

Pak-US Strategic Partnership in the War on Terror to Curb Militant Bloodbath

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Abstract:

Pakistan's involvement in the US war on terrorism was a tragic decision. No option was left for the ruling elite of Pakistan except to join the global war on terrorism and to take a U-turn from the support of Taliban's regime in Afghanistan which was duly recognized by Pakistan's government in 1996. It was expected by the policy-makers of the US that the alliance with Pakistan would provide extraordinary strength in combating the Al-Qaeda and other affiliated conglomerates in Afghanistan as well as in borderland area. However, after fifteen years of war, the alliance has enfeebled despite their mutual understanding regarding the objectives envisaged in the Strategic Partnership. The war on terrorism has now been escalated from Afghanistan to Pakistan and it has provided space to religious extremism, militancy, intolerance, ethnic division and sectarianism. There is no denial to the fact that religious extremism and terrorism are common threat and have damaged both the countries yet Pakistan has sacrificed more than the US in terms of human and material loss. Nevertheless, blame game and trust deficit is on the rise from both sides. This article focuses first on the joint ventures that the US and Pakistan mutually initiated to curb militant bloodbath in Afghanistan as well as in the border region. Secondly, it will explore factors responsible for increasing trust deficit between the partners. The study will not only provide deep understanding about the prevailing issues between Pakistan and the US but will also give true pictures to streamline the methodology for negotiating with each other in future..

Introduction:

The tragic incident of 9/11 shocked the world community at large as it was a humiliating blow on the face of super power like the US. It was utmost important for the US to maintain its supremacy and keep the nations of the world under its influence by giving fierce response to the radical forces operating at that time in Afghanistan especially Al-Qaeda which took responsibility for the attacks on

World Trade Centre and Pentagon. It is an existential fact that after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1989 Afghanistan had become the hub of various militant groups which controlled the large swath of Afghanistan. Former Secretary of State in the Obama Administration, Hillary Clinton has acknowledged the blunder of leaving the conflicting areas at the disposal of radical forces after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Resultantly, the same forces became a potential threat to the world.¹

Being a responsible member of the United Nations it was not an easy task for the Pakistan to ward off the resolutions UN passed for the global war on terrorism under the pressure of the US. Secondly, Richard Armitage's direct threat to Pakistan "either you are with us or against us" entirely changed internal and external political dynamics of Pakistan. It provided no space for the policy-makers to diplomatically handle the threat.² Therefore, the Taliban government, which was established in 1996 after decade long civil war and recognized by only three Muslim countries i.e. Pakistan, UAE, and Saudi Arabia, denied the US pressure besides request of Pakistan's delegation to handover Osama Bin Laden, head of Al-Qaeda, to the US. The Taliban did so on the grounds that US did not provide the substantial proofs of his involvement in the 9/11 attacks. In this situation, the then commander in chief and the president of Pakistan took a 'U-Turn' and decided to formally align with the US in the global war on terrorism against Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan in the largest interests of the nation. In his address to the nation, on 19th September 2001, General Musharraf said that by joining the US global war on terrorism Pakistan would secure its interests. He categorically mentioned that the defense of Pakistan came first than anything else.³

On 7th October 2001, the US formally launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) with its mighty air force and the active assistance of Northern Alliance- an arch rival of Taliban- to target the Taliban and Al-Qaeda hideouts. It is an undeniable fact that the US attack on Afghanistan became a key factor for rising extremism and terrorism not only in borderland areas but also encouraged radical forces to tighten their influence in Pakistan. The militants entered the tribal areas for taking refuge as well as to strike back the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. In the alliance Pakistan got much importance because of its close proximity with Afghanistan. Taliban who mostly consists of Pashtun population have a close racial and linguistic affinity with the Pushtuns living in tribal areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pashtuns on both sides of Pak-Afghan border follow the same brand Deobandi Islam and believes in Jihadism against the infidels.⁴ This is the reason that Al-Qaeda's fighters and Taliban were warmly welcomed by the tribal people. The militant forces also opted to take shelter in the tribal areas for strategic purpose. The treacherous terrains of the area served as the natural fortress for the militants who successfully launched their defensive and offensive operational activities from there as writ of the state was at the lowest ebb in these areas. Secondly, the militant groups involved into a deep friendship with the local people of FATA, which was a source for their protection as well

as strength. Anyone who was trying to raise voice against the militant forces was immediately killed. It is estimated that approximately 1,035 tribal elders have so far been killed in terror related incidents since they were considered pro-government. However, later on, the militants' activities didn't remain confined to tribal areas but spread to the whole country.⁵

Arguably, being a partner of the US in 1979 and then 2001 Pakistani nation suffers a lot because of destabilization in Afghanistan. During Afghan Jihad against Red forces smuggling and culture of violence cultivated in Pakistan. Ousting of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto by General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977 injected fear in the minds of the progressives and gave impetus to traditionalist religious forces under the patron ship of military dictator. Transformation of society through religion was in full swing so as to inject religious zeal in the minds of the Jihadi forces to strengthen their struggle against the forces of Soviet Union and those who are fighting in Indian held Kashmir. Moreover, Zia's reforms in legal, financial, educational and social sectors further pushed the Pakistani society to religious extremism.⁶ It would not be wrong to say that liberal and progressive Islamic traits were converted into radical narratives and terminology of political Islam began to be widely discussed in intellectual circles. It is important to understand here the reservations expressed by Nusrat Bhutto over the political use of religion by Zia-ul-Haq. She warned the world community that the strategic use of religion by the then regime would eventually give birth to the religious extremism with the rightists in the driving seat. Emergence of Islam in the political stage of the country is, no doubt, a critical factor as it is always controversial even among the various religious sects. Furthermore, so-called Afghan Jihad is a fundamental factor for the introduction of militant Islam in Pakistan. The impact of religious extremism shattered the very fabrics of Pakistani society by making the people intolerant and divided which were once moderate, peace-loving and integrated.⁷

It is worthwhile here to focus on the operational activities of Threek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) which came into being in December 2007 under the leadership of Bait Ullah Mehsud. The stated objectives of the organization were to target Pakistan's army, work for the implementation of Shariah in Pakistan and to assist the Afghan militants against the US and NATO troops.⁸ Nevertheless, their active pursuance was restricted to Pakistan rather than Afghanistan. Some of the security experts believe that the establishment of TTP was funded by Al-Qaeda so that to keep the Pakistan army intact while it will give tough resistance to the foreign troops in Afghanistan. However, the organization created havoc in Pakistan and made no distinction in targeting the civilian and military personnel. Target killing, suicide bombing, bomb blasts on Mosques, schools, universities, markets and attacks on government institutions had become order of the day. In most of the attacks, TTP accepted responsibility. TTP secretly extended its relations the radical factions in the urban areas of Pakistan as well. It further complicated the security situation especially for the law enforcement agencies. Sectarianism which was deep rooted in Pakistan after the Iranian revolution

(1979) once again emerged on the surface. Deobandi and Salafi brand of sectarian outfits made agreements with TTP. They pledged to protect each other's objectives in urban areas and in FATA.⁹

Pakistan army deployed 80,000 standing soldiers on its western border to curb the militant activities in early 2002. However, security vanguard, later on decided to stop further deployment of the troops on the eve of attack on Indian parliament by Kashmiri freedom fighters. Indian government immediately leveled allegation at the Jihadi organization i.e. Jaish-e-Muhammad (JM) and held it responsible for the attack. New Delhi created an environment of war with Pakistan. In this situation it was not possible for the security vanguards of Pakistan to keep an eye on the spread of radical forces, especially Al-Qaeda, in different parts of Pakistan. Arab fighters involved into marital relationship with many Pastun families in FATA so that to get the natural support of the indigenous people. Moreover, for making the Jihadi activities strong enough, Arabs took an initiative to provide training, funding and weapons to the local Taliban factions.

The tragic episode of Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) gravely turned the security situation from bad to worse in Islamabad. In 2007, a group of students of religious seminary (Jamia Hafsa) associated with Lal Masjid captured the children's library. They demanded immediate implementation of Islamic system in the capital city Islamabad. The then president-cum-army chief decided to use force against the militant students of seminary. With the code name of 'operation silence' the armed students were killed by the security forces. During the operation many female students were killed and many found missing. This conduct of the army was severely criticized especially by the religious groups. Various militant outfits including TTP and Al-Qaeda called for revenge and declared open war against the state of Pakistan. It caused a new wave of suicide terrorism in Pakistan in which innocent people were the prime targets.¹⁰

Financial Aid to Pakistan by the US after 9/11:

Although, before the incident of 9/11 Pakistan was under the economic sanctions of the US, yet after the event flow of American aid started to Pakistan with the initial package of \$600 million. Later on, General Musharraf in his Camp David visit in 2003 successfully negotiated \$3 billion aid package based on five year began in 2005 and divided it into civil and military sectors.¹¹ The initial approach of the Obama administration focused to provide non-military aid package to war-torn areas and to contain the radicalization process in underprivileged areas particularly in FATA. In 110th congress session, president, vice president and secretary of state were on the same page to support Enhance Partnership with Pakistan Act (EPPA). They had a desire to pass the bill in the next session of the congress.¹²

Initially, the 111th congress session passed Pakistan Enduring Assistance and Cooperation Enhancement Act 2009 (PECE). Later on, after three months, carry-lugger bill 2009 (EPPA) was also passed which increased financial aid for

Pakistan three times. The then Chairman of the senate in his statement mentioned that EPPA was a step towards factual strategic partnership between Pakistan and the US. According to the bill, Pakistan will receive \$1.5 billion annually for the FY2010-2014 to promote democratization, rule of law and maintain its economic stability.¹³ In response Pakistan will actively pursue the strategic objectives in the region which come in the category of war on terror. In the Act a clause explains that \$750 million will be transferred to Pakistan by the authorization of President's Special Representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan after assessing Pakistan's performance for the objectives mutually agreed in the broader perspective of Strategic Partnership. It is clearly mentioned in the Act that no security assistance or arms will be transferred to Pakistan. However, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the condition could be relaxed if the US considers it important for the state's objectives but political and judicial courses are not going to be impeded.¹⁴ For making the partnership more factual and strong Washington entered into a strategic dialogue process. Therefore, in this context, It is pivotal to understand the viability of Defense Consultative group which was the prime forum for the dialogue between the US and Pakistan.

Pak-US Defense Consultative Group (DCG):

For further channelizing the efforts against the war on radical and terrorist forces Pakistan and the US took an initiative to start the process of Strategic Dialogue. It was a platform in which both the partners could mutually discuss the divergent issues and could find out their solution. Nevertheless, the specific objectives were related to the field of defense, education, science and technology, economy and energy. Basically, there were five major groups in which DCG was prime one to ensure security in Pak Afghan borderland area and promotion of joint security interests in the region beyond 2014.¹⁵ The DCG was established in Bush administration with the purpose to discuss military cooperation, security assistance and counter-terrorism efforts between the US and Pakistan. The group was energetically intact in Obama administration. However, the US officials were not satisfied from the performance of Pakistan's army efforts against the militants who were attacking the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan from FATA. The significant point is, that both the governments have a consensus to understand and protect each other's objectives not only related to terrorism but in a broader perspective of the region. The various meetings of the group both the states acknowledged each other's efforts and sacrifices of civilians and military personnel. In addition to this, they have also been discussed the vexing security challenges from the new entities like ISIS.¹⁶

Coalition Support Fund (CSF):

Pakistan is a strategic partner of the US in global war on terrorism on the one hand and the US is supporting Pakistan through financial assistance under the platform of coalition support fund, while on the other hand boosting the capabilities of the security forces of Pakistan so as to make it able to eliminate

the militants' safe sanctuaries in tribal areas, improve border security and to sustain the gains of Operation Enduring Freedom. Moreover, the cost incurred during the military operations related to the war on terror is also paid to Pakistan. From 2001 to June 2013 the US has provided \$10.7 billion to Pakistan in which only 2% has been allocated to air force and navy while large number of amount has kept for Pakistan army. Pakistan has deployed its 1, 00,000 soldiers to its western border. Their food, clothing and housing expenditures are covered through CSF. Special Representative of Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke acknowledged that 60 to 65% of Pakistan's demands are genuine and the funds would be transferred under CSF.¹⁷ Furthermore, the US humanitarian assistance to Pakistan is also worth-mentioning here. In 2005 earthquake and 2010 flood the US generously contributed for the rehabilitation and development of the devastating areas. The US has also chalked out a comprehensive plan for the development of FATA especially in fields of education and health. It is well-perceived that due to non-provision of the basic necessities of life the people of war-torn areas can join the ranks of radical forces, therefore, the US demands as approached from Pakistani side too, was to keep the people intact in economic activities. In January 2015, the then Secretary of State John Karry attended Strategic Dialogue Meeting in Pakistan in which he reaffirmed that collaboration would be continued with Islamabad in the areas settled under strategic partnership.¹⁸

Military Training & Exchange:

Another area of cooperation between Pakistan and the US is a joint military training program. Since 2009, the US has trained round about 1,120 army officials including navy and air force officers. Pakistan is one of the largest beneficiaries of International Military education and training (IMET) since 2001. Both the state annually exchange their military staff and conduct joint training to further enhance mutual cooperation between the militaries of the two countries.¹⁹

Trust Deficit Syndrome in Pak-US Strategic Partnership:

Islamabad is Washington's protégé. As the Kingpin, owing to its geopolitical position, in the imperialist strategic deployment in Western Asia, Pakistan's importance has considerably been increased in the eye of the US since 1979.²⁰ The decision of the security vanguards under the leadership of President Musharraf to allow air, land and logistical support to the US and other foreign troops to strike Al-Qaeda militants improved its image before the comity of the nations. Islamabad was also expecting that by joining the US war on terrorism would positively contribute to the eliminations of economic sanctions imposed on Pakistan instantly after nuclear-tests in 1998. Furthermore, the emergence of religious radicalization in Pakistan is closely associated with the destabilization in Afghanistan.

The Abbottabad episode entirely changed the dimensions of relationship between Pakistan and the US. On May 2nd, 2011 United States Navy SEALs carried out 'Operation Neptune Spear'. In the operation Al-Qaeda leader Osama-Bin-Ladan was killed near the army garrison in Abbottabad. A hot debate generated among the policy-makers in Washington that whether Pakistan is an ally or enemy. Indian media highly propagated the issue which gravely distorted the image of Pakistan as a partner of the west in the global war on terrorism. Doubts about the role of security forces of Pakistan in containing the militant forces in the borderland and in Afghanistan emerged. On the other hand, civil and military leadership of Pakistan was also much infuriated on the question of violating the sovereignty of the state²¹. Arguably, Pakistan has done more than her capacity and scarifying in shape of bloodshed and economic loss, however, the Abbottabad episode, largely spread anti-Americanism in Pakistan which gave space to the militant outfits to target the civil and military installations. They used the pretext that Pakistan was supporting the US war on terrorism; therefore, Jihad against Pakistan and its security forces is equally justifiable as against the US. Controversy still exists among the experts in Pakistan and the US that whether army was aware of the presence of Osama near Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) or not? More, so whether the operation was a result of coordinated efforts of CIA and ISI or it was solely directed by the US?²² Whatever the reality is, it is undeniable fact that the incident deeply caused internal as well as external threats for Pakistan.

It was hoped by the partners that trust deficit will be minimized diplomatically, yet with the passage of time it deeply widened. On 27th July 2011, an American contractor Ramond Davis shot down two Pakistanis- Faizan Haider and Faheem Shamshad- in the congested city of Lahore in broad day light. He tried to escape from the scene but was arrested by the police. This event generated a new debate among the policy-makers of Pakistan and in the US. His identity had become suspicious as Washington was demanding diplomatic immunity under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. On the other hand, Pakistani courts were demanding the proofs from the US embassy about his employment as member of diplomatic team.²³ Civil and military establishments of Pakistan were in deep confusion that how to handle the situation. Domestically, pressure of the masses on Pakistan government was augmenting. They were demanding the hanging of private contractor who was actually destabilizing the country. Islamic political parties such as JI and JUI (F) and Islamist outfits like JuD, TTP and Haqqani Network were demanding to handover Davis to them. In the beginning, civil government took a tough stance and it seemed that Davis would be penalized but gradually Washington started to pressurize Islamabad for his release. Some American officials used threatening tone against Pakistan and ask Obama administration to cut off all kind of communications with Islamabad if she is not willing to release Davis. Economically weak and vulnerable in terms of security it was not possible for the governing elites of Pakistan to ward off American threat therefore for resolving the issue 'Diyat (blood money which is

paid to victim's family according to Shriah law) was provided which was around \$2.4 million. Ramond Davis narrated in his autobiography that ISI played an important role in his release by pressurizing the victims' families for accepting blood money.²⁴

Another tragic event which further created hostility and disappointment between Pakistan and the US was Salala incident. It is an area which is 2.5 km inside Pakistan when accessed from Afghanistan precisely located in Baizai a subdivision of Mohmand Agency tribal region of FATA. On 26th November 2011 an American AC-130 apache gunship helicopter and number of fighter jets crossed the border and strike Salala army check post. In this strike 24 army soldiers were killed and around 30 were badly injured.²⁵ It is considered to be a NATO coordinated strike. Security vanguards were very angry and decided to react on the strikes. People and civil government were also on the same page and demanded apology and compensation for the attack. Since, both the countries were blaming each other for taking lead in attacking first, therefore, the issue was made controversial. It was a high time for security managers of Pakistan to take firm steps so as to appease the anger of people and gave realization to Washington that such kind of attacks will undermine the partnerships. No doubt, that such kind of acts will negatively affect the struggle against the militants operating both sides of the borderland. As an immediate measure, Pakistan ordered the US to instantly vacate Shamsi airbase within fifteen days and no more operations would be conducted from the base. Shmasi airbase was actually being used for the drones' operational activities to hit the militants residing in the tribal areas of Pakistan.²⁶

There is no denial to the fact that drone strikes inside FATA are itself a controversial issue in Pakistan. Confusion among the security experts exist that whether there is a consensus between the US and Pakistan over the drone strikes inside Pakistan or American does it unilaterally. Different politicians firmly criticize drone strikes as they argue that the attacks are causing collateral damage due to which people of FATA are becoming anti-Pakistan. However, after the Salala incident, on one hand Americans were compelled to vacate the airbase, while on the other hand, Pakistan boycotted upcoming Bonn conference in which round about 40 countries were participating to discuss the political situation in Afghanistan and to figure out the solution for ending the Taliban's militancy.²⁷

In the sixty years of Pak-US relationship the US pumped billions of dollars in Pakistan. Anti-Americanism should have its lowest ebb but it has been tremendously upgrading in Pakistani society. It is, therefore, utmost essential to understand the different strands of anti-Americanism which are deeply penetrated in the society of Pakistan. The first strand is called 'liberal anti-Americanism'. This is a reaction to the American policies towards Pakistan army from the early phases of dictatorship to the present. Although this is a tiny view but deep-rooted in Pakistani society. The exponent of this argument have a point

of view that Washington throughout its relationship with Pakistan actively protected and prolong the dictators' rule in Pakistan for their narrow strategic interests which resultantly undermine democratic ideals in Pakistan. Second strand is called 'nationalist anti-Americanism' and they argue that the US is not a reliable friend of Pakistan. In the history when Pakistan was in trouble-1965 war and 1971 war with India-she step backed and left Pakistan alone²⁸. Moreover, they in this alliance Pakistan has suffered a lot in term of human and material loss as compared to the US in its sixty years of relationship. And finally, the third strand of anti-Americanism is from the Jihadist forces. They are not only against the US policies in Muslim World but fiercely against the western cultures and ideals. Moreover, consider the western culture is a constant threat to the religion of Islam and Muslim societies including Pakistan, therefore, Jihad against the west is need of the hour. Niaz writes:

'Presently, anti-US sentiment is sweeping across Pakistan as well as in the Islamic world in general; this is unlikely to mellow down in the near future. There is a wide disconnection between the governments and grass root perception of the people. Occupation of Iraq and continued killings, arm gap with India, Indo-Israel nexus, Pakistan's nuclear proliferation scandal, isolation of the country, and rise of India as a hegemonic power-all fuel negative feelings that put pressure on the government. Besides, there is resentment brewing in Balochistan, and the NWFP, especially FATA, which has been scene of recent military action'.²⁹

Conclusion:

To say that Islamist militancy is an outcome of the orthodox policies of general Zia-ul-Haq is a sweeping argument. Use of religion for political objectives was started immediately after the independence of Pakistan. Pakistan's security managers first used the irregulars to liberate Kashmiri Muslim brothers who were living under tyranny of the Sikh ruler. Tribal people were motivated in the name of Islam. Moreover, in the early 60's Pakistan started to support the pro-Pakistan militant organizations and political parties in Afghanistan. However, the argument is strong enough to argue that Islamist militancy formally channelized in Zia-ul-Haq era which entirely transformed the society of Pakistan with the introduction Saudi-branded Islam. To contain the physical expansionism of communist forces in Afghanistan and to counter the doctrinal spread of the Iranian revolution in Pakistan general Zia-ul-Haq not only patronized the religious political parties but allowed the mushroom growth of sectarian organizations. Zia-ul-Haq could evidently be held responsible for introducing violence, drugs, weapon culture and made Pakistani society intolerant and fanatic. Unchecked flow of funds from the US made the task easy

for religiously fanatic leader to collect the support of like-minded political parties and other outfits. By this approach he not only fulfilled the objectives of the US but successfully prolonged his dictatorial rule.

The seeds of religious extremism have already been sowed in his era but the situation further aggravated after the incident of 9/11 when the US and NATO troops attacked on Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. All those fighter-Taliban and Al-Qaeda-who were the heroes and holy warriors in 1979 against soviet forces were instantly dubbed as terrorists. All these elements sneaked into the adjacent Pak-Afghan borderland area for the safe refuge. Later on, these militant organizations used FATA for strategic objectives to strike the foreign troops in Afghanistan. Militant forces took full advantage of Pashtun ethnicity and spread into FATA and settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Along with it, many Afghan people migrated to Pakistan leading to refugee crisis.³⁰ The phenomenons of non-state-actors and refugees have profoundly increased internal and external threats for the state as well as for the people of Pakistan.

After the US attack on Afghanistan various factions of the militants were compelled to enter into borderland area of Pakistan for seeking safe havens there. Many militants and sectarian groups which were already operating in Pakistan were banned by the then government under the pressure of the US. These outfits later joined hand with Afghan and TTP militants. This led to set in an intense wave of violent attacks, target killing, kidnapping and suicide attacks inside Pakistan. As a result a new doctrine with the name of Talibanization was widely discussed among the intellectual community and media groups. The US war on terror was systematically shifted from Afghanistan to Pakistan. From 2004 to 2015 round about sixty thousand innocent citizen of Pakistan have lost their lives and approximately fourteen thousand military personnel have sacrifices their lives in the line of war on terrorism. This war has completely devastated Iraq and Afghanistan while Pakistan is on the verge of collapse.

Talibanization is a real challenge which needs to be addressed not only by physical forces but thorough change of society's narratives and for this purpose Policy-makers had to turn to the vision of the father of the nation. Mohammad Ali Jinnah said, "If Pakistan does not find modernity, it will sink into medievalism, there is no third path".³¹ The tragic incident of 9/11 turned out to be a curse for Pakistan as the actual ground for war on terrorism was Pakistan due to which religious extremism got strength. The only way to come out of this menace is in the hand of moderate and educated leadership which can provide the accurate direction to the nation. It can not only inject tolerance in the minds of the people by creating the economic opportunities for underprivileged classes in society but can bring the hostile groups into national political mainstream.

Arguably, Pakistan is passing through the most critical phase of its history and bearing the brunt of religious extremism. In the whole episode, Pakistani society which is largely liberal has gone into defensive position while radical groups are on the driving-seat which are entirely transforming the basic structures and culture of the society making it a major security threat to the state of Pakistan. It is, therefore, important for the civil and military elites to opt multi-dimensional approach for reversing the ride of religious militancy in Pakistan. Force without political approach is futile and if the people of the state are confused there are great chances of the start of civil war within the state. As Amir Mir explained;

*“The meteoric rise of the Taliban militia in Pakistan since the 11th September 2001 attacks has literally pushed the Pakistani state to the brink of civil war. Since the US-led Allied forces launched their offensive against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the 9/11 episode, the leadership of the two “non-state actors” in the war-torn Afghanistan has been systematically moving fighters across their eastern border into Pakistan, where they have taken over the rugged mountainous regions of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administrative Tribal Areas (FATA) after joining hands with the local Taliban militia”.*³²

This is an existential fact that one of the major factors of rising extremism and Islamist militancy owes to the hardened approach adopted by the US in the Middle East and Persian Gulf. There is a general anxiety among the security managers of Pakistan who perceive that the presence of the US and coalition forces in neighboring Afghanistan will once again push Pakistan into unending chaos. Moreover, the western powers are not ready to acknowledge the fact that the country in alliance can assist in achieving the goals of partner country but not at the expense of its own national interests which can be in clash with the interest of the country in alliance. Non-realization of this fact is distorting Pakistan's image in world community especially by the western media which at times blame Pakistan for double game. However, this is not a one sided trust deficit. Pakistan policy-makers are also deeply frustrated from the US role and cooperation not only in this strategic partnership but her dubious historical track record with Pakistan is also a matter of concern for them. In this context, it is important that the leadership of both the countries-Pakistan and the US- should adopt flexible approach and realize each other's limitations and respect their national interests otherwise trust deficit will only give benefit to radical forces in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan.

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