War on Terror: Repercussions on Pakistan’s socio-economic and Political set-up

Niyaz Ahmad Ganie
Research Scholar
Dept. of political science
Kashmir University, 190006.

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Abstract
The traumatic incident of September 11 2001, brought a dramatic shift in US foreign policy. In its immediate aftermath, G.W. Bush by launching ‘Bush Doctrine’ announced clearly his intention to begin a Global War on Terror (GWOT), a protracted struggle against terrorists and the states that harbour and support them. Among the primary US allies in war against terror is Pakistan, as the latter became a frontline state against war on terror. By joining US-led war on terror, Pakistan benefitted in a lot of ways, viz: Pakistan restored its membership in Commonwealth, averted further isolation as all its Sanctions were waived-off by USA under Brownback-II, besides receiving a lot of economic assistance and defence equipment. However, the coalition of Pakistan with US in war on terror created a lot of socio-economic and political-cum-security problems for Pakistan, as some analysts are of opinion that US war on terror has become Pakistan’s own war with undreamt human and economic losses. The proposed study is an attempt to identify, describe and analyse the repercussions of US war on terror on Pakistan in the post 9/11 period.

Keywords: 9/11, war on terror, Pakistan, security crisis, Af-pak region, drone attacks, FATA, anti-terror operations, socio-economic losses.

Introduction: The 9/11 terrorist attacks brought all those states who had good relations with Taliban states especially Pakistan on US radar. After the refusal of Taliban to handover Osama bin Laden, US Richard Armitage send a blunt massage to the then ISI chief General Mehmood saying, “Either u are with us or you are with terrorists.” Bush administration threatened Pakistan with all measures short of war in case of Pakistan’s non-cooperation with the US in Afghanistan. As president General Musharraf claimed that, on 12 September, Secretary of State Colin Powell called him with an ultimatum: “You are either with us or against us.” Consequently, Pakistan become a frontline state in US-led War on terror providing logistic support as well as aerial and land access to US forces to Afghanistan via Pakistan. When US-led NATO forces under “Operation Enduring Freedom” pounced heavily on Taliban and Al-Qaeda base camps and hideouts in Afghanistan following post 9/11 deadly attacks on US, millions of Afghan Civilians entered Pakistan. In the cloak of Afghan refugees, many Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters also sneaked into Pakistan. The process got further facilitated by the porous border between the two countries. FATA, particularly North and South Waziristan became the safe havens for the Al-Qaeda, Taliban and foreign terrorists from Central Asia, Caucasus, Middle East and Africa. There are around fifteen to twenty small, local militant groups in South Waziristan and twelve in North Waziristan, who are not closely co-ordinating their operations, but have committed themselves to
come to each others rescue if needed, and are highly inspired by Taliban. This situation created problems for Pakistan's administration, as these terrorist groups especially, Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Lashkar-e Jangvi (LeJ) defied the writ of Pakistani state, besides launching a series of offensive strikes and suicide attacks throughout length and breadth of the state, thus creating a war-like situation in Pakistan. With mounting pressure from both inside and outside especially by US, Pakistan launched a series of attacks on these foreign and home grown terrorist over the last seventeen years starting from the operation ‘Al-Mizan (2002), ‘Operation Kalasha’ (2004), Operation Rah-e-Haq (2009), Operation Rah-e-Rast (2009) to a large scale operations like Zarb-e-aazb (2014) and Radul-fasad (2017) in the recent years. But they had created already a chaotic situation in Pakistan, besides inflicting heavy socio-economic losses as Pakistan could not eliminate them completely.

Repercussions of War on Terror on Pakistan: Ever since, Pakistan has joined the war on terror campaign, the country has suffered more than any other country. Pakistan is grappled by a series of problems like lawlessness, political instability, socio-economic downswing. All these problems which are now challenging the very survival of Pakistan can be discussed under following subheadings.

Economic losses

In all the major sectors of economy, overall growth rate was affected due to the terrorism-related activities, especially suicide attacks which stormed the country over these years. All the trading activities like foreign investments, exports were disrupted because of chaos and lawlessness. The US provided billions of economic aid to Pakistan but the economic condition of Pakistan did not improve as it was desired, as the spokesperson of PTI government Mohammad Faisal in a press briefing asserted that Pakistan lost $123 billion since 9/11 vi. The economy was subjected to enormous direct and indirect costs which continued to rise from $2.669 billion in 2001-02 to $23.77 billion in 2010-11.

Precarious security situation affected Pakistan’s exports, prevented the inflows of foreign investment, affected the pace of privatization program, slowed the overall economic activity, reduced tax collection, enhanced expenditures on additional security spending, damaging domestic tourism industry, rise unemployment and poverty rate, stop further industrialization. Inflation ratio increased from 4.4 to 8.6 percent during 2001 to 2014, however there is considerable control over national inflations because of anti-terror operations, viz: Zarb-e-aazb, Rad-ul-Fassaad etc. Trade deficit also increased from $4.3 billion in 2006 to $16.8 billion in 2018 vii. The prices of beverages and food items, including basic foodstuffs like wheat products, rose at an even higher rate and the country’s political turmoil also threatened foreign direct investment, which was a critical indicator in developing regions. This is the worst possible scenario for foreign investment. Pakistani Rupee lost its value as compared to other regional currencies. The oil prices and food-stuff created uncertainty among the masses and reflected the poor policies of the government. The foreign investors were afraid of the government policies and domestic environment of Pakistan. Ethnic and sectarian violence resulted in the cancellation of foreign investment and business orders. Foreign direct investment and tourism industry was adversely affected. Terrorism not only affects the infrastructure of Pakistan, but also affect the financial markets. Pakistan economy is insecure due to the terrorism. Finally, the level of foreign investment is decreasing continuously. Investors feel insecure about their capital, investment and
profit, because of growing instability and uncertainty.

Foreign direct investment increased in Pakistan, but it is primarily because of series of anti-terror operations-Zarb-e-aiz, et.al which improved the security situation in the country.

Pakistan’s investment-to-GDP ratio has nosedived from 22.5 percent in 2006-07 to 17.7 percent in 2018-19 with serious consequences for job creating ability of the economy.\(^{viii}\)

**Socio-Cultural Repercussions**

Pakistan’s active participation in the war on terror negatively impacted its society. It destroyed the socio-cultural fabric of Pakistan, with drug trafficking, sectarianism and extremism becoming the very part of its society. As according to Hassan Abbas, Pakistan’s U-turn on the Taliban policy, the Lal Masjid operation and the crackdown on militants in Swat and FATA created serious social problems.\(^{ix}\) To curb extremism, posing serious threats inland and abroad, Musharraf was compelled by the US to restrict the activities of radical groups in Pakistan. Consequently, he banned Jihadi organisations and frozen their assets. He conducted various operations inside the country and arrested and targeted various extremist forces but was unable to eradicate sectarian violence from the society.\(^{x}\) Presently, Sectarianism is one the most threatening challenge to Pakistan, as it has plagued the society with violence ad mass murder. while its roots dates back to 1970’s, it began emerge as a potential threat in 1980’s onwards and it got momentum in post 9/11 period. while sectarianism has almost been exclusively the purview of Shia –Sunni organisations like Lashkar-e-Jangvi (sunny) and Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Fiq-e-Jafriya(shia) known for murdering the followers of one another’s religious communities, there have been incidents of sectarian violence between Ahmadiyas and sunnis, sunnis and christains and even between Barelvis and Deobandis within sunnis claiming thousand of lives over these years.\(^{xi}\) Since 2001, there has been over 4,000 deaths only because of sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni and double the number injured in almost 1500 incidents of sectarian violence. Besides, sectarian violence, another alarming phenomenon for the Pakistan since its cooperation with US in war on terror, are Suicide attacks targeting security forces convoys and check-posts, police and army training stations,\(^{xii}\) and even public places like schools, polling stations, meetings/Jirga, hotels and restaurants, public rallies, mosques and various other places. Moreover, Suicide bombers targeted gas pipelines, railway tracks, power transmission lines, bridges, and communications infrastructure. The extremist groups also closed-down girls’schools, barbershops, and video stores, and also increased challenges for the writ of the government not only in Tribal areas, but also in the settled areas of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and across the whole country. These suicide attacks and the bombings of public utilities besides creating law and order crisis, also produced an atmosphere chaos and anarchy in the society. Other social evils i.e., target killing, murdering, robbery, and kidnapping etc. increased and created a sense of uncertainty in the society.\(^{xiii}\)

**Political implications**

Cooperation of Pakistan in US-led war on terror ended its political isolation internationally and its role as a frontline state was once again assumed as it was awarded the status of ‘Major non-NATO Ally’.\(^{xvi}\) Also, its membership in the Commonwealth was resumed and incentives in the form of cash credit, debt credit and defence equipment were provided. The event of 9/11 and the
subsequent events brought militancy in the country. Religious militant groups, Pakistani Taliban and their supporters widely criticized Musharraf’s Afghan policy. Prior to Pakistan military action in the tribal belt, some Al-Qaeda elements escaped into Pakistan’s territory. Most of them were captured or killed during military and intelligence operations, while some of them escaped, and later on posed serious threat to domestic stability and national security of Pakistan, as terrorist targeted government institutions, damaged public property and foreign offices as well as officials including the President and the Prime Minister. In the military operations against terrorists and extremists, hundreds of security men lost their lives. Pakistan’s partnership with the US led war against terrorism had serious security repercussions for country. Although, Pakistan army conducted several operations in FATA to eliminate Al-Qaeda network, extremism and militancy. But, due to these operations the government faced serious security problems within the country. Moreover suicide attacks and bombing across the country resulted in thousands of civilian death and destruction of public property. The unilateral US missile strikes in the Pakistani territory which sharply increased in 2008, fuelled anti-US sentiments among the Pakistani public. The insurgent groups used these attacks to bolster their anti-US propaganda through arguing that they were fighting Americans who launched attacks on Pakistani territory. One writer noted that “Pakistan today is a scary place for Americans” and “it is one of the most anti-American countries in the world”. Above all, the unilateral Drone strikes had negative consequences for the Pak-US long-term relations. These attacks were counter-productive to Pakistan’s efforts against terrorism and extremism as reiterated by Pakistan’s civil and military leadership. They had spoiled the domestic socio-political environment. The general public as well as the military establishment got deeply threatened by the missile strikes which violated the state sovereignty and might be detrimental to cooperation with the US. Pakistan paid a heavy price on military side by joining the US alliance against terrorism. Thousands of Pakistan’s armed forces (between 85000 to 120000) were deployed on western border with Afghanistan and hundreds of soldiers and civilians numbering over 70,000 lost their lives which were much more in number than the total allied soldiers died in Afghanistan. This is besides the collateral loss to human life. Along with it, the Indo-US nuclear deal is also a serious repercussion for Pakistan as “India tried to manipulate the American doctrine of pre-emption to pressurize Pakistan,” Pakistan’s U-turn in its pro-Taliban policy cost it dearly since 9/11. With the coming of Northern Alliance to power Pakistan lost a friendly regime on western border. In the post-9/11 scenario, the influence of Islamabad in Kabul has decreased dramatically while on the other hand, the Indian influence increased. It has made the western border of Pakistan highly troubled, thus adding to the regional instability. As such, the growing Indian influence in Afghanistan as well as in Central Asia is a serious setback for Pakistan’s foreign policyThe new Indo-Kabul engagements in the post-September 11 have been the bone of contention between Pakistan and India. The base at Farkhor and its involvement with road-building to Afghanistan “will allow a permanent Indian military presence in a country that not only borders Afghanistan but also shares a short border with Pakistan”. An indifferent rather unfriendly government in Afghanistan makes Pakistan’s western border vulnerable for attacks and interference in future. Pursuing a policy of strategic depth in Afghanistan, Pakistan failed to stop a pro-Indian regime in Afghanistan. Its prospects to curb the growing Indian influence in Afghanistan and Central Asian Republicans (CARs) got a significant setback. As according to an Indian Author, India benefited more than Pakistan from the alliance against terrorism and improved its relations with China and deepened with Afghanistan, US and CARs.
Conclusion

9/11 incident and the subsequent US war against terrorism has affected the internal dynamics, external policies and the future course of Pakistan. The partnership with the US helped Pakistan to overcome sanctions, end its isolation and revive economic as well as military assistance. On the other hand, Pakistan was compelled to take a U-turn in its Taliban policy resulting in the loss of a friendly Taliban regime on its western border, besides loosing tens of thousands of civilians and security personnel and billions of dollars since 9/11.

Endnotes

1 Ahmed Rashid, Descent into chaos :Pakistan, Afghanistan and the threat to Global security p.240.
3 Musharraf, In the Line of Fire, p.201.
5 quoted in “Pakistan’s Tribal areas : appeasing the militants” International crisis group Asia reporter no.125 (11 dec 2006), p.15.
6 Foreign office spokesperson, M. Faisal said this in his weekly breifing , quoted also by Economic Times, 2-02-2019.
8 www.sbp.org.pk
9 Hassan Abbas, Pakistan’s Drift into Extremism, p.85-86.
10 ibid, p. 15-20
11 C. Fair, “Explaining Support for Sectarian Terrorism in Pakistan Piety, Maslak and sharia, Religions, vol.6, Georgetown university, p.1137-1167


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