Olive Branch or Bellicosity

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The US Congressional proposal to cut defence spending by over $42 billion in next seven months and up to $500 billion over a decade would have serious implications not only for the US of shore balancing but for its allies as well. States, heavily dependent on the US aid and protective shield would be profoundly affected by these cuts including Pakistan. The Deployment of Harry S. Truman Aircraft Carrier in the Persian Gulf has already been postponed, outgoing Defence Secretary Leon Panetta is about to suggest pay cuts in the salaries of the US military and there is a proposal that due to high cost involved in pulling out military equipment from Afghanistan, US might sell some of these outfits to regional countries. Apparently it looks like another empire is coming to its age.

It is yet a little early to predict that the whether the “Graveyard of Empires” would stand to its reputation or would the US be an exception. But the plausibility of this prophecy coming true has increased. As Alfred McCoy wrote in December 2010 that the history dictates that despite these empires might give an omnipotence outlook, they actually remain very fragile units, especially once things start spiralling out of their control to turn worst. So they could disentangle at unprecedented speeds. Like it took an year for Portugal, two for USSR, eight for France, eleven for Ottomans and almost seventeen years for the British Empire to become history. The US, according to him, is in a visible decline since 2003 and might face the same fate possibly within a decade or so.

These are the US economic woes which have compelled her to negotiate peace with the Taliban, whom it had once regarded savage and barbaric people deserving no mercy. However, their human rights violations look like dwarf once one take an account of the US government killings of around 1.5 to 2 million Muslims, including women, children and elderly of between since 2001 according to varying estimates. These estimates do not include people killed in Iraq, between 1991 - 2003, due to sanctions and surgical military strikes.

In a startling development, now the Taliban have extended an olive branch to Pakistani government. The offer had generated mixed reactions from various quarters within Pakistan. It is ironical that while most liberals fervently advocate peace between India and Pakistan despite a deep ideological divide and unresolved disputes these liberal “war mongers” strongly oppose a peace with the Taliban militant groups. This might give a clue that whom agenda they might be following.
A stereotype logic offered by these hawks is that in past there have been repeated peace attempts without yielding any result and thus peace is not possible with them. This however is not the complete truth as most of these peace attempts were either sabotaged by the US or were broken down due to ongoing military operations in which both sides accused each other. The successful deals with some of the militant commanders in North Waziristan prove that these deals can be kept intact if the pressure from the US is resisted. These militant groups, despite their illegitimacy, were not hostile towards Pakistan prior to 9/11 and only collided with the state once Pakistani government decided to take them on due to American pressure.

It is now becoming evident that due to precarious economic condition, the US after leaving this region would drastically reduce aid for Pakistan. Then will an economically downtrodden Pakistan be able to continue this war at its own? If great empires like Britain, USSR and the US could not win over their guerrilla tactics, Pakistan doesn’t stand a chance. Probably now we are approaching our last “critical juncture or crossroad” of destruction or destiny. If we desire peace, for sake of prosperity, we need to hold the olive branch, but if we are hallucinating to eliminate them then we need to move down the policy of bellicosity, the course adopted by all the great empires, ultimately leading to their self-destruction.

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