

Lessons from the Battle of Ahzab for Countering Post 9-11 US Efforts to Assert Dominance

Of all the events in the world, 9/11 has had the most devastating effects on the Muslim world and Pakistan in particular. General Pervez Musharraf was Chief Executive of Pakistan when the event occurred and his decision sealed Pakistan's fate in the US war on the Khilafah, referred to in the media as the War on Terror. The paradigm he established exists today and is the guide for every military leadership since his era.

In any situation, the thought process requires a ruler to understand the geopolitical situation and to take the necessary actions to achieve the objective. The Islamic perspective is to abide by the law of Allah (swt), finding all means to implement them. For the scenario faced by Musharraf, the Ahkaam that he needed to abide by were that it is Haraam to align with Kuffar against Muslims and that it is Haraam to provide Kuffar bases, of any sort. Allah (swt), **﴿إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمْ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ﴾**

“Allah forbids your alliance with those who fight you because of your Deen, and drive you from your homelands, or aid others to do so: and as for those who turn to them in alliance, they are truly oppressors.” [Surah al-Mumtahina 60:9]. Given that Pakistan was pivotal in any US attack on Afghanistan, in practical terms Musharraf was required to refuse the US demands. This meant refusing the US any support, military, economic, logistical or other, in their proposed war on Afghanistan. In his book, “In the Line of Fire,” Musharraf mentions that he war gamed the scenario and was not in a position to counter any of the US demands for fear of being bombed back to the Stone Age. Further, Musharraf agreed to the US demands within two days of the attack.

However, nothing Allah (swt) commanded is impractical. No matter how difficult the situation a sincere leadership will find a way to implement Islam's Ahkaam. So many years after the crusader war began, Pakistan's Muslim population eventually paid all the price where Musharraf lied that we won't pay. We lost thousands of civilians, military men and our influence in Afghanistan. India got strengthened there and US remains unhappy with us, forever demanding that we “do more.” This happened to us because Musharraf fooled us into believing that Allah's Ahkam are impractical. They never are, there is always a way.

The purpose of the article is to show that our system produces leaders who are simply incapable of leading us out of such situations. The responsibility to take care of the interest of the Ummah is embedded in Islam. RasulAllah (saw) said, **﴿كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ، فَلِلْإِمَامِ رَاعٍ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ﴾** **“Everyone of you is a guardian and everyone of you is responsible (for his wards). A ruler is a guardian and is responsible (for his subjects)”** [Bukhari]. And it has been narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Prophet of Allah (saw) said: **﴿إِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَّةٌ يُقَاتِلُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ وَيَتَّقِي بِهِ فَإِنْ أَمَرَ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَعَدَلَ كَانَ لَهُ بِذَلِكَ أَجْرٌ وَإِنْ يَأْمُرُ بِغَيْرِهِ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهُ﴾** **“The Imaam (of the Muslims) is a shield for them. They fight behind him and they are protected by (him from tyrants and aggressors). If he enjoins fear of Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, and dispenses justice, there will be a (great) reward for him; and if he enjoins otherwise, it rebounds on him.”** [Muslims]. This is practically manifested in the statement of the Mother of the Believers, Aisha (ra) when Abu Bakr (ra) was elected as Khalifah, where she described the Ummah as a flock of sheep without a shepherd until Abu Bakr (ra) was elected as Khalifah.

Despite Musharraf's statements, the law of Islam could have been clearly implemented. Islam demands that we implement Allah's Ahkam as a matter of life and death. We are

capable to resist American demands then as we are now. As for India being used by the US, we had the capability then as we have now to withstand an attack from India, given our nuclear weapons, as well as conventional history. Consequently, the US would have been thwarted in its plans to establish a military base in Afghanistan and weaken Pakistan and would have caused less or no destruction compared to the current policy in supporting the US war on terror. Moreover, the US opened the doors of Afghanistan to India in an unprecedented manner. The following four points provide a framework of implementing an Islamic principle for evaluating these type of actions.

- 1. Understanding the Geopolitical environment**
- 2. Adoption of the best technological means to protect the Muslims against an attack.**
- 3. Adoption of all political and economic means to divide the enemy and weaken them.**
- 4. Always trusting Allah (swt) in ensuring that the plan of action will yield the required results.**

This process is clearly illustrated by RasulAllah (saw) and the Companions (ra) on many occasions. The Battle of Ahzab shows clearly the role of the Muslim ruler, and the mentality of the ruler in protecting his citizens from the plans of the enemies.

1. Understanding the Geopolitical Environment

The Prophet (saw) was always observant of the political situation around him and remained on the alert, regarding the conspiracy of the enemy. He (saw) was forever keen to gather news about the enemy and every development that took place in the Arabian Peninsula. He would send people on exploratory and news gathering missions all over the region. He was anxious to learn everything about the movements of the Arabs in order to be ready to deal with any hostilities. This was especially the case at this point, now that the enemies of the Muslims in the Peninsula numbered many, which was reactionary to the building of an army and a state to be reckoned with. In light of the above, the Messenger of Allah (saw) considered intelligence gathering to be vital. In fact it was through this medium that he received early warnings of the Quraysh, combining together with several other tribes to raid Madinah. He was therefore able to make advanced preparations to meet the new threat. It was the Jews of Banu Nadir who endeavored to incite the Arabs against the Messenger of Allah (saw) in order to exact their revenge for being expelled from Madinah. A number of them had formed a party against the Messenger of Allah (swt) and it was this party which approached the Quraysh in Makkah. Once they were assured that the Quraysh were convinced and that they would gladly respond to their call, the Jews went to Ghatafan of Qays Ghaylan, to Banu Murrah and to Banu Fazarah, to Ashja'a, to Salim, to Banu Sa'd, to Asad and to anyone else who held a grudge against the Muslims. In time, a number of Arab tribes allied and went out with the Quraysh heading for Madinah.

Examining the post 9-11 situation and the US conflict with the Taliban, Musharraf would have known very early on that US was planning to remove the Taliban regime. The US-Taliban nexus began to crumble after the Taliban refused the pipeline deals proposed by Unocal. By 1998, Unocal had pulled out of Afghanistan, and the US was already threatening to bomb the Taliban. The US desire to remove the Taliban from power was reported to Niaz Naik, a former Pakistan Foreign Secretary. This was reported in an article¹ on the BBC

website, stating: “Niaz Naik, a former Pakistani Foreign Secretary, was told by senior American officials in mid-July that military action against Afghanistan would go ahead by the middle of October.” Hence, if Niaz Naik knew it, so would have Musharraf. So as soon as 9/11 had occurred, Musharraf’s first thoughts should have been that the US will bring the war to Pakistan and that he needed to have a plan to protect the Muslims.

Regarding the US conflict with China, whilst the US conflict with China is well in the open now, US policy to contain China had begun well before 9/11. Indeed, the Bush presidency was characterized by its policy of regarding China as a strategic competitor, as opposed to the strategic partner the term as used by his predecessor, Bill Clinton.^{2 3} The state of affairs between the two countries was adequately described: “An article in the Washington Post on June 22, 2001 reported that *‘China’s leaders are increasingly concerned that Washington and Beijing are headed for a confrontation as China emerges as an economic and military power in Asia.’* The article, citing both Chinese and US officials and analysts, reported concern that ‘shifts in attitudes in both nations seem to be pointing to a showdown.’” So given this reality, the major regional power, China, would not have sided with the US in its ambitions, allowing Pakistan to lead the Ummah as an effective force to counter US ambitions.

Regarding the US-Russia conflict in the Central Asian Republics, the Russians understood that this was about establishing a military footprint to undermine their presence in the Central Asian Republics. Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the Russian government realized that the US will attempt to push into the Central Asian “stans”— Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—as part of the US effort to defeat the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the region. But these countries had been part of the Soviet Union ten years before, and Russia did not want the US increasing its influence there. On September 13, 2001, Russian intelligence officials held a meeting with Northern Alliance figures. They promised to increase support to the Northern Alliance in an attempt to outbid the US and keep the US military out of the region⁴.

Regarding the US relations with India, Bill Clinton’s March 2000, six day visit to India, followed by a six hour visit to Islamabad aptly described the US alignment with India. This alignment was in the making for many years, and hence should have been no surprise to Musharraf, as US Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott, had had unprecedented, extensive closed door negotiations with India from 1998 onwards, when the pro American BJP came to power. Given this scenario, the traditional Pakistani policy of stirring unrest in occupied Kashmir, to evoke a response by India in order to invite US mediation was doomed to fail. Since the US had aligned with the BJP, so one has to question why did Musharraf initiate Kargil? Worse, after Nawaz Sharif’s meeting with Clinton in July 1999, Nawaz Sharif received full cooperation from Musharraf in our withdrawal from the heights of Kargil after its heroic liberation by our armed forces and mujahideen. Hence post 9/11 Musharraf had effectively aided a pro US government to stabilize itself in India, as more concessions were made regarding the Kashmiri mujahideen.

Regarding NATO’s reluctance, the US’s closest allies within NATO did not confirm their support for the US until 2nd of October 2001. In a speech Lord Robertson, Secretary General of NATO, stated⁵: “The facts are clear and compelling. The information presented points

² <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/new-president-new-china-policy>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/mar/08/usa.guardianleaders>

⁴ Ahmed Rashid, Descent into Chaos, 2009

⁵ <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/so11002a.htm>

conclusively to an al-Qaida role in the September 11 attacks. We know that the individuals who carried out these attacks were part of the world-wide terrorist network of al-Qaida, headed by Osama bin Laden and his key lieutenants and protected by the Taliban.” NATO only confirmed on 2nd October 2001 that the US had been attacked by al-Qaeda, and only provided non-combat support after 9/11. Foreign combat assistance to the USA in the Afghan War of 2001 came through UN Resolutions. NATO was unwilling to commit troops to combat without UN authorization. The NATO allies, waited for a UN resolution.

To conclude, Islam demands that the ruler is always aware of the political scenario, so that he can thwart any conspiracy against Muslims and Islam. Post 9/11, neither Musharraf nor his entourage acted according to the political environment in order to make the correct judgments to protect Muslims. And from the evidences given above, it was perfectly possible to thwart the US plans and not be part of the US War on Terror.

2. Adoption of the best technological means to protect the Muslims against an attack.

In the case of the Battle of Ahzab, the Prophet (saw) adopted different warfare tactics, with the trench being a new technology for that time. The Quraysh marched under the leadership of Abu Sufyan. Together with their allies, the army totaled about 10,000 men. When news reached the Messenger of Allah (saw), he decided to entrench himself inside Madinah. Salman al-Farsi recommended digging a trench around Madinah. The trench was dug and the Messenger of Allah (saw) worked at it himself encouraging the Muslims on with the hope of reward in Heaven. He encouraged them to double and redouble their efforts and in this way the trench was completed in six days. The Quraysh marched until they reached Madinah and to their surprise they found their way barred by the trench. Clearly the Quraysh and their allies were not familiar with this kind of defensive strategy, they were forced to encamp outside Madinah beyond the trench to consider their next move. Abu Sufyan and those with him soon realized that they were in for a long stay by the trench because they were not able to storm it. This inconclusive situation proved troublesome as it was winter, the winds were fierce and it was biting cold. Under these conditions the people began to feel demoralized, they wished that they could return home.

Considering the post **9/11 situation**, the Pakistani nation's armed forces should have been put on alert for an attack by all potential enemies, especially the US and India. Nuclear weapons should have also been put on alert for immediate deployment. The verse of the Quran states, **﴿وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَظْلَمُونَ﴾** **“And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged.”** [Surah al-Anfaal 8:60].

To conclude how can a country with nuclear capability be thrown back to the Stone Age? Further, what is then the point of all the sacrifices this Ummah has made to fund the nuclear weapons?

3. Adoption of the political and economic means to divide the enemy and weaken them.

In the case of the Battle of Ahzab, the Prophet (saw) was prepared to offer 1/3 of the dates of Madinah to break the unity of the Quraysh alliance. The Messenger of Allah (saw) was always confident that Allah (swt) would grant him victory; and relief came through

Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud. He had already embraced Islam though his own people did not know it and he came to the Messenger of Allah (saw). Nu'aym proposed a way to the Messenger of Allah in which he could jeopardize the coalition. So Nu'aym went to Banu Quraydah, with whom he had been a close friend in the days of Jahilliyah, and told Banu Quraydah what their fate would be if Ghatafan and the Quraysh were to leave them to face Muhammad (saw) alone. He emphasized that the Quraysh and Ghatafan might not bear waiting for a long time because they were not inhabitants of that area. Finally, he suggested to them not to fight alongside the allies until they had taken hostages from their chiefs who would remain in their hands as security in order to have Ghatafan and the Quraysh stay. Only then should they fight Muhammad (saw) with their allies until they made an end of him. The Quraydah thought that this was excellent advice. Nu'aym then went to Quraysh and told them that the Jews of Quraydah had regretted their action in opposing Muhammad (saw) and are working to overcome their shortcoming. He stated that they were prepared to make it up with him by handing over some chiefs of the two tribes, Quraysh and Ghatafan, so that he could cut their heads off. He said to them, "So if the Jews demand hostages, do not send them a single man." Then he went to Ghatafan and told them the same story that he had told Quraysh.

The Arabs' suspicion of the Jews grew and Abu Sufyan sent for Ka'ab informing him that they had been besieging Muhammad (saw) for a long time and that they should make ready for battle the next day. Ka'ab replied that it was the sabbath, a day on which they did nothing i.e. no fighting and no work. Abu Sufyan was enraged and he came to believe what Nu'aym had told him. He sent an envoy back to the Quraydah that if Quraysh and Ghatafan went out to fight alone, their coalition would be broken so they would end up fighting Muhammad (saw) alone. When the Quraydah heard Abu Sufyan's comments they asserted their stand that they would not violate the sabbath, and mentioned the hostages whom they should hold as security. When Abu Sufyan heard this he had no doubt left concerning what Nu'aym had told him. He began to think of a new strategy and he conferred with Ghatafan only to find out that they too had second thoughts about fighting Muhammad (saw). That night, Allah (swt) sent a bitter wind and a thunderous storm which overthrew their tents and toppled their cooking pots. They were stricken with panic and thought that the Muslims would seize the chance to direct their onslaught against them, so Tulayha arose and shouted, "Muhammad has come after you, so run for your lives". Abu Sufyan said, "O Quraysh! Be off, for I am going." So they grabbed hurriedly whatever they could carry and fled. Ghatafan and the rest of the allies did the same. By the morning, they were all gone.

Considering the 9-11 scenario, the conflict zones were clear. The US had conflicts with Russia and China. Both knew that the consequences of the war in Afghanistan was the establishment of a US military footprint on their doorstep and were uncomfortable with it. Russia had already attempted to buy out the Northern Alliance. This occurred on 13th September 2001 but the Northern Alliance had already been bought out by the US. This coincided with Musharraf's commitment to the US to provide unstinting support on the 13th September 2001. Hence, Musharraf's commitment to the US had set off the dominoes falling, with the Northern Alliance committing to the US war, knowing that Pakistan had committed to supporting the US. This then emboldened the US who then took an uncompromising position on the Taliban. Musharraf must have been aware of the meeting between the Russian intelligence and the Northern Alliance, and hence the reservations of the Russians. The Northern Alliance was critical to the US for the war, only if Pakistan had committed; otherwise the US could not have executed the war. So here was an opportunity for Musharraf to implicitly strengthen the Russian hand. Did he even consider this? Was he even aware?

The Chinese would have welcomed a weaker US, considering the conflict that had occurred earlier in the year over Taiwan. Knowing its temperament, China would have remained neutral at the very least.

Regarding evidences that Osama Bin Laden (OBL) and Al-Qaeda were responsible for 9/11. Once 9/11 had occurred, within two days, the US had already established, supposedly with evidences, that OBL and al-Qaeda were responsible. On September 13th 2001, Musharraf had agreed to all seven demands of the US, presumably with the evidences presented to him. But the issue of evidences was pivotal to the whole war. Ten days after the 9/11 attacks, CNN reported: "The Taliban . . . refus[ed] to hand over Bin Laden without proof or evidence that he was involved in last week's attacks on the United States...The Taliban ambassador to Pakistan...said Friday that deporting him without proof would amount to an 'insult to Islam.'" CNN also made clear that the Taliban's demand for proof was not made without reason, saying: "Bin Laden himself has already denied he had anything to do with the attacks, and Taliban officials repeatedly said he could not have been involved in the attacks." Bush, however, "said the demands were not open to negotiation or discussion." The issue of evidences (or lack of) was established by the press corps in the US. In the *Washington Post* archives⁶, the issue of evidences was raised by a reporter:

RUSSET: Will you release publicly a white paper which links him and his organization to this attack to put people at ease?

POWELL: We are hard at work bringing all the information together, intelligence information, law enforcement information. And I think in the near future we will be able to put out a paper, a document that will describe quite clearly the evidence that we have linking him to this attack. But also, remember, he has been linked to earlier attacks against U.S. interests, and he's already indicted for earlier attacks against United States.

But at a joint press conference with President Bush the next morning, Powell withdrew this pledge, saying that "most of [the evidence] is classified." Seymour Hersh, citing officials from both the CIA and the Department of Justice, said the real reason why Powell withdrew the pledge was a "lack of solid information." So the US had become judge, jury and executioner, within two days of the attack, but they were still gathering the evidences even ten days later. NATO reluctance was clear from the outset, where they did not commit to supporting the US. This was a perfect opportunity to exploit using political means and lobbying. But this was not even present since Musharraf had committed to the US cause within two days. Further, why did Musharraf not raise the weakness of the evidences implicating OBL and al-Qaeda? The Russians would have supported them, and NATO only committed to non-combat support. By raising the issue of evidences in the public arena, the US would have been forced to justify their war-mongering.

To conclude, it takes a committed leadership that regards protection of the Muslims as its vital responsibility to initiate all possible means to protect the Ummah. Surrender in two days, as Musharraf did is just indicative of how worthless the rulers of the Muslims and the Ummah are to this type of leadership.

4. Always trusting that the Nusrah of Allah (swt) will come to those who are steadfast and patient.

Considering the Battle of Ahzab the bitter wind and thunderous storm were indicative of the Nasr of Allah (swt) for those who are patient. Allah (swt) in the Quran states, ﴿وَلَا تَهِنُوا فِي﴾

⁶ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/nbctexto92eo1.html>

﴿ابْتِغَاءَ الْقَوْمِ إِنْ تَكُونُوا تَأْلَمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُونَ وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا﴾ **“And don't be weak in the pursuit of the enemy; if you are suffering (hardships) then surely, they (too) are suffering (hardships) as you are suffering, but you have a hope from Allah (for the reward, i.e. Paradise) that for which they hope not, and Allah is ever all-Knowing, all-Wise.”** [Surah an-Nisa'a 4:104]. This belief was clearly reflected in the mentality of the Prophet (saw), the companions (ra) and the Muslims in Madinah.

Considering post 9/11 events, Musharraf trusted the US, and he became a hero in the eyes of the US for a few years. Pakistan was made a non NATO ally, and small sums of debts were forgiven. Geopolitically, the US brought in an India ally, the Northern Alliance into power in Afghanistan, enabled India to establish embassies in Afghanistan, brought the war on terror into the tribal areas, and finally forced the Pakistani army to chase the Taliban.

To conclude, can anyone other than Allah (swt) be trusted? The event of the Battle of Badr (313 fighters against over 1000) is evidence of Tawakul. And verses of the Quran in which Allah (swt) mentions sending angels to fight the Kuffar are evidence of the Almighty's support for His servants. Musharraf clearly thought otherwise.

Musharraf read the geopolitical scenario and made judgment based on his secular thinking. He then went on to trust the US. If his geopolitical reading was incorrect, what did the rest of his political medium advise him of the geopolitical scenario? One has to question whether he really took his decision in the interest of the Muslims, or was he just a coward, unable to resist the US, or even more sinister, he was part of the US plan conniving with them to establish the US military footprint in the region.

If one evaluates the decisions of the civil and military leadership that came after Musharraf, we see the same lack of awareness of the geopolitical scenario. We see the same cowardly approach to appeasing the US. We see the same narration of lies and deceit to cover their weakness and inability to take the decisions to protect the Ummah. Hence, one has to question the very system, civil and military that produces this type of leadership.

A true Muslim leadership in the form of the Khilafah (Caliphate) upon the methodology of the Prophethood would have read the geopolitical scenario and made a judgment based on the Islamic Ahkaam. It would then go on to implement these judgments and then trust Allah (swt). The important point is that the responsibility to take care of the affairs of the Ummah is *fardh*/obligatory and the sincere leadership amongst you will think deeply about how to protect the Ummah. This will naturally lead to a whole body of thinking devoted to understanding the geopolitical scenario to enable actions to protect the Ummah and Islam.

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