

## THE CHANGING NATURE OF PAKISTAN'S ROLE AND CHALLENGES IN "THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM" SINCE 9/11

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### **ABSTRACT**

*After the 9/11 terror attack in New York, discourse on Pakistan and the United States relations took a sharp turn from hostile political and diplomatic relations to deeply engaging and mutually beneficial relations. Pakistan joined the allied forces as the key strategic ally in the global war on terror, and played dual roles as the provider for the war waging efforts of allied forces and also launched counter insurgency operations on its home soil. Over the period of time, the role and challenges of Pakistan changed because of changes in its political structures and domestic political compulsions. The nature of relations of the two countries has been transactional in nature, now the losses are outweighing the benefits of the partnership, thus Pakistan is gradually parting its way with the US and as a result of this the strategic interests of both countries in Afghanistan have become mutually exclusive.*

**KEYWORDS:** *The United States, Pakistan, Global War on Terror*

### **INTRODUCTION**

On October 20, 1947, the United States (US) established diplomatic relations with the newly founded state of Pakistan, being one of the first few states doing so. The US recognized the geo-strategic importance of Pakistan to contain the influence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in the region. Pakistan allied with the US during the cold war and joined the erstwhile intergovernmental military alliance of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) to keep in check the forces of communism led by the USSR (See Appendix). In the 1970s, Pakistan provided diplomatic launching pad for the United States to talk to the People Republic of China (PRC), which led to thaw in the relations of the US and the PRC. In 1980s, during the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR, their relations reached to a new level of understanding. The Political and Intelligence machineries of both countries worked shoulder to shoulder to provide support, in terms of financial, training and logistics for mujahedeen movement in Afghanistan. Ultimately, collective effort of both nations led to the withdrawal of the USSR from Afghanistan in 1989.

In 1990s, the relationship between the United States and Pakistan hit all-time low when the former pressed sanctions against the latter by passing Pressler amendments due to its secretive nuclear proliferation programs. A new era in their relations began following the twin tower attack in New York on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2001. Pakistan became the main non-NATO ally of the United States in the Global War against Terrorism. In return of Pakistan's support in the Global War against Terrorism and for being the main strategic partner, the United States removed diplomatic and economic sanctions against Pakistan and forgave its one-billion-dollar loan (Erickson, 2008). The then Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf,

later on acknowledged that the United States threatened to bomb Pakistan “back to the stone age” but eventually he took the decision in the favour of his national interests (BBC News, 2006).

On September 19, 2001, he mentioned his country’s national interests in his speech, which is as follows:

*“They want to isolate us, get us declared a terrorist state...In this situation if we make the wrong decision it can be very bad for us. Our critical concerns are our sovereignty, second our economy, third our strategic assets (nuclear and missiles), and forth our Kashmir cause. All four will be harmed if we make the wrong decision they must be according to Islam”* (Krause & Mallory, 2014).

President Musharraf’s speech essentially indicated that the decision was taken in the larger national interests. At that time, Pakistan was on the verge of being declared as the terrorist state that could ultimately jeopardize its political, economic and diplomatic standing in the world. Its economy, which had been bailed out by foreign aid since its inception, would have been in shambles. The 9/11 event ushered a new era in the partnership between the two nations. On 15 September 2001, Pakistan declared its full support to coalition forces in its war against terrorism. It provided logistic support, intelligence support and access to its air bases adjacent to Afghanistan to coalition forces. This was a complete turnaround of Pakistan’s foreign policy vis-à-vis Taliban.

Since 2001, this partnership had gone through different phases. This paper highlights the changing nature of Pakistan’s role and challenges in “The Global War on Terrorism” and the type of the partnership between the US and Pakistan.

### **Pakistan’s Role in “the Global War against Terrorism”**

Pakistan’s role ranges from being the facilitator for the coalition forces for its war waging efforts in Afghanistan, being the active participant in the war against terror on its soil. It suffered huge losses both in terms of men and material in its fight against terror, but its role has always been under the scanner due to its selective targeting of the terror groups and support for the very terrorist groups that the US is fighting against in Afghanistan.

### **Provider of Logistic and Intelligence Support**

Afghanistan is a landlocked country and its invasion by the coalition forces required logistic and intelligence support from Pakistan because of its geographic proximity and continuous engagement of its intelligence agencies within the region. Pakistan allowed the coalition forces to use its five airbases along the border of Afghanistan and gave rights to the coalition aircraft to land anywhere in the country in case of an emergency. It gave access to two-thirds of its airspace and Pasni, the Pakistani naval base, was provided to the coalition forces for using its naval facilities (Shah, 2007). Though the exact proportion of cargo passing the Pakistan was not stated by the United States due to security reasons, but land and air routes through Pakistan remained the main sustaining arms of the coalition forces as well as for maintaining and enhancing war fighting capabilities of Afghan National Defence Security Forces. Hostile relations with Iran made supply routes through it impossible and cargo routes through Central Asia were very costly. Danger of Russia and China exerting their influence on their smaller Central Asian neighbours was also ever present. Consequently, an alternative option of providing logistic support through Central republics was a tricky and unreliable one. Thus, Pakistan was chosen as the frontier allied state with the United States and the main provider in its war waging efforts in Afghanistan. Though as an intelligence provider, Pakistan’s role has been under the scanner of the US establishment, but definitely on the logistics

front Pakistan's role in anti-terrorism efforts has been central since 9/11.

### **Counterinsurgency Operations by Pakistan Army**

In 2004, Pakistan for the first time conducted military operations in Federally Administrated Tribal Area (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These operations were the result of the United States' call for action against the terrorist escaping the coalition forces through mountainous and porous region of Tora Bora at the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Its ground forces were also deployed on the western border to check infiltration by Al Qaeda and Taliban suspected terrorists escaping the coalition forces' actions (Dawn, 2002). Most prominent military operations were Rah-e-Haq in Swat Valley (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) against Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) in January 2007. Operation Zalzal against Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) in South Waziristan in 2008 (Dawn, 2009). Battle of Bajaur in August 2008, Operation Sherdil in response to Marriott Hotel bombing in September 2008. Operation Black Thunderstorms in September 2009. Operation Rahet-e-Nijat in South Waziristan in October 2009. Operation Rah-e-Shahadat in Khyber Agency in April 2013. Operation Zareb-e-Azb in North Waziristan in June 2014 in response to TTP attack on Jinnah Airport attack (Karachi) and Operation Radd-ul-Fassad to secure Pakistan's border in February 2017. Pakistan has suffered thousands of casualties, both civilian and military personnel in its operations against the terror organizations and in terrorist attacks. Without Pakistan military actions on its soil, there is no conceivable graceful withdrawal by the US from Afghanistan. The US always wants strong military actions from the Pakistani military against all types of terrorist groups without grouping them into good and bad. Peace in Afghanistan could only be achieved through the common strategic and security visions of Pakistan and the US in the region, otherwise security and stability would remain elusive in the region.

### **Integral Part of Peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan**

Before the terrorist attack of 9/11, Pakistan had well established diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime. They parted their ways after the US launched an offensive against the Taliban regime, however, as the war went on, Pakistan and the US strategic divide kept on increasing. Pakistan establishment started taking Afghan Taliban as the instrument of strategic leverage in Afghanistan. Now, the irony of the Afghanistan reconciliation process is that Pakistan and the United States have charted out different strategies for prospective peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. The US does not want Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network to play a predominant role in the reconciliation process, it considers both terrorist organizations essentially a proxy of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and contradictory to its strategic interests in Afghanistan. However, Pakistan envisages the focal role of these groups in any possible reconciliation process in the foreseeable future (Mishra, 2014). According to the latest data released by the US forces in Afghanistan to CNN news agency, 14% of Afghanistan district are under the control of Taliban and 30% are contested by Afghan government (Walsh, 2018). Pakistan can use its proximity and influence on its former ally, the Taliban, to bring it to the negotiation table with the US and Afghanistan. Gaining strategic depth in Afghanistan vis-à-vis India through considerable influence in any Afghan Peace settlement has always been a goal of Pakistan (Mishra, 2014). Pakistan, naturally has a significant role in any feasible peace and reconciliation process because of its strategic location and proxies in Afghanistan.

### **Pakistan's Challenges in "the Global War against Terrorism"**

The political and economic equations in Pakistan have changed since the start of war on terror in Afghanistan. In the year 2013, for the first time, the democratic elected government completes its full term and successful transfer of political power from one political party to another takes place in this country. The present democratic elected government is responsible to its people and has to face more restraints in decision making than the military run government of Musharraf, which joined the US in its war. The growing menace of terrorism and fundamentalism has made policy options of Pakistan establishment restricted vis-à-vis Afghanistan. Growing mistrust between the allies and weakening civil-political institutions have aggravated the challenges for Pakistan to play more active and straightforward role in the war on terror.

### **Maintaining Domestic Political and Economic Stability**

Since independence, politics of Pakistan has been mired in military coups throughout its short history. The military remains the most trusted and respected institution among the masses of Pakistan. Various times, military toppled the elected government on the pretext of misrule and mismanagement and it ruled for almost 36 years in Pakistan. It exercises great control over political institutions of a country, even if it does not remain at the helm of a country. Last civil government formation in 2013, was the only first successful democratic transition in the country. Various religious Islamic bodies and terrorist organizations are the new emerging power centres, which have started to exert influence on the political discourse of the country. Recently, on November 26, 2017, Pakistan's law minister had to resign after the protests organized by an Islamic political party named the Tehreek-e-Labbaik. Therefore, decision making in Pakistan is not always in the national interests, but rather it is the accommodation of the interests of various power centres. The decision-making power of political elites has been subdued by the military and emerging Islamist forces. The biggest challenge to Pakistan is to have a prudent and efficient democratic political discourse which can usher in the national discourse in the right direction, which seems a remote possibility considering the present power structure in Pakistan. Pakistan's main considerations of joining the United States in its war against terrorism were political and economic in nature. The US kept its promise and removed all types of sanctions against Pakistan for proliferating and keeping nuclear weapons imposed through the Symington Amendment (1978), the Pressler Amendment (1990), and the Glenn Amendment (1998). The removal of these sanctions enabled Bush Administration to grant Pakistan with economic aid. A bill was passed in Congress in which it was stated: -

*"The President is authorized, for Pakistan and India, to provide assistance, enter into contracts, take actions in international financial institution, sell, lease, or authorize the export of defence articles or defence services, authorize the export of dual-use item, or extend other financial assistance"* (Momani, 2004).

The US flexed its financial muscles in International Monetary Fund (IMF) and with creditor nations to pass through Pakistan's loans and to reschedule its debt payments. The United States gave approximate 33 billion dollars from 2001 to 2017 aid to Pakistan including Coalition Support Fund (CSF) (Rana, 2017). A political and economic stability in Pakistan is the most essential prerequisite to fight the menace of terror at its home soil and to contribute peace efforts of the US in Afghanistan. A politically unstable and economically weak Pakistan has failed to provide effective civil-political institution in tribal areas of its North-West region. As a result, it has become the permanent fertile land for extremist groups.

### **Terrorism and Insurgency in Pakistan**

The war waged against extremist forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan after 9/11 toppled the Taliban regime from Afghanistan, but could not wipe out extremism from the region. Instead, the menace of radicalization and terrorism further expanded from its safe havens in Afghanistan to Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and also to previously untouched territories of Pakistan's cities of Peshawar, Quetta, Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The United Nation Security Council has 139 entries of terrorist entities and individuals based in Pakistan on its list of militants and terrorist organisation (Mohan, 2018). The deployment of 80,000 strong Pakistani forces could not stop the Taliban, Al Qaeda and their affiliated groups from spreading their tentacles in Pakistan soil (Mir, 2011). Double games of Pakistan establishment have caused great collateral damage to Pakistan. According to reports submitted by the top spy agencies of Pakistan to its Supreme Court Pakistan had lost total 49,000 lives from 9/11 to 2018. Interestingly, the government had put this figure at 40,000 (Raja, 2013). Actual figure must be higher than the recorded figure; even if we take official figures we can estimate immensity of problems of terrorism in Pakistan. Increasing fundamentalism and sectarian divide in Pakistan have further exacerbated the problem of terrorism. The policy of Islamisation adopted during Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq has already started showing its worst result on the destiny of nations.

### **Conflicts and Mutual Distrust between the Allies**

After the 9/11 terrorist attack, Pakistan joined the United States as the main Frontline strategically in its global war against terrorism in Afghanistan. Both partners have been mutually dependent since then, despite increasing mutual distrust between them. The United States under the presidency of Donald Trump has shown its displeasure with Pakistan for its divergent strategic objectives and lack of commitment in fighting against the terrorism. This has put the rift between the two nations in open. On January 1, 2018, the President of the United States tweeted: -

*"The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools, They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!"* (Chaudhry, 2018).

Killing of Osama Bin Laden and Salala incident left an indelible mark on the U. S. -Pakistan relations. Pakistan's tacit support to the Taliban, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad and other Jihadist groups has been thorns in their relations (Mishra, 2014). But, it seems unattainable in the foreseeable future on the part of Pakistan to stop supporting these groups for the reasons that of its strategic interests in Afghanistan and domestic political compulsions. The interests of Pakistan and the United States are not only becoming divergent but also becoming conflicting in nature.

### Lack of Development in Pakistan's Tribal Areas

Regions of Federal Administered Tribal Area (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been the prime safe havens and launching pads for terror attacks across Afghanistan and Pakistan. The underdevelopment and absence of civil-political institutions in the North-West region have been the main contributing factors behind this region being the epicentre of terrorism. We take the example of FATA, the region having a population of 3.176 million, growth rate of 2.19%, literacy rate of 17.2%. The lack of educational infrastructure and meagre opportunities of earning a livelihood in the region has added fuel to the fire of terrorism and insurgency across the entire region (Salahuddin, 2012). The lack of civil-political institution and law and order situation has laid the foundation for the making of Frankenstein in the form of different terrorist organizations. Pakistan faces huge challenge of establishment of civil-political institution in the region. Tribal regions of Pakistan are controlled rather governed by it are still ruled by the colonial era legal framework of the Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR) (Krause & Mallory, 2014). Improving in literacy rate and job opportunities for youth must be the main areas of concern for the Pakistani establishment as the sole use of military option for wiping out the terrorism will not do solve this serious problem. Otherwise, the tribal youth would continue to fall into the trap of terror masterminds.

Especially in FATA, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Balochistan, development is well below the national level. FATA fares particularly badly, with a very low level of development that is one third of the national level. This may be attributed to the conflict witnessed in this region since 2008, which has destroyed not only livelihoods and physical infrastructure, but also disrupted a more fundamental sense of belonging and social cohesion by replacing it with fear and uncertainty. Given that there has been a return of some of the temporarily displaced persons (TDPs) to their homes in 2015, it is possible that some semblance of normalcy may return to FATA.

**Table 1**

Province/Region	Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)
Human Development Status	Very low Human Development
Development Index (HDI) Value	<b>0.216</b>
Immunization rate (%)	<b>15.7</b>
Satisfaction with health facility (%)	<b>7.5</b>
Expected years of schooling (years)	<b>6.7</b>
Mean years of schooling (years)	<b>1.8</b>
Living Standard (%)	<b>27.7</b>

FATA Human Development Status [TABLE]. (2017). Retrieved [September 18, 2018]from[http://www.pk.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/HDR/HDI%20Report\\_2017.pdf](http://www.pk.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/HDR/HDI%20Report_2017.pdf)

### CONCLUSIONS

After 9/11, once again the United States and Pakistan forged partnership to catch and destroy former main target Osama Bin Laden and his terror outfit Al Qaeda. But, this time around their common enemy was their ally of the 1980s that was the Afghan Taliban regime. Their partnership has been more of transactional in nature rather than driving by a convergence of interests. In return of waging war against its former ally, the military rule of Pakistan got necessary political and diplomatic legitimacy across the world. Pakistan got billions of dollar aid directly from the US who also used its political and economic clout to help Pakistan in getting loans from the IMF, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. In return of favour, the US took advantage of the available strategic location of Pakistan. 80,000

strong military of Pakistan was deployed on its North-Western border of Pakistan and various counterinsurgency operations were conducted since then.

The role and challenges of Pakistan changed during the course of war against terror. Heavy casualties of Pakistani soldiers amidst counterinsurgency operations in the tribal areas, terrorist attacks in Pakistan, public perception against the Americans, the prospective structure of the reconciliation process in Afghanistan, domestic political compulsions were the main factors that contributed to the divergence in the strategic objective of the US and Pakistan. Current sharp reactions from the United States political elite showed conflicting nature of their strategic interests in Afghanistan.

How Pakistan manages its tribal belt and deals with radical elements based in and functioning from its soil would have direct implications for security scenario in Afghanistan and Pakistan and beyond. This would also decide the trajectory of the United States-Pakistan relations in the future.

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## APPENDIX

In September 1954, **Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)** or Manila pact, a political and military alliance was formed among the United States, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan to prevent the communist forces to spread their influence in the Southeast Asia region. SEATO formally disbanded in 1977.

In 1955, **Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)**, a mutual security organization was formed with common political, economic and military goals among Turkey, Iraq, Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran initially called as the Baghdad Pact. The US was not a member of the organization but it signed bilateral military aid treaty with each member country of CENTO. It participated actively in each meeting of the organization as an observer member. CENTO formally disbanded in 1979.