examination is required of Pakistan's obsessive fixations and whether they have contributed to Pakistan and Pakistan Army's end aims of downsizing India Also whether any factors can emerge which could release Pakistan from Pakistan Army's stranglehold over Pakistan's foreign policy and political governance?

Pakistan's geopolitical significance as being inconsequential in global affairs was brutally brought home to Pakistan by geopolitical developments in wake of reactions of Major Powers, with exception of China, to India's full integration of Kashmir sans any Special Provisions. Pakistan was unable to garner global support against India as Major Powers stances were determined by their assessments of relative geopolitical weightage of Pakistan with India as an Emerged Power.

Pakistan Army would find it hard to digest this geopolitical reality and trends indicate that Pakistan Army Generals continue to be in a 'state of denial' that Kashmir mistakenly fostered for decades by Cold War determinations as 'Kashmir Dispute' no longer figures so. Prevailing geopolitical realities would indicate that Kashmir as Pakistan Army's main plank of its own existential relevance stands demolished by Indian PM Narendra Modi's audacious yet legally sound abrogation of Article 370's Special Provisions applicable to Kashmir and bifurcation of the State into two Union Territories under direct more control of New Delhi.

Pakistan Army's second myth, more obsessively clung to by Pakistan Army, was that Pakistan with its China-supplied know how of Nuclear Weapons and Long Range Missiles Arsenal, endowed Pakistan with 'Strategic Equivalence with India'. This myth was first breached in Kargil War 1999 when India won the Limited War with a nuclear overhang of Pakistan Army's much vaunted Nuclear Arsenal.

In August 2019, twenty years later, India has busted this Pakistan Army myth for a second time. In 2002, in one of my SAAG Papers, I had analysed in detail that this much sensationalised bogey as a pressure point on India over Kashmir was fostered by United States and the West alarming the world that 'South Asia is a Nuclear Flashpoint' or that 'Kashmir is a Nuclear Flashpoint', was strategically unfeasible as Major Powers would step-in pre-emptively against Pakistan at the slightest hint that such an eventuality was underway by Pakistan Army.

In 2019, with Pakistan's geopolitical isolation on Kashmir established by Major Powers stating that Kashmir is not an 'international issue' but a 'bilateral issue' to be sorted out by Pakistan with India, Pakistan Army has begun parroting the myth of 'Kashmir as a Nuclear Flashpoint' once again

Pakistan Army has prompted its 'Selected Prime Minister Imran Khan' and his Foreign Minister, besides others, to vocally declare that Pakistan has the Nuclear Option' open and that Kashmir could be a 'Nuclear Flashpoint.

Such war-mongering by Pakistani assertions prompted India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to state in declaratory terms that India has not foreclosed its 'First Use' nuclear option—an implicit warning to Pakistan Army against nuclear adventurism.

Major Powers in 2019 realise that India despite its Nuclear Weapons Triad and power asymmetries over Pakistan is a benign and responsible Emerged Power and would not resort to the nuclear option unless its military adversaries impose the near likelihood of a nuclear strike against India. That India would not hesitate to forsake its 'No First Use' in such an eventuality has been made in declaratory terms by India as stated above.

Pakistan today is in a state of terminal economic collapse existing on a month-by-month economic life-support systems. In an earlier Paper I had highlighted that Pakistan's economic collapse has been brought about by cumulative over-sized misappropriations over decades by Pakistan Army of Pakistan's National Budget for Pakistan's nuclear weapons arsenal and funding Jihadi terrorists' affiliates of Pakistan Army ISI.

Pakistan may have received infusions of financial aid in recent months from its traditional donors in the Middle East and China. In 2019, indicators suggest that both in the Middle East, and China particularly, there is a growing belief that beyond a point their underwriting of Pakistan's failing economy is going to be geopolitically counterproductive for them.

The next logical question that emerges is whether any options exist which can arrest and rescue Pakistan's headlong dive into an unprecedented existential crisis which is not the direct making of the Pakistani masses but which stands forcibly foisted on the people of Pakistan by the Pakistan Army's "Equivalence Strategies" and the misuse by the Pakistan Army of its notorious intelligence agency—the ISI. The ISI has been grossly misused by Pakistan Army Chiefs for political intrigues, stage-managing emergence of Pakistan Army "Selected Prime Ministers" like current Pak PM Imran Khan, and muzzling media and public dissent.

Pakistan can be saved as a Nation-State and its existential challenge mitigated by one simple yet momentous step by the Pakistani people of forcing Pakistan Army to return to the barracks of its cantonments, force Pakistan Army to submit to Pakistani democratically elected civilian political control, and to recast ISI role to military intelligence. Pakistan Army's hold over Pakistan's foreign policy be neutralised and Pakistan Army's disproportionate appropriations over Pakistan's Budget be firmly curtailed and finances saved be diverted to Pakistan's ailing economy and social development of its masses.

Regular readers of my Papers of 2007-08 periods and in the immediate wake of United States Special Forces liquidation of Al Qaeda Chief Osama bin Laden ensconced in Pakistan Army's major Garrison deep within Pakistani territory may recall how close Pakistani masses led by its middle class civil society segments, lawyers and students, came to topple Pakistan Army's traditional hold of Pakistan Army over governance of Pakistan and its foreign policies.

Was it not the pro-democracy million man marches by people of Pakistan which forced re-instatement of Pakistan Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary dismissed by General Musharraf and the eventual forcing of General Musharraf to relinquish office as President of Pakistan?

Concluding, it needs to be emphasised that the above demonstrates the street-power of Pakistan's civil society and Pakistani masses to bring about radical transformation of Pakistan's governance by establishing the supremacy of civilian control over the Pakistan Army. Pakistan's current generation owe it to their future generations to bring about the political transformation of Pakistan and save it from the brink of extinction as a Nation State.

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