

## OSAMA AND HIS LEGACY FOR INDIA

■ Dr. M.N. Buch

There have been so many comments on the killing of Osama bin Laden, Pakistani complicity in giving him refuge, etc., that anything I might say would be redundant. However, I would like to reiterate that:

1. In order to rule over and dominate Pakistani society the army has projected itself as a guardian of Pakistan against the enemy. The only obvious enemy is India and, therefore, the Pakistan Army will never allow a successful peace process to take place because that reduces the importance of the army as a defender against an aggressive India.
2. As a corollary of the above no true democracy will be permitted to be established in Pakistan.
3. Regardless of the Prime Minister's extremely laudable peace overtures Pakistan will not give up the use of terrorist groups against India, nor desist from trying to destabilise India.
4. Under no circumstance will Pakistan voluntarily allow India a role in Afghanistan.

With regard to terrorism our role is reactive, which means that we try and build up defensive measures whilst awaiting the next attack from Pakistan. This was not always so because in the past whenever an incident took place in India retribution visited Pakistan by way of covert action by India. That acted as a severe deterrent. Even since Shri I.K. Gujral became Prime Minister we seem to have abandoned our proactive role. I am not advocating war or misadventure, but we shall have to work out a proactive role for India and its security forces which convinces the Pakistanis that they, too, are vulnerable to attack. In a letter I obviously cannot elaborate on the subject.

However, my main theme today is Afghanistan. Historically the Pashtuns have never been hostile to India and in this behalf Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, played a major role. Our support of the Soviet Union and its puppet regime in Afghanistan did create Mujahiddin hostility towards India and certainly the Taliban are not pro India. Despite this I do not think that the average Afghan is anti Indian. Despite all the mischief played by Pakistan what should be our role in Afghanistan? First and foremost I am not able to understand the logic of America's presence in Afghanistan. The Afghans are in no position to launch an attack on the American mainland. Nor are the Afghans, in the foreseeable future, likely to embrace a Westminster style of democracy, because the country is much too divided between tribes and ethnic groups, all of whom share in common an extreme, fundamentalist approach to Islam. The American presence will neither restore peace nor make the Afghans western style democrats. It is in America's interest to pull out of Afghanistan and that, too, very quickly.

If America goes the Taliban will reestablish control over Afghanistan under Pakistani sponsorship. That, however, will not go down too well with such ethnic minorities as the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, etc. India can covertly assist in keeping the Northern Alliance alive as a counter balancing force to the largely Pashtun Taliban. Undoubtedly Indian influence will be reduced almost to nothing initially by Pakistan functioning as the mentor of the Taliban in Afghanistan. This need not worry us because the Afghans have never accepted an outsider who tries to rule them directly or by proxy. Alexander did not succeed, nor did the British, Soviets or the United States. Within two years of trying to dominate Afghanistan the Pakistanis will come running out like curs with their tails between their legs. That gives us enough time to hit back in Afghanistan with a development package which no one, not even the Taliban, will be able to resist. One of the fallouts of such a policy could be that the

Pashtuns may cause Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP) Province to break away from Pakistan. That will be a very welcome move because in some ways I am like Khrushchev who, when asked why he opposed the unification of Germany and whether he did not like the Germans, replied, "I love Germany so much that I would like to see many Germanies". I would not mind seeing the vivisection of Pakistan because the weaker that country becomes through secession the better it will be for India.

I know I am painting the worst case scenario vis-à-vis Pakistan and Afghanistan. That is not a bad starting point because anything better than this would be a positive development and I hope Prime Minister's Kabul visit will help to bring about this happy result.

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