GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR: THE COST PAKISTAN IS PAYING

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Abstract

According to a US bi-partisan report World at Risk 2008, all roads that lead to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), proliferation and terrorism pass through Pakistan. The impression is created that Pakistan is the only country where terrorism of all kinds is found and nurtured. However, what has been missed by scholars and analysts is the role that Pakistan has played as a “front line state” in the ‘Global war on Terror’ (GWOT). It is because of Pakistan that the US and its allies are able to claim any success in the said war. But ironically, Pakistan is always accused of supporting the Taliban and al Qaeda. This study aims to highlight the role Pakistan has played in the GWOT and price it is paying in term of its security besides economy, political strife and social disruption. This not only affects Pakistan’s efforts as a critical ally of the war but also jeopardizes its security, integrity and sovereignty.

Introduction

The phenomenon of terrorism has existed in one form or another. However it became world wide after the events of 9/11 and the GWOT. A historical survey of terrorism indicates different periods of its occurrence that identified the different groups, methods, individuals and their motives. The French revolution popularized the word “terrorism” and “terrorists”; the anarchists used terrorist activities against the kings, powerful people and groups in Russia, Austria- Hungary, Italy, USA, France and Portugal; while nationalists groups in oppressed countries used terrorism to fight imperialist forces. According to Arthur H Garrison, “Between the late 1940s and the 1960s, terrorism changed from selectively targeting government officials to targeting civilians and sympathizers of
the occupation in Africa and the Middle East. The 1960s brought an international scope to terrorism ....” 4 Terrorism, with the advancement in the means of communication, transportation and technology became transnational in character.

Terrorists can now easily get economic and political support and propagate their cause and motives. 5 Thus in the 20th and 21st Centuries, terrorism has continuously grown. The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) from 1970-2007 compiled 80,000 events of terrorist attacks at the domestic and international level 6. The dawn of the new century saw novel dimensions and trends of the said phenomenon. Today terrorists aim to achieve larger casualties with fewer incidents, while threats of religious, nuclear, biological, chemical ethnic, state, cyber, economic and trans-national terrorism confront the inhabitants of the world 7. While new forms of terrorism are yet to be seen such as maritime terrorism.

Definition of Terrorism

There are ample chances of the repetition of the definitions. Which reveals that there is no single accepted definition of the term and even the US government has failed to provide a single accepted definition. The old saying that “One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter” is even today an accepted fact. The term is defined as under:-

- **Walter Laqueur**: Terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective while targeting innocent people 8.

- **FBI Definition**: Terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. 9

- **Terrorism is the use or threat of violence against small numbers to put large numbers in fear as stated by an ancient Chinese philosopher: kill one, frighten 10, 00.** 10
The analysis of the term terrorism reveals that it’s the unlawful use of force or violence against a civilian population with some specific aims at heart. There is a need to explain the traditional, i.e. state terrorism and modern, i.e. revolutionary terrorism.

Global war against Terrorism (GWOT)

The GWOT is the name given to the US-led operations to eliminate international terrorism, which means “terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country”\(^\text{11}\). The decision was taken after the events of 9/11 which changed the entire dimensions of the word ‘terrorism’. The war came to signify all efforts including political, legal, ideological and military against organizations labeled as terrorists, in addition to governments/states supporting them. They are recognized as a threat to the entire world. Here the focal point is Al Qaeda and all militant organizations and individuals with extremist Islamists agendas\(^\text{12}\).

The GWOT includes both combat and non-combat initiatives, such as intelligence gathering, effective law enforcement, countering narcotics trafficking, efforts to freeze terrorist financing, economic sanctions, disabling known terrorist cells and training camps, and fighting insurgencies. It also involves training military and police forces, reconstruction efforts, strengthening infrastructure and supporting fledgling governments, protecting human rights, and providing humanitarian aid.\(^\text{13}\)

It includes the following elements:

- Punish the Taliban in Afghanistan and prevent them from coming into power again.
- Military campaign to eliminate terrorists.
- To end any support for terrorists, including sanctuaries and safe havens.
- Try to eliminate conditions conducive for terrorists.
➢ Acquire Pakistan’s support to fight the Taliban in Afghanistan in addition to countering extremists elements in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{14}

The war started with the attack on Afghanistan in October 2001. Later US efforts included its National security strategy 2002 \textsuperscript{15}. The war still seems to be far from the finishing line.

**Pakistan and GWOT**

**Pakistan and USA- A friend in need?**

Since the time of its inception, Pakistan has had to fight for its “territorial integrity and security”.\textsuperscript{16} It faced many post independent problems along with the Kashmir issue which resulted in the first war with India in 1948 and later in 1965, 1971 and 1999. Beside this, both India and Pakistan are at loggerhead with each other on a number of issues. The situation further deteriorated when Afghanistan immediately after independence started claiming some parts of Pakistan as Pakhtunistan (separate state for the Pashto speaking people). Thus Pakistan’s top priority became its defense, as a bulwark against India and Afghanistan\textsuperscript{17} for which Pakistan welcomed help and assistance from all quarters. The desired security umbrella and assistance was provided by the US in 1953 in return for Pakistan’s support for its international coalition against communism in the shape of its membership in SEATO and CENTO. In 1971 Pakistan acted as a bridge between US and China and helped the former to normalize its relations with China. This offended the former USSR, and Pakistan had to pay dearly in the inform of the dismemberment of East Pakistan (Bangladesh).

During the Cold War Pakistan had to face the brunt of the Soviet Union’s hostility, due to for its alliance with the US. The growing Sino Pakistan relations were also not welcomed both by India and the Soviet Union. Massive economic, military and political support against Pakistan was provided by the USSR to India. Similarly, in the wake of the 1962 Sino-Indian war, the US provided massive military and economic assistance to India, which India used in its war against
Pakistan in 1965. During the war the expected support from the US did not come to Pakistan, while all kinds of assistance from the US were suspended. Once again in 1971, Pakistan got a short shrift and was unable to get any substantial help from the US when India invaded East Pakistan (which culminated in the formation of Bangladesh). At this crucial stage of history, Pakistan’s democratically elected leader Z. A. Bhutto was hanged by General Zia Haq, who was intern welcomed by US as the president of Pakistan. Popular opinion holds General Zia to be a US man’ and that Z. A. Bhutto was punished by the US for his nuclear policy and bilateralism with the Muslim world and the USSR. It was a heavy price that Pakistan paid in a sense that the General ruled Pakistan for more than a decade with devastating effects on its politics, institutions and security, but also the promotion of radicalism and extremism in the Pakistani society. The Pak-US relations remained at lower ebb and anti American sentiments grew in Pakistan.

However the situation changed dramatically, when the USSR attacked Afghanistan in 1979 and the US lost its policeman in Iran after the Iranian revolution of the 1979. Pakistan became the front line state for the US to fight against the communist onslaught. It’s an accepted fact that the US was able to rollback communism with the help of Pakistan alone. However the role played by this South Asian country was not fully appreciated and once again the divergence of interests polluted the relations of the two countries. The aftermath of Afghan jihad for Pakistan was destructive; three million Afghan refugees on Pakistani soil, a burden on the country’s economy along with the emergence of a plethora of social issues like drug and kalashnikov culture, extremism and radicalism. The defeat to the Soviet Union ended the US interest in the strategic partnership of Pakistan. According to Maleeha Lodhi:

_The end of the Cold War also persuaded the US to re-evaluate and downgrade its relationship with Pakistan on the ground that the new global_
environment did not warrant the old strategic partnership\textsuperscript{19}

Sanctions were imposed on the nuclear issue and there was a threat that Pakistan could be declared as a terrorist state and the relations got further strained with the US getting closer to India. The event of 9/11 changed all this.\textsuperscript{20}

The US had to look towards its old neglected ally for its war on terror. Now Pakistan became the most favored collaborator of the US in the war, but once again Pakistan is paying the price.

**GWOT and Pakistan: Indispensable Partners**

The war on terror was aimed at eliminating international terrorism and punishing the perpetrators of the 9/11. The US targets are states that support terrorists and terrorist organizations. To achieve this aim the US desperately needed the support of a regional partner and Pakistan was the natural choice. However, this marriage of convenience is based on the war because of the following divergent interests.

For the US the GWOT meant war against adversaries like “rogue states, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferators; terrorist organizations of global, regional, and national scope; and terrorism itself”\textsuperscript{21}. Out of these the Al-Qaeda with Osama Bin Laden, in Afghanistan was top priority. The US strategy to achieve its aim was laid down in The National security Strategy of United States of America 2002 and 2006 and National Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2006, respectively. The GWOT started with “Operation Enduring Freedom” in Afghanistan, the main objective was to smoke out the terrorists responsible for 9/11, followed by Operation Iraqi Freedom\textsuperscript{22}. For its success among the coalition partners,\textsuperscript{23} Pakistan was the best option due to its geographical location, ethnic affiliation and the role it had played during the Afghan Jihad 1979 against the former USSR. Thus Pakistan was selected as the front line collaborator of the US in the war.
However, the post 9/11 circumstances did not prove to be much help for Pakistan. (Among the three countries that recognized the government of Taliban in Afghanistan in 1994, Pakistan had to take a U-turn in its foreign policy, and had to fight against its own supporter.) The northern-western belt of Pakistan has the tribes with historical, ethnic, cultural, political, religious and linguistic ties with the people on the other side of the Afghan border. As a result the people of Pakistan generally do not approve of the GWOT. According to a Gallup poll of Pakistanis in urban areas, 83 per cent sympathize with the Taliban rather than the US and 82 per cent consider Osama bin Laden a holy warrior, not a terrorist, although 64 per cent also believe the attack on the US was an act of terrorism.

In view of these factors it was expected that Pakistan would say no to the war. The question that needs to be answered is why Pakistan decided to join the war? The answer to this is:

- The widely held accepted reason is that Pakistan joined the war under gargantuan pressure from the US who declared categorically that “either you are with us or are supporting the terrorists”.

- However this is not the only reason, Pakistan joined the war because the country itself had been a victim of terrorism in the wake of Afghan jihad and Pakistan’s support for the Mujahhidin. Terrorism took the shape of religious extremism, sectarian violence and drug trafficking. In addition cross border terrorism from India over Pakistan’s support for the Indian-held Kashmiris and bomb blasts. 

- The image of Pakistan among the international community had been tarnished over the issue of acceptance of Taliban regime 1994-2001, nuclear explosion of 1998, Kargil episode of 1999, the overthrow of the democratically elected government in 1999. This war could provide Pakistan the
opportunity to improve its image and get respect from the international community.

➤ Provide opportunity to clear off the label of being a terrorist state.

➤ Most importantly the collaboration was to provide economic, political and other related benefits to the country.

The reason why Pakistan joined the war was best explained by the former president Musharraf on 19th September 2001. There are three important things in which America is seeking Pakistan’s help. First is intelligence and information exchange, second support in the use of Pakistani Air space and the third is that they are asking for logistic support from Pakistan. We know that whatever are the United States intentions they have the support of the UN Security Council and the General Assembly in the form of resolution for war against terrorism and this is a resolution for punishing those people who support terrorism. If we take a wrong decision in this crisis it can lead to the worst consequences. On the other hand, if we take a right decision, its results will be good. The negative consequences can endanger Pakistan’s integrity and solidarity. Our critical concerns can come under threat. When I say critical concerns, I mean our strategic assets and the cause of Kashmir. On the other hand we can re-emerge politically as a responsible and dignified nation and all our difficulties can be minimized.

However in this decision one cannot ignore Indian readiness to support the GWOT.

The US, demanded from Pakistan:

➤ Access to Pakistani air and land bases.

➤ Action against anti American and pro terrorists elements in Pakistan.

➤ Stopping every kind of support to the Taliban.
- Closing Pak-Afghan border.
- Freezing the assets of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.
- Providing intelligence with the help of intelligence agencies of Pakistan.
- Support for future US endeavours.\(^{31}\)

Immediately after 9/11, Pakistan used its good offices to persuade the Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden to the US “...General Musharraf sent the ISI chief with his personal letter to Mullah Umar for the extradition of Osama. It was an effort that failed to persuade the top hard-core Taliban leadership to consider the consequences...”\(^{32}\). Pakistan provided full support to the US operations in Afghanistan. It provided air space; logistic support at Dabandi, Pasni, Zhob, Jacobabad, Shamsi and Khot; naval support and intelligence support as well. In addition Pakistani armed forces actively guarded the border with Afghanistan. Now Pakistan armed forces are operating in FATA. Pakistani armed forces started chasing transnational terrorists after the 9/11 in FATA. Therefore, to elaborate this part and also discuss the major military operations in FATA, Pakistan has been pressurized to curb the religious organizations in the country along with Madrassa reforms (Madrassas are the religious schools). Although Pakistan is paying a high cost for its alliance in GWOT in every field, only security dimension is mentioned in this research work.

**Security of Pakistan**

As mentioned earlier, the main targets of the OEF were to end Taliban government and Al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. It was because of Pakistan’s support that the US was able to capture Kabul without bloodshed, but it installed a pro Indian Karzai as the president of Afghanistan. It is a very strong statement. You can say Karzi had an inclination towards India. The visit of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Afghanistan in 2009 is of great significance. India, the supporter of the Northern Alliance, opened its consulates
in all the important cities of Afghanistan which Pakistan considers as a threat. Also India is massively supporting Afghanistan in its reconstruction projects\(^3\). Now Pakistan, with growing Indian influence in Afghanistan, has to keep a vigilant eye on its western border as well.

In the wake of the US led military campaign in Afghanistan, Afghan refugees entered Pakistan. In the cloak of Afghan refugees many Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters also sneaked in to Pakistan\(^3\). The process is further facilitated by the porous border between the two countries. FATA, particularly North and South Waziristan became the safe haven for the Al-Qaeda, Taliban and foreign terrorists from Central Asia, Caucasus, Middle East and Africa. The situation was fully exploited by India when it moved its forces on the eastern borders of Pakistan in 2002\(^3\). The question to be seriously answered is would Pakistan be in a position to go for any terrorist adventure in India? Hence opening a new security front on its eastern border also, when it’s already facing a security threat on its western border. Pakistan has to keep an eye on two fronts - east and west. Not only is it a security threat but also a huge burden on the exchequer of Pakistan. Pakistan government moved its army in FATA for the first time in its history. This is resented by the locals. To remove the terrorists from these areas, a military operation was launched in the Pakistan’s tribal areas in 2002\(^3\). Rahe Haq, Rahe Rast and Rahe Nijat are the military operations launched by the Pakistan army in the tribal areas of Pakistan with the aim to catch the terrorists, local and foreigners from the area. These operations proved to be a double edged sword for Pakistan.

Firstly, these operations invited the anger and resistance from the local tribes and “...turned into an undeclared war between the Pakistan military and the rebel tribesmen”\(^3\) hence US forces and Pakistan army were declared “equal enemy”\(^3\). Also there is a strong belief among the locals and the citizens of Pakistan that the US forces are present on the soil of Pakistan and that whatsoever is happening in the tribal areas is all under the supervision of the US forces. The
situation has been further aggravated by continuous drone attacks by NATO forces on the territory of Pakistan. This is not only resented by the tribesmen but has also resulted in anti-American feelings among the general public. According to A.Z. Hillali “Military camps, patrolling vehicles, army installations and scout forts have become targets of heavy militant attacks. These military operations may result in unleashing events in which the U.S. could be a loser and Pakistan’s security and stability may be jeopardized”. The insurgency by the pro-Taliban tribes, Taliban militants and Al-Qaeda members is attributed to army action in FATA.

Secondly, realizing the growing of pro-Taliban, anti-government sentiments and fearing that a similar kind of situation might also develop in the adjacent areas, the government decided to negotiate with the Tribes. The first agreement was signed in April 24, 2004, the second on 7th February 2005; both agreements pledged, not to support foreign terrorists, not to attack government personal and security posts! In return the government would announce pardon to the pro-Taliban forces and withdraw their cases. The third agreement Waziristan accord was signed between the government and the seven militants of the Taliban Shura, on 5th September, 2006. The accord was a peace agreement to stop any cross border movement and stop attacks over government security forces. The government on its side agreed not to attack the militants and solve the issues according to the tribal customs and traditions. Another peace deal was signed in August 2007, but it also failed.

However, these agreements one considered to reflect Pakistan government’s incapability to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. They also provide opportunity to the extremist elements to reunite and further strengthen themselves. However the point that is missed by the analysts is the ground realities. The people of Pakistan and the religious political parties like Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), strongly criticize any military operation in the area along with the continuous attacks by the NATO forces on the territory of
Pakistan. Parties like Awami National Part (ANP) equate it with the racism against the Pushtun and compare it with the 1971 East Pakistan disaster. By signing the peace accord with the Taliban, Pakistan wanted to achieve the following aims:

- Government cannot afford the growing criticism over the military campaign in the country.
- It also affects Pakistan’s active role in GWOT and can endanger the entire war on terror.
- The agreements can pacify the opposition on the one hand and, on the other, can wean the support of moderate Taliban. To keep the communication channels open with Taliban and build trust.
- It helps to reduce the security threats to Pakistan.
- Also reduce the economic burden of war on Pakistan.

In the present day world, one cannot solve problems by force, one has to go for other options as well and the best option is negotiations. This is what is now realized by the US government i.e. they cannot win the war. Now the US is also contemplating negotiations with the Taliban.

Pakistan is a developing country with multifarious internal problems and external threats. This has severely affected the desired performance of the economic sector of the country – political instability, rising poverty, unemployment, inflation, corruption, and minimum foreign investment, balance of payment problem, ailing agricultural and industrial sectors, with no option for Pakistan but to get hold of loans from IMF, WB, and other monetary institutions on strict and austere terms and conditions.

The situation for Pakistan became worst when it decided to join GWOT. The GWOT has hit Pakistan very hard. The News reported on March 24, 2010 that “during the period from 2002 to mid March 2010, a total of 7,739 terrorist incidents had occurred in Pakistan which had resulted in 8,875 deaths of both security personnel and civilians. Some three million
people had been displaced because of the fighting inside Pakistan.”

Conclusion

Pakistan presently is caught in a vicious circle: Internally, extremism and radicalism is on the rise and it has become the victim of growing terrorist activities within the country. The militants and extremists have now moved from the FATA towards the more settled urban areas of Pakistan, thus reorganizing themselves and creating more security threats to the country. In the tribal areas, growing dissatisfaction against the military campaign has created a situation in which the writ of the government is challenged. Pakistan is threatened by the prospect of being called a terrorist state alongwith growing misperception and propaganda by its enemies that Pakistan is not committed to the GWOT. These are some what foreseeable threats to Pakistan. However this war is now on the nerves of every Pakistani: they are facing a sense of insecurity, fear, depression, low level of tolerance, growing law and order situation and hopelessness. Mostly affected are children.

The need of the hour is to stop the blame games. The international community is also responsible for the rising menace of terrorism. Try to address the real causes behind this threat rather than just pointing towards Pakistan and chanting the do more, do more mantra. Come forward, admit Pakistan’s role, Fence the Pak aghan border, accept Pakistan nuclear parity with India, provide access to Pakistani manufacturers to European markets and write-off all the loans of this country. The US has to support Pakistan diplomatically and politically and with the latest weapons and technologies. Pakistan must be acknowledged as the most important ally in the GWOT rather than as a terrorist state. With limited resources, political instability, natural calamities, Pakistan has already contributed enormously to the war. Now it’s the international community that must acknowledge Pakistan’s needs and efforts and provide it the unconditional support if the war against terrorism is to be controlled and combat the
transnational groups effectively to end this protracted war on terrorism.

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**Notes**

2. Ibid., pp 44-45.
3. Ibid. pp. 46-47.
4. Ibid., p. 47.
5. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Foreign Policy, http://countrystudies.us/pakistan/82.htm


Ibid.


Ibid.

This paragraph needs more explanation. The author needs to explain why Pakistan did a U-turn in its Afghan policy. Second, it’s too simple that Pakistan has to fight against its own supporters, because prior to 9/11 on August 14, 2001, President Musharaaf banned to militant organizations in Pakistan, whose fugitives were residing in Afghanistan.


Ibid.


Fazal-ur-Rahma, op.cit. p. 5.f


Indian Parliament was attacked in Dec 2001. India blamed jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba, religious organizations, and blamed Pakistan secret service ISI for supporting them. India moved its troop on the international border with Pakistan. Pakistan denied the charges.


Nation, March 7, 2007, cited in Ibid.

Ibid., p. 145.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Evagoras C. Leventis, op.cit.

A.Z.hillali, op.cit., p. 145.

The jang Urdu, 3 May 2010.