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Pakistan sliding into the void

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Pakistan is one of the key countries in Central Asia. With a population of more than 220 million, the vast majority of them Sunni Muslims, it is in a flimsy balance that at the first failed step would make it slip into the void of a civil war.

Its partnership on the "new Silk Road", vital for the expansion of Chinese industry, which would allow it to take its manufactures along the new routes and railway lines to the large markets of the Middle East and Europe through Pakistani territory, has forced Islamabad to rethink the old alliance with the United States, who apparently let go of his hand. At the same time the country is flanked in the north by Afghanistan, with a border of 2,670 kilometers, which with the coming to power of the Taliban, whether the *mullahs* wanted or not, have reactivated the fundamentalist organizations that for decades, more or less frequently, operate in the country. And to the south by India, which beyond the ever-bloody Kashmir – which has plunged the two nations into three wars and countless border clashes since 2014, with the arrival of Narendra Modi's government and its fervent anti-Islamic policies – forces the Pakistani government to look carefully at the persecutions to which Delhi is subjecting its southern brethren, that beyond Kashmir establish a state of permanent tension throughout the border of 2,919 kilometers.

No doubt the Pakistani shift towards China for the United States has been a greater displeasure and the increase in the increasingly complex relations between the two powers

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force Pakistan to play harder with its new partner and frame itself in the openly anti-American pole: China, Russia, Iran. A theory that is confirmed by Islamabad's decision to withdraw from the "(virtual) Summit of Democracy" in self-defense that US President Joe Biden called, between December 9 and 10, which brought together 110 countries and in which "authoritarianism, corruption and the defense of human rights" were discussed. What is undoubtedly the attempt to create a new focus against America's rivals that are becoming more numerous and more powerful.

Washington's policies regarding "traitors" are known, an increase in pressure should be expected, not only on the two main borders of Pakistan, which will be in line with the deterioration of the internal security of the Central Asian country, which is in a constant *crescendo*. As can happen in the separatist province of Balochistan, where for decades different armed movements have been intermittently attacking central government targets. And given the new situation, such actions can be encouraged even by the CIA and the Pentagon.

The recent statements of Noor Wali Mehsud, the emir of *Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP) during a tour of some of the group's bases in "tribal areas" and districts of northern Pakistan, such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, (KPK) that were TTP strongholds between 2007 and 2012 and where the fundamentalist insurgency that crossed freely into Afghanistan to collaborate with its brothers has remained since then.

Mehsud, who moved through that region with a large armed column, including Afghan police vehicles, in broad daylight and with their flags unfurled in open defiance of the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan, said his group "is an offshoot of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" and that it will "fight until Pakistan, like Afghanistan, it is also under *Sharia* law." For his part, from Kabul, Mehsud's statements were disavowed despite the fact that the Pakistani had reaffirmed earlier this year his *Bayat* (oath of allegiance) to the leader of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, which was never rejected.

Despite the *mullahs'* refusal, Mehsud's statement is to be taken as a true declaration of war, bearing in mind that days earlier he had announced that given the government's breaches he would not extend the one-month truce that had been agreed since November 9 last

mediated by the interior minister of the Emir Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Sirajuddin Haqqani.

Some versions deny the veracity of the video recorded by Mehsud that according to those same sources has been made in Afghanistan, which if true, would be proof of the relationship between the TTP and the Taliban. If it is confirmed that the filming was actually carried out in Pakistan, it would show the weakness of the Pakistani army and government, forced to a peace agreement with the insurgents who since the fall of Kabul have become arrogant, given that the Pakistani group has lost several leaders and many fighters in Afghanistan before the victory of August 15 in the war that ended with the American defeat.

Other insurgent groups in the region, such as the *Islamic Jihad Union of Uzbekistan*, have adhered to Mehsud's declaration, which is also not good news for Islamabad.

La agitación interna

El fin unilateral del alto el fuego de un mes entre Islamabad y el *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan*, decretado por los terroristas, se fundamenta en el incumplimiento de los acuerdos que incluían la liberación de los 120 militantes del TTP que el Gobierno tiene detenidos, además de que, siempre según el TTP, el Gobierno central violó todas las reglas acordadas, las que incluían no realizar operativos contra el TTP además de no establecer nuevos puestos de avanzada de las fuerzas de seguridad en la región. Según las denuncias de los *muyahidines* varios de sus hombres fueron asesinados por las fuerzas federales mientras otros habían sido detenidos.

Antes del acuerdo el emir del TTP, en declaraciones periodísticas, había dicho que muchas áreas de Waziristán estaban controladas por el TTP y que la influencia del grupo se estaba extendiendo en otras áreas de Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, por lo que fue el gobierno de Pakistán el que “suplicó” a Kabul que medie con el TTP un alto el fuego.

El TTP habría publicado una serie de videos donde se veían aviones y helicópteros paquistaníes bombardeando mezquitas, viviendas de civiles en casas y matando civiles en Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

El TTP se pregunta además por qué el Gobierno de Pakistán, que se rindió dócilmente a la organización virulentamente radical como *Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan* (TLP), rompió su acuerdo de alto el fuego con ellos.

Islamabad habría liberado a unos 860 cuadros de TLP y su jefe el clérigo extremista Saad Hussain Rizvi, además de haber levantado la prohibición de la organización, aparentemente religiosa.

Undoubtedly one of the consequences of having released the TLP from sanctions was the lynching of Sri Lankan citizen Priyantha Diyawadana, who was general manager of a company in the city of Sialkot, after she ordered the removal of some TLP posters inside the factory, for which she was accused of blasphemy and which launched a mob to lynch the woman, that after being set on fire his body was dragged down the street on December 3. A situation that will be repeated as fundamentalism continues to grow in Pakistan, which due to its new geopolitical alignment will try to slide into the void.

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