

Pakistan in War on Terror: Ally with Conflicting Interests

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Abstract

The cost of war in men and material paid by Pakistan in American led “War on Terror” has been unprecedented to any of the ally of the War Alliance. The vitality of its role was neither appreciated, nor truly lauded as it deserved. Pakistan has its own national interests and national priorities to pursue upon not solely American interests. This mismatch severely hindered synchronization of their war effort and helping Taliban to take benefit of this existing cleavage. The paper focuses to identify the national interests of Pakistan and the United States with a view to ascertain degree of alignment and conflict in their approach. The research found that Pak-US relations since the commencement of War against Terror in Afghanistan has taken frequent turns with every major event in the theater followed by rhetoric of “do more” and threatening for suspension of aid. While playing ally’s role, Pakistan’s own security was internally challenged threatening socio-political polarization and national dis-integration along ethno-religious faultiness. Pakistan was left alone to fight against the safe heavens of terrorists alongside Durand line with disregard to all of its human and economic cost. Research found that Pakistan successfully played its cards as bargaining chip to seek US weight in resolving it’s economic and security related issue in befitting manner. The research supports the hypotheses that Pakistan and USA had their specific interests for going into war but with partial convergence and partial divergence in their national interests.

Key words: War on terror, National interests, conflicting allies, US-Pakistan relations

Introduction:

The punctuated history of intense engagement and distinct estrangement was directly proportionate to the degree of convergent or divergent of their interest on a particular issue of international or regional importance. Pakistan’s strategic location obliged it the title of fulcrum of Asia”

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connecting the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula and the untapped oil reserves of Central Asia with the oil hungry East Asia, alongside geo-economically and geo-politically volatile Indian Ocean (Calabrese, 2015). Therefore, Pak-US relations have always been predominantly indebted to the geo-strategic need of the USA and security needs of the Pakistan. The frequent drifts in the warmth to tenderness of their bilateral relations were due to their differences over issues of regional conflict such as; Indian occupation of Kashmir, denuclearization of South Asia, democracy promotion, and Pakistan's looking towards East for its security concerns (Baloch, 2006). The repeatedly fluctuating history of convergence and divergence of bilateral interests brought Pakistan, the "most allied ally" of 50s, to a "most sanctioned ally" in 90s (Baloch, 2006). The continuum of relations speckled from one extreme of cooperation and friendliness as evident at the times of Cold War, dipping to the other extreme of ignorance or discord of 90s, and chumminess and collaboration during the War on Terrorism (WoT) in post 9/11 era (Kronstadt, 2009)

National Interest is an evolving impression defined by national identity with changing global power politics and considered as derivative of "foreign policy" of a state (Huntington, 1997). The foreign policy of any state is its structured behavior in pursuance of its national interests and influenced by socio-political values & belief, technological innovations, history, and religion (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987). The national interest, derived from French manifestation "*raison d'état*", is a state's in a given set of time and space objectives and desires, in the areas of economic, military, political, cultural or otherwise. The term defines the ambitions, hopes, aspirations and objectives of sovereign states in the international community (Nuechterlein, 1976; Powaski, R. E, & Pusca, 2019).

According to the Morgenthau, Thompson, and Clinton (1985): "Nations act on the basis of interests and power, and that these elements transcend in importance any judgment regarding motives or sentiment. Interests, limited by evaluations of power, alone can save nations from moral excesses and political folly, for governments must reasonably subordinate all standards to those that reflect political reality" (p.4).

Morgenthau (1982), one of the leading guru of realism, "in defense of national interest" defined "national interest" as 'deeply ingrained habits of thought and preconceptions as to the nature of foreign policy in the United State and in his "another great debate" Morgenthau (1952) asserts that "national interest is the central cause of American's state foreign policy in given set of environment and refers it as "intervention vs. neutrality in 1793, expansion vs. the status quo before the Mexican and after the Spanish-American War, international cooperation vs. isolation in

the 'twenties, intervention vs. abstention in the late 'thirties. American foreign policy has always been evolved around clear-cut issues of foreign policy.”(p.974)

American's Interests in War on Terror

Though the covertly American invasion of Afghanistan was aimed around extremely broad objectives, but the overtly declared aims were to dismantle al-Qaeda, and to deny it a safe base of operations in Afghanistan by removing the Taliban from power. Despite having unprecedented collection of military might on its disposal, America found Pakistan's concurrence critical in routing out of Al Qaeda and Taliban presence from Afghanistan. US adopted multi-pronged approach towards Pakistan. Mixing coercive policy with financially coated carrot on one hand and overplaying the threat to Pakistan's own security on the other while keeping Indo-Pak ensure that Pakistan's pulls in check (Yusuf, 2009). The post- 9/11 command of “either be with us or against us” (Musharraf 2006) was the reiteration of Kennedy's Administration's post-Cuban Missile crisis proclamation that “no legal issue arises if the United States responds any challenge to its power, position and prestige” (Acheson, 1963; Chomsky & Barsamian, 2010). The “non-negotiable” list of demands from Pakistan imply (Sattar, 2007):

- Pakistan to publicly condemn the terrorist act and abandon Taliban Government for good.
- Provide territorial access inside and air space for US military and intelligence operation against Al-Qaida.
- Provide intelligence support astride the Durand Line including Afghanistan's hinterland.
- Pakistan to stop supply of recruitment, fuel and diplomatic support to Taliban.

Over US the years concentration of Al Qaida ruminants and their supporting Pakistani Taliban added a fresh dimension in US mandate because of Washington's apprehension that state breakdown of nuclear-armed country could have a catastrophic for global security. The ‘carrots’ that US used for Pakistan included; “the promise of extensive state-building support, adoption of a policy that would prod India to resolve outstanding Indo-Pak issues, and assuaging Pakistan's concerns in terms of a hostile post-Taliban Afghanistan”. (Krause, 2004, p.9.)

Pakistan's Policy Options & National Interests

Pakistan found itself in a catch-22s in its reluctant decision of joining US War against Taliban to whom it nurtured to power. On the face of its internal dynamics and external pressures, Pakistan was left with no choice

to continue supporting Taliban on the face of UN Security Council unequivocally condemnation of terrorism. Indian threat on its East and internally developing Taliban compelled Pakistan to look inwardly and regard its own well-being as a priority security concern (Krause, 2004). The deviation in Pakistan's security concern implied that the US should institute an incentive structure with increasing payoffs for Pakistan to focus its energies in realigning with US goals and objectives. Therefore, Pakistan's policy decision to side with America was inspired by the objective of pursuing its national interests; Ensuring preservation and protection of Pakistan's national security, economic growth, the need to safeguard its strategic nuclear and missile assets, and the Kashmir cause (Gupta, 2002):

- a. Exoneration or warding off Indian influence in Afghanistan has always been one of the leading objectives in Pakistan foreign policy calculations since its inception. Pakistan has always remained skeptical of the India's supporting Pakhtunistan movement and Baloch insurgency from Afghanistan's soil. Therefore, Pakistan's decision to join American led War on Terror was not due to a candid transformation of heart concerning Afghan Taliban, rather owing to the fear of alienating US and losing space for India in American's war alignment. Pakistan has also been vitally concerned with the safeguarding of its geographical integrity. The renewal of new alliance with US would help Pakistan to reinforce its security and dilute Washington's growing bond with India.
- b. Pakistan's economic interests in Afghanistan are well founded because of its trade dependence and strategic location connecting Central Asia with Pakistan and rest of the world. Huge reserves of untapped oil and gas in Central Asia have prompted a duel amongst the big powers for gas and oil pipelines in and around the region. Pakistan's flagship economic project, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor [CPEC] also has similar stakes in Afghanistan as it promises to link Central Asia with South Asia and beyond via Afghanistan and Pakistan. So, the security situation in Afghanistan, whether deteriorates or stabilizes due to War on terror was to have direct bearings on Pakistan's economic interests
- c. Pakistan support for the Taliban government in Kabul was motivated by the desire of following which Pakistan could not afford to lose in post-Taliban Afghanistan by staying aloof from War on Terror :

- Having a friendly ally government ready to empathize with Pakistan over Kashmir against Indian claim.
 - Facilitate to establish a safe and protected road network across Afghanistan to link Pakistan with untapped market and oil rich Central Asia.
 - Having an ally Afghanistan, free from Indian influence, would give Pakistan “strategic depth” in any future confrontation with India
 - It was assumed that Pakistan’s active participation with decisive position in war against terror can safely guard its interests in Afghanistan as envisaged above.
- d. It was assumed that Pakistan ‘s active role in war on terrorism would dispose international community to accept Pakistan’s depiction of Kashmir conflict as a self-determination issue and reject the Indian’s portrayal of Kashmir as a terrorism problem equating it with extension of Al Qaida (Nayak,2002).
- e. Economic growth of the country would be on right trajectory because of renewal of international aid flows to Pakistan.
- f. On joining WoT Pakistan believed to have safeguarded its “strategic nuclear and missile assets, end of nuclear and democracy sanctions that Pakistan was facing since its nuclear explosion and Musharraf’s military takeover from October 1999.
- g. On political front, the U.S. Administration was expected to provide legitimacy to Musharraf’s regime like its previous engagements did for General Ayub Khan and Genral Zia ul Haq.

Pakistan could successfully secure number of its expected interests, though with heavy price, including the hope of having a say in Afghanistan’s future political governing process. However, the objective of gaining peaceful resolution of Kashmir issue from the American war against terrorism remained illusion.

Pakistan’s in War on Terror: An Overview

The scenario presented a new set of security paradigm distinguishing terrorism as a new global threat and an impetus to Indian’s propaganda machine of alleging Pakistan as patron of both Taliban and Kashmiri “terrorists.” This propaganda campaign portrayed Pakistan as a target than a partner in the U.S.-led war on terrorism (Nayak, 2002). On realizing the threatening consequences for its economic and security domains, Pakistan was quick enough to opt for paradigm shift in its foreign policy. The paradigm shift included disowning Taliban government and altering its national course on Kashmir policy (Nayak, 2002). Pakistan pulled off its overt backing from Kashmir freedom movement, and banned

operation of some of the freedom organizations at its soil by declaring them as terrorists.

Pakistan went all out to support U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom, apprehended and targeted Al Qaida and other foreign militants operating in the country, provided all-embracing land, air, and seaport approachability including a host of other logistical and security-related assistance. Fall out of Kabul and carpet-bombing shaking Tora Bora Mountains led to the fleeing militants to take sanctuary in Pakistani side of the Durand Line. Influx of infiltration from Afghanistan spiraled the War on Terror in Pakistan's tribal areas resulting into indigenous insurgencies there. Soon the scope of militants' operations and insurgencies expanded across tribal areas to depth and breadth of Pakistan's geographic limits. Pakistan adopted carrot & stick approach to control the worsening situation, however soon it was evident that appeasement policy proved to be counterproductive.

Concentrations of fugitives Taliban and foreign fighter along Pakistan's side of the Durand Line put Pakistan at a paradoxical position, threatening its sovereignty and integrity. In late 2007, most of the local militants grouped together under the Tahreek - e -Taliban Pakistan (TTP) umbrella under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud in South Waziristan. Establishment of TTP expanded the scope of insurgency in tribal areas and extended terrorists' activities including; bomb blasts and suicide bombings throughout Pakistan coupled with the intense resurgence of Baloch Separation movement. All intelligence indicators were pointing Indian hand behind TTP & Baloch insurgents. US was found reluctant in prodding India on a solution to Kashmir and withdrawing its support from TTP and Baloch separation movement (Fair, 2009). Instead of stabilizing Indo-Pak relationship and addressing Pakistani insecurities, rather US extended leverage to India in Afghanistan's reconstruction role. American's pro Indian approach and reinforcing Northern Alliance's power politics in Afghanistan added in to Pakistan's suspicions further. Pakistan understood the gravity of threat and found no choice but to fight a war against the militants in Swat and FATA on its own.

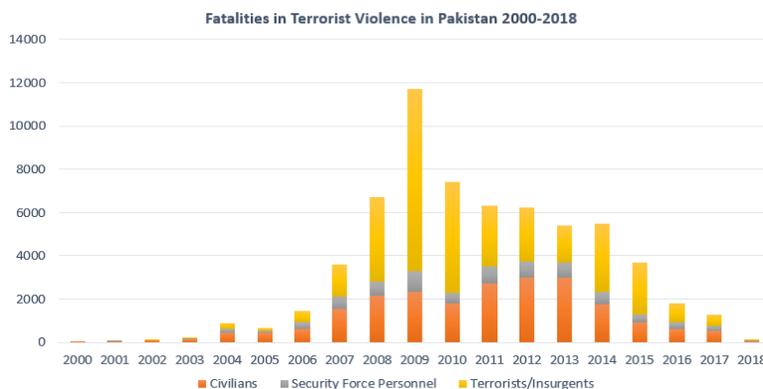
Pakistan's Cost of Pursuing National Interests

Pakistan sincerely participated in War on terror but with the condition not to compromise its own national interests. The War on terror in Afghanistan brought in terror, instability and colossal amount losses in men and material whose effects would take decades to recover to some extent. The cost Pakistan paid for fighting war as a non-NATO player was much more than all members of the alliance. This cost of war included:

a. *Proliferation of Terrorism*

The War against Terror started with Afghanistan as target with elimination of Al Qaida from Afghanistan and over throw of Taliban government from Kabul as principal objectives. But soon the war spiraled in depth and breadth of Pakistan making havoc in its population centers and creating serious security and social intricacies for Pakistan. The terrorism not only generated psychological imbalances amongst Pakistani people but it also created ethno-religious fault lines –dividing society in far-and against for the militants. It was a hard-pursued socio-political resolve that brought government and all segments of the society on one page against the terrorists. Pakistan, during this long drawn asymmetric war, suffered innumerable human losses including civilians, military personals, and terrorists/ militants across the time spectrum of the war from 2001 to 2018. The countdown of terrorist attacks in Pakistan recorded around 18000 plus incidents till 2018 (NACTA).

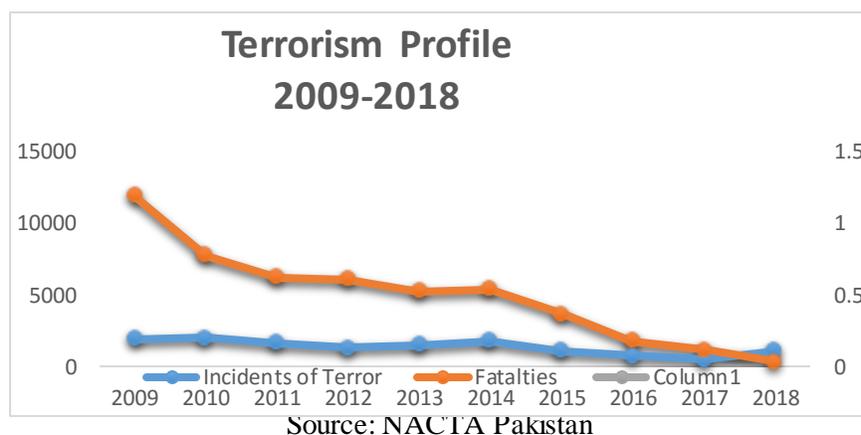
Graph No.1: Wholesome Fatalities View From 2001-2018



Source: NACTA Pakistan's Database

Initially Pakistan lacked capacity and skill over and above the political resolve to fight against such a largescale war hardened insurgent. Operation Al Mizan an operation zalzala with appeasing strategies (from 202-2008) did not achieve intended results. Therefore, the terror incidents and fatalities continued rising upward with alarming speed. However, it was with Operation Rah-e Nijat in Sawat (2009, Rah-e Rast (2010-2011), and Operation Zarb e Azb deracinated the menace of violence and terror without any discrimination of good and bad Taliban, abolished all the militants' sanctuaries (Ul amin & Khawja, 2019). The in Army Public School Peshawar massacre on 16th December 2014 transformed the

operation with true national color, uniting whole nation rallying behind the National Action Plan. The operation included around 9000 intelligence-based operations against militants, resulting in the death of 2763 militants, abolishing 837 hideouts, capturing around 18,087 weapons and 253 tons of explosives (Khattak, 2015). The terrorist profile started declining after Rah-e-Nijat gradually with rapid decline 2010 onward.



b. Human & Economic Cost

Pakistan stood with America on terror on terror with full heart and mind and suffered unmatched losses in men and material. Instead of recognition of its unprecedented support and sacrifices while fighting War on terror, Pakistan was blamed for provision of “safe haven to terrorists” and giving U.S. “nothing but lies & deceit” (Pandey, 2018). Such a discourteous, illogical and sham assertions from Donald trump made Pakistan feel injured and insult that overlooked the historic cost Pakistan paid in term of human and economic losses in the American War. The degree of Pakistan’s sincere commitment can be judged from the cost Pakistan paid during the war. The War drastically effected Pakistan as a state and society, sacrifices unparalleled to any member of the alliance. The cost included (Khan,2018):

c. 75,000 casualties, & over \$123 Billion lost to economy against the US "aid" of \$20 billion in total

d. The War devastated Pakistani tribal areas, displacing internally millions of uprooted people from their homes and polarizing social fabrics of the society in to “for and against” of the war alliance.

e. Pakistan continued provision of free lines of communication on ground & air c (GLOCs/ALOCs).

Conclusion

War on Terror in Afghanistan was one of the American Wars of imperialism in which Pakistan was dragged in. Pakistan did not join the War on its free will rather geo-strategic compulsions derived from changing ground realities compelled it to join the American alliance. The projected war scenario threatened non-cooperating Pakistan with dire security and economic consequences. Pakistan felt constrained to bring paradigm shift in its foreign policy pursuit with regard to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistan's decision of joining in War against Terror was influenced by its national interests such as, economic growth, to ward of Indian influence in Afghanistan, seeking American help in resolution of Kashmir issue, to facilitate trade connectivity with Central Asia through Afghanistan and to have friendly country in its backyard that can provide strategic depth in case of any Indian invasion. The war in Afghanistan soon spilled over to Pakistan's tribal areas-Eastern side of the Durand Line and placed Pakistan in its doldrums- threatening its survival. With initial setbacks for few years, Pakistan slammed back with renewed strategy and national resolve yielding unprecedented results in the history of War on terror. However, for achieving such a triumph Pakistan has to pay very heavy price in term of financial and human losses. Pakistan, successfully acquired, all of its national interests that it pursuit during the war baring resolution of Kashmir issue which still seems at a far distance.

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