

United States' Afghan Conundrum and the Pakistani endgame

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THE allegation of United States linking ISI, the Pakistani spy agency to the September 13 attacks on the US Embassy and NATO head-quarter does not come as a surprise to many keen observers of the region. Not many months ago it was revealed that the US had put ISI in its internal list on "terrorist and terrorist support entities". As the US relations with Pakistan deteriorate further Washington is increasing coming out in public about its assessment of Pakistan's complexity in war on terror. The rift between the two allies in the war on terror was simmering for quite some time and the Osama bin Laden's episode only split it wide open. The unilateral raid is the result and not cause of the US Pakistan growing rift. The downward spiral begun since the US special force consisting from Navy seals commando made a raid in September 2008 which created uproar in Pakistan. Later, there were media reports that this raid was authorized by President Bush. The US operation is now limited to drone attack which now is being operated from Afghanistan without intelligence input by Pakistan.

Trouble between the two pertains to their endgame strategy in Afghanistan. After US announced its phased combat troop pullout by 2014 Pakistan preparation for the post withdrawal scenario gained pace. This planning for end game has been on tow with Pakistan's help in carrying out operation in selected tribal agencies. Such duplicity has been inherent to a strategy that allows Islamabad to receive massive US military aid that dominated US aid under the coalition support fund. The military equipment it received to fight terrorism also strengthen its conventional weapon capability. The US has off late put conditions to its aid in the hope of keeping the military in line. The US Government Accountability Office (GAO) in July sub-

mitted a report saying that out of 3 billion requested for 2012 for Pakistan, 88 per cent of the total aid committed under Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act (EPA) of 2009 does not require Secretary of State Certification. This includes USD 1.3 b economic support fund and USD 1.1b for Pakistan Counterinsurgency capability fund and USD 155 million for four other programs. This does not include Coalition Support fund (CSF) disbursed separately by Pentagon. Certification involves only 3.5 million Foreign Military financing. This process of Certification has been superfluous at its best. This is evident from the fact that Secretary of the state Hillary Clinton provided this certification on March 18 while the US was preparing for unilateral raid on Osama's hideout in Pakistan. Though

accusation and counter accusation has been part of recent US-Pakistan relations their dynamics have changed after the unilateral May raid. Pakistan cannot be publicly seen as towing the US dictation. Similarly after Osama's discovery US cannot continue with public pretension that Pakistan is delivering. Already USD 800 million aid has been suspended.

US demand on Pakistan to take action against

Haqqani network in bound to fall on deaf ears as Pakistan prepares for US exit. Many in Pakistan consider Haqqani network as "strategic asset" which it should not lose when the drawdown is so near. General Kiyani's statement that Pakistan would not do anything that will affect its 'national interest' finds resonance in such assessment of its foreign policy elite. In spite of suicide attacks on civilian targets as well as



PAKISTANIKAHUDHAFATZ

high profile attack on military interests that includes Mehran attack there is no sense of urgency to rein in these groups. Pakistan still maintains its posture on Haqqani group. It feels that this group loyal to Pakistan Army would create strategic space. It is not surprising the Jinnah Institute report on Afghanistan which includes the perception of foreign policy elites also echoes the sentiment of the

military that US strategy in Afghanistan is 'counterproductive to Pakistan's interests'. It has asked the US to include both Quetta shura and the Haqqani network in the negotiation on future of Afghanistan.

Rawalpindi is not elated about the Taliban and US talks that was underway without its knowledge and approval. Pakistan in the past has sabotaged reconciliation process where it feels it is sidelined. Whether it

was the arrest of Mullah Baradar in the past, sheltering Osama in the garrison town or its refusal to take action against the Haqqani group Pakistan pursues a well calibrated strategy. This gets facilitated further by the US's confusion regarding its own Afghan strategy which is torn between department of State that wants to pursue reconciliation and Pentagon that harps on a military strategy.

High profile attacks on US interest in Afghanistan that culminated in US embassy attack in Kabul reflects that Pakistan security establishment want to send a warning to the US on the prospects of any reconciliation process which disregards centrality of Pakistan. Though it has sufficient control over Quetta shura it does not have complete faith on its leaders. As the Taliban remains divided between the old and new generations, between the group willing to negotiate and the one that prefers a hard-line stance, so also their strategy. This confusion regarding their approach is clear from the reaction of the Taliban leadership to the High peace council chief Burhanuddin Rabbani's killing.

Bridging the wedge between the non-Pushtuns and Pushtuns would become a serious problem after Rabbani's killing. If Haqqani group or elements supported by Pakistan are behind this brutal assassination then Pakistan endgame in Afghanistan would also remain a distant dream as also peace in Afghanistan. Both Taliban and other minority ethnic groups are vital to the stability and political reconciliation. Rabbani's assassination has dealt a serious blow to the nascent reconciliation process. His murder has left Afghanistan devoid of a leadership who is acceptable to ethnic minorities to negotiate peace with Pushtun for a power sharing arrangement. Afghanistan braces for an uncertain future with peace remaining as distant as it was before the 9/11.

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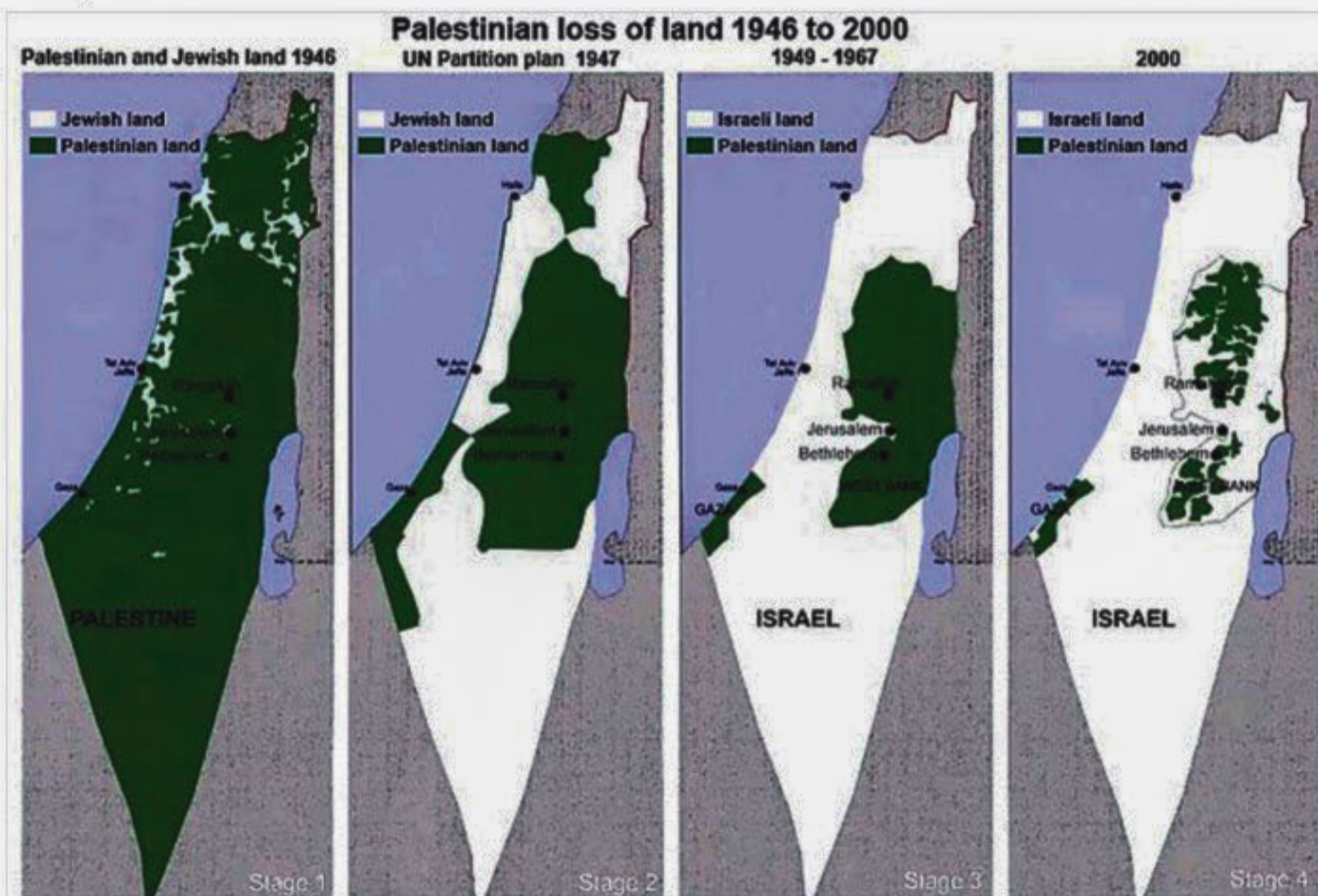
Palestine to seek UN recognition for statehood

FARIDUL ALAM

PALESTINIAN villagers say Israeli settlers in the West Bank have set fire to dozens of acres of agricultural land and cut down about 500 olive, fig and almond trees" (AP, 22 Sept'11). "The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, strongly condemned Israeli for its decision to build 900 new settlement units on lands of the occupied East Jerusalem, considering this act as a disregard to the international will and flagrant violation of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention" (OIC web 21 Sept'11). These incidents have happened when the Palestine President Mahmud Abbas has reached to the UN with the preparation to raise their demand for statehood. Though 126 member states, comprise 5.5 billion people of 7 billion world population, have officially recognized the Palestinian state in some form, it is still not considered as sovereign state as per international standard. As a result the conflict between Israel-Palestine has become an endless game spread over the whole Middle East. 'The Balfour declaration' of 1917 was the basis to create a Jewish state in Palestine and that is the root of the continuing Israel-Palestine conflict. Though the Arab world categorically rejected to establish such state within Palestine, their rejection was overruled and the Israel state was established in 1948 and the Palestinian people became stateless. The six days war in 1967 made the Palestinian people more frustrated and criminal arson at Al Aqsa Mosque in 1969 forced the Arab and the other Islamic states of the world to be united and work together for the protection of Muslims and upholding their human rights, which resulted the creation of Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Although before and after forming the OIC, the Arab world tried to solve this problem by recognizing the independent entity of Israel but the recognition of a Palestine land comprising the West

bank, Gaza stripe and East Jerusalem were abandoned by the Israeli authority time and again. In different times it has been reported in different media the brutality of the Israeli authority towards the Palestinian people including the women and children. The affected people were even deprived from the humanitarian assistance from others.

The people of Palestine have been fighting for more than sixty years for their self-determination. At present it is not only limited within a specific territory



rather it has become international tension as more than 4.6 million Arab people have been displaced and accepted the life of refugeehood in different Arab countries and more than 5.5 million are living in different parts of the world as refugees, which means the Palestinian people are the largest number among the world refugees. The UN resolution 61/113 (2006) was adopted to reaffirm the right of the Palestinian people which could be assured. Apart from it, different initiatives were also taken by the OIC. Among them the extra-ordinary summit meeting that was held in Makkah in December 2005 is notable, where next 10 years Action Plan (AP) was prepared. I(IX) of the AP states to make all efforts to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan and the full completion of the Israeli withdrawal from all remaining Lebanese territories, in compliance with Security Council Resolution 425, and extend effective support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. It seems that the fragmentation of the key OIC members unlock the opportunity for the external forces to secure their

own interest that hampers the greater unity of Muslims.

Though there were many obstacles for the Palestinian authority to move for the claim for the statehood, some recent development might have inspired them. The adjacent countries like Turkey and Egypt were specifically maintaining good relationship with Israel for strategic reason but Israeli assault on Turkish sea vessel in May 2011 annoyed the Turkish government and the recent border firing between Egypt and Israel resulted attack on Israeli embassy in Egypt and the embassy officials had to flee because of Egyptian people's movement, which has also deteriorated the Egypt-Israel relationship. All these mean that those states are certainly going to show their sympathy towards the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian authority were tried to restrained by the states who are known as the 'friend state' of Israel and specifically warned by the USA that it will exercise veto power in the UN Security Council. If this happens, however, the general assembly can raise Palestine's status from "permanent observer" to "non-member observer state", a largely symbolic vote, without Security Council's approval. It is obvious that the Palestine is going to face a challenging future as the whole process may bring

more sufferings to the Palestinian people. In the recent times, the world has witnessed several significant changes, which is called the victory of people through the eviction of autocratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and the struggle is still going on in Syria and Yemen. The 'Masters' of the world have welcomed all these movement and even sponsored to assure victory, which is encouraging. That is why, hope naturally comes, why not this is the time for the Palestinian people to restore their rights?

There is no question about the legitimate right of statehood for the Palestinian people but the question is whether they will be given it or not. The present international scenario does not show the favorable position for Palestine. Then the question may come to our mind 'when should it be given?' The answer is that only the change of international structure can assure it. It is well known that the Palestinian people are fighting for their rights and self-determination, which is stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and also guaranteed in the Charter of the United Nations.

Finally, we shall not forget that change is a certain process in course of time. The power structure of the world did not remain the same and will not remain as now. Human rights are inherent and cannot be undermined permanently by force. This is only the human being, who can make impossible thing possible. Our solidarity for the Palestinian people.

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ILLUMINATI WORLD

Israel approves 1,100 new homes in east Jerusalem

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JERUSALEM (AP) Israel's government on Tuesday granted the go-ahead for construction of 1,100 new housing units in occupied east Jerusalem, raising already heightened tensions fueled by last week's Palestinian move to seek U.N. membership.

Israel's Interior Ministry said the homes would be built in Gilo, a sprawling Jewish enclave in southeast Jerusalem. It said construction could begin after a mandatory 60-day period for public comment, a process that is largely a formality.

The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem as their future capital. They have demanded that Israel halt all settlement construction in east Jerusalem and the adjacent West Bank territories captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war as a condition for resuming peace talks.

Israel says east Jerusalem, home to sensitive Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy sites, is an eternal part of its undivided capital.

Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, swiftly condemned the Israeli decision, saying it amounted to "1,100 no's to the resumption of peace talks."

He urged the United States, Israel's closest and most important ally, to change its position and support the Palestinians in their quest for U.N. membership.

With peace talks stalled for the past three years, the Palestinians last week asked the United Nations to recognize an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza Strip.

The U.S. opposes the measure and has vowed to veto the request in the Security Council. Like Israel, the U.S. says a Palestinian state can only be established through negotiations.

In an interview published Tuesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he would not freeze settlement construction again.

Speaking to the Jerusalem Post, he said that a 10-month moratorium on new construction last year failed to yield results. He said he saw no need for another freeze.

Netanyahu says negotiations should begin without any preconditions.

Source: Associated Press.



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