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U.S. Role in Pakistan's Political Crisis

Since I am originally from Pakistan and have been teaching interdisciplinary studies (including political science) at City College of San Francisco, I have been following the developments there with great interest and concern, both from professional and personal points of view. For brevity and clarity, I am itemizing my impressions as follows:

1. From the reports available so far, it seems likely that the U.S. government colluded with anti-Imran Khan Pakistani politicians to have him removed from power. According to Khan, members of the U.S. Consular staff met several times with the opposition leaders and with only the dissident members of Khan's party. That choice of meeting only with anti-Khan people points an accusing finger at the U.S. There are many other details that support the likelihood of possible U.S. interference in Pakistan's internal matters. On becoming the U.S. President, Joe Biden called almost every world leader, but he did not call Imran Khan. In a Congressional hearing, the Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, accused Pakistan of ties with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Most people do not know that of the total number of the Pashtun people (most Taliban are Pashtun), nearly 40 percent are Pakistani citizens; the rest live in Afghanistan. Like a good leader, he has to look after the interests of the citizens of his country who have close ties with their brethren in Afghanistan. At the same time, for regional solidarity and security, a good Pakistani leader would certainly want to have cordial ties with a neighboring country that has been the victim of the world's two super powers' brutal invasions since 1979. Khan believes in diplomatic solutions to political problems and warned the U.S. that there was no military solution to their war in Afghanistan. He was right. It took the U.S. government an expense

of trillions of dollars and sacrifice of innumerable lives to replace the Taliban with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

2. I coined the term “indirect colonialism” in my teaching about the U.S. regime-change strategy that it employs consistently. In this kind of colonialism, the colonizing power uses local brown-skinned self-seeking, nation-betraying leaders to sacrifice national interest for the sake of self-advancement. The colonizer does not have to spend its resources on launching a formal invasion to occupy a country. Local corrupt politicians prostitute national interest to do the colonizer’s bidding.

3. Just a few examples of indirect colonialism will suffice. In 1953, the U.S. government colluded with the British government to overthrow the democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh, and replace him with the dictator, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last Shah of Iran, who did whatever he was asked to do by the United States. Like Imran Khan, Dr. Mosaddegh was putting his national interest above the greed of foreign, imperial powers that tried to force him to accept an insultingly low royalty from its own oil. In Imran Khan’s case, he refused U.S. military bases in Pakistan and refused to let his country be used as a “hired gun” to fight for the U.S. the so-called “war on terror.” A more accurate phrasing will be to call it the “war OF terror.”

4. On July 5, 1977, the U.S. government used the then Pakistan’s army chief Gen. Zia-ul-Haq to overthrow the democratic government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whom he arranged to be hanged on murky, unconvincing charges. This blatant intrusion into Pakistan’s internal affairs was hatched inside the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan on July 4, 1977. In that case, U.S. just carried out Henry Kissinger’s threat to Bhutto: “We will make an example of you” if you do not stop pursuing the bomb. After India detonated its nuclear device, Bhutto was trying to assemble a similar bomb to maintain the balance of power.

5. It should be noted that the same fate befell the democratically elected Egyptian President, Dr. Mohamed Morsi. He was allowed to stay in power for just one year. Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi removed him in a coup d’etat in 2013. Morsi died in jail under mysterious circumstances. Representing the will of the Egyptian people and acting on their mandate, Morsi was demanding that Israel end its brutal occupation of Palestine. At one point, the Israeli ambassador had to be rescued from Egypt. Egyptians asked their President to close down the Israeli embassy and consulates in Egypt until the Zionist country complies with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and other Resolutions. It is the same demand that Pakistan’s Imran Khan made in his speech at the United Nations when he unequivocally declared that Pakistan would not recognize Israel

until the Palestinian rights were met. Both Morsi and Khan stood for justice and rule of law, which was too much for Israel and its patron U.S. to allow. Hence their removal from power.

6. Yet another example of U.S. interference is the 9-11-73 U.S.-engineered coup in which the democratically elected Chilean President, Dr. Salvador Allende, was overthrown and replaced with the dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet. All of the above regime changes resulted in massive violence, unrest, and loss of lives. Since the Second World War, the U.S. has interfered negatively and disastrously in the internal affairs of more than 70 countries in its regime-change misadventures.

7. The people who brought the no-confidence motion against Imran Khan have been proven to be ill-educated, incompetent, corrupt, and always putting personal interest above the national interest. The Panama Papers revealed that the Nawaz Sharif family has laundered billions of dollars out of Pakistan and put it in foreign banks. As for the other clan, the Zardaris, their leader was known as Mr. 10 percent because for every government contract during his Presidency, his share was automatic 10 percent. He is suspected of having Benazir Bhutto's brother Murtaza Bhutto assassinated when he ran against Zardari's wife Benazir to become Pakistan's PM. Murtaza's daughter, the famous journalist and author Fatima Bhutto, has spoken out about her father's assassination.

8. By comparison, Imran Khan is highly educated and the only unselfish Pakistani political leader I have seen in the past half century. When he became Prime Minister, Pakistan was teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. Through personal efforts and charisma, he arranged to get close to \$ 6 billion from Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates to pay off the IMF so that the country could be saved from defaulting on the loan. Despite COVID-19, global skyrocketing inflation, and zero cooperation from the opposition parties, whose only focus was to make him fail, he was able to reduce the national deficit from Rs. 22 billion during Nawaz Sharif's administration in 2018 to Rs. 1 billion in 2022 at the time of his ouster. These figures are from a broadcast on Pakistan television. In three years, he created close to 6 million jobs. He introduced health cards for the poor to provide them free healthcare. His "No one will sleep hungry" program in the country's most vulnerable populations looked after the very poor. He encouraged exchanges between students from private and public schools to promote national integration. A major achievement of Imran Khan is that he rid the country of terrorism. Pakistanis and foreign visitors could walk the streets without fear of being kidnapped for ransom. That freedom had never been possible during the Zardari and Nawaz Sharif eras when terrorism was

rampant and no one felt safe. Many such accomplishments go to his credit. It was not in his power to control the world-wide phenomenon of inflation.

9. For the first time since Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan occupied a respectable position in the comity of nations. At the United Nations, Khan brought to world attention the Israel-perpetrated ethnic cleansing and other atrocities on Palestinians living under the Zionists' illegal occupation. The world knows that Israel's defiance and violations of numerous UN Security Council Resolutions could never happen without the patronage and military, financial, and diplomatic support of the United States. He stated clearly that Pakistan would not recognize Israel until Palestinians are given their rights. Similarly, he placed on the world stage the India-perpetrated human rights disaster in Kashmir.

10. Khan cultivated close ties with the neighboring China (much to the dislike of the U.S.) and adopted a friendly stance toward another neighboring country, Russia (another of his peace-motivated moves that the U.S. did not like). The U.S. government has been following this dangerous Bush doctrine: "You are either with us or against us," leaving no room for neutrality. However, the U.S. does not threaten big countries like India for their neutrality. The kinds of threat that a U.S. Assistant Secretary of State is reported to have used in the case of Imran Khan are reserved for those countries like Pakistan that have found that 100 percent subservience to the United States has not been beneficial to them. It seems impossible for the U.S. to understand this simple logic: The interests of the United States are not necessarily those of other countries.

11. Khan's meeting with Putin had been scheduled long before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Instead of cancelling his long-scheduled visit, he went to meet with Putin but never made any statement about Ukraine. His cultivation of close ties with Russia and adopting a neutral position like India was another irritant for the U.S. government that fails to see the positive side of neutrality: Pakistan could play an important role in bringing the U.S. and Russia together, as it did in arranging the first secret meeting between the two estranged powers, U.S. and China. According to the *Dawn* report, "Former US secretary of state Dr. Henry Kissinger recognised Pakistan's 'key' role in arranging his secret visit from Islamabad to Beijing in 1971 for making breakthrough in China-US relations." <https://www.dawn.com/news/1613819>

12. In cultivating good relations with China and Russia, Khan was just doing the right thing for his country's progress. With the spineless and incompetent interim government that has replaced Imran Khan, the country is poised to slip back into U.S. vassalage, to the grave detriment of Pakistan's sovereignty. Before Khan, the preceding governments

sacrificed close to 30,000 Pakistani lives to fight America's war of terror, incurring also financial loss of billions of dollars. Before Khan, the U.S. drone attacks on Pakistan, with tacit approval of the then Pakistani governments, killed thousands of innocent Pakistanis. The Obama Administration had adopted this insane policy that anyone over the age of 12 should be treated as a potential terrorist, subject to elimination. It was atrocities like these that made Pakistan's author Mohsin Hamid write in his novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*: "No other country inflicts death so rapidly upon the inhabitants of other countries, frightens so many people so far away, as America." Acting as a sovereign leader, Khan ordered all those drone attacks to be stopped.

13. Imran Khan is not perfect. No one is. He made some mistakes. Everyone does. But given the overwhelming odds against him, he did accomplish a great deal.

14. I have yet to see anyone in U.S. media mention the important fact that Imran Khan served as the Chancellor of University of Bradford in England for nine years (2005-2014). He left that prestigious and honorable position to pursue his political career in Pakistan.

15. From the massive demonstrations inside and outside Pakistan in support of Imran Khan, he seems certain to return to power in due course of time.

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