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## Pakistan Affairs

Q#1: Joining the US led coalition on war against terrorism has many short and long-term repercussions for Pakistan. Elaborate.

Ans:

### Introduction:

Pakistan has been a major non-NATO ally of United States in its war against terrorism. However, this period of engagement was not any different from the previous ones, sharing similar pattern of longer disengagements as well as a short prelude to engagement. Furthermore, diverging national interests not only made both countries mixed in a complex relationship but also made them strange bedfellows. However, Pakistan had to pay and in fact is still paying the price. The US presence in Afghanistan and its war on terror pose a plethora of short and long term implications to Pakistan, ranging from social, political, economic and geographical.

## 1- Short-term repercussions of War on Terror for Pakistan:

Following are the short-term problems (posed to Pak) owing their origin to US led war against terror,

### 1.1- Settlement of Al-Qaeda and transnational militants in Northern areas of Pakistan.

With the onslaught of US led NATO's Operation Enduring Freedom against Taliban government, Pakistan's northern areas (erstwhile FATA) became the sanctuaries for militants. Thus, Pakistan had to bear the influx of fleeing militants of foreign origin.

### 1.2- Radicalisation of Youth in Erstwhile FATA:

The immediate implication posed by presence of Al-Qaeda and other transnational militants was the radicalisation of gullible Pashtun youth. Thus, local recruits became an important cog in Al-Qaeda's strategy of global militant-jihad. Similarly, local training camps were made in South and North Waziristan to recruit and train locals to fight NATO troops in Afghanistan.

Former Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar notes, "ethnic links of militants and familiarity with Pakistan's FATA region provided militants an opportunity to exploit ethnic affinities by brainwashing Pashtuns about Islamic brethren being invaded in Afghanistan" (Abdul Sattar; Pakistan's Foreign Policy (1947-2016)).

1.3- Talibanization of Society and Mushroom Growth of Militant Organizations:

Al-Qaeda leaders like Ayman Al-Zawahiri resorted to hybrid warfare of misinformation and disinformation against Pakistan. Al-Zawahiri used the takfir against Pakistan. Bruce Riedel notes, "Al-Qaeda leadership revived the tradition of a thirteenth century Muslim polemicist Ibn Taimmiyah, which is takfir against states in case if a Muslim state does not wage jihad" (Bruce Riedel; Deadly Embrace). If Ibn Taimmiyah was a trouble for Bahri-al-Mamluk Sultanate then Al-Zawahiri was an anathema for Pakistan. Jihadi literature, pamphlets, and magazines inspired many self-styled militant organizations.

Such rapid growth of militant organization resulted in Talibanisation of society in Pakistan. British journalist Anatol Lieven notes, "the rapid Talibanisation of society first in Saudi, under King Muhammael (TSNM) and later under Mullah Fazlullah resulted in governance breakdown." He adds, "the people in Saudi and Waziristan embraced Talibanisation due to easy access to so-called justice by militants rather than civil courts where corruption is endemic and justice too costly" (Anatol Lieven, Pakistan: A Hard Country).

14- Suicide Bombings and Loss of Human Lives:

By taking a cue from Tamil Tigers of India and Sri Lanka, the militants in Pakistan employed suicide bombing as an irregular war tactic against Pakistan. Al-Qaeda inspired groups like TTP and JUA (Almar) resorted to hit and run tactics. Suicide bombing became a new social reality in Pakistan, as these groups daily targeted

high-value civilian and security personnel targets. The Brookings Institute Fellow, Madiha Afzal notes, "Pakistan has lost more than 40,000 civilians in suicide bombings, however, this count is strictly confined to civilian-death toll, and does not include military and other armed forces casualties." (Madiha Afzal, Pakistan Under Siege: State, Society and Extremism).

### 1.5- Shattering Investor Confidence in Pakistan due to Terrorism:

Economy became the first casualty in Pakistan's embroilment in US led War on Terror. As militants targeted civilians following Lal-Mosque blast in 2007, foreign dignitaries and investors started running for their lives. Consequently, the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), tourism industry and small-scale manufacturing declined. Thus, the cost can be equalled to more than \$200 billions in today's exchange rate standards. The international image of Pakistan was also shattered.

## 2.6- The Influx of Afghan Refugees Arriving in Pakistan:

Since the 1979 Soviet incursions into Afghanistan, Pakistan was already hosting over three million Afghan refugees. Similarly, following US led War on Terror in 2001, Pakistan once again had to bear the influx of refugees. This was a serious economic and administrative dilemma for an economically weak country like Pakistan.

## 2. Long-Term Implications of US led War on Terror for Pakistan:

Following are the long-term repercussions for Pakistan emanating from US led War against terrorism:

### 2.1: Demographic Imbalances in Balochistan due to settlement of Afghan Refugees:

The historically marginalized province of Balochistan, had to bear the burden of settlement of Afghan refugees. Already devastated by the fourth wave of insurgency, this caused additional constraints for the provincial government of Balochistan. Furthermore, the settlement of Afghan refugees

(pre-dominantly ethnic Pashtuns) augmented the grievances of Baloch people. An historical sense of marginalization coupled with strong-iron-hand response of state conspired to raise doubts about marginalizing ethnic Baloch by settlers. The sociology of the conflict suggests that such doubts further provide credence to insurgents, and Balochistan is no different in that regard.

2.2 - Rise of Informal Economy and Smuggling due to change in social fabric.

Besides, Balochistan other provinces too had to bear the constraints of social-fabric transformation due to influx of refugees. The local businesses were critically hit due to presence of aliens (un-registered Afghans). Similarly, porous border of Afghanistan provided such Afghan nationals a smuggling route. There is a considerable literature on political economy suggesting Pakistan has more than Rs 700 billion worth of undocumented economy, which is un-taxed and beyond legal channels.

2-3- US blames of alleged dual role of Pakistan in the Afghan conflict:

The US-Pak relations have always remained on tight rope. The divergence of national interests gave rise to mutual doubt and paranoia. The US consistently took a leaf-out from Indian playbook of blaming Pakistan of playing an alleged dual role. However, US has never been able to provide a credible evidence for that. The Neo-Cons in Bush administration and hawks in Obama administration blamed Pakistan for their failure in Afghanistan. As veteran journalist and Central Asian expert Ahmed Rashid writes, "the US policy in Afghanistan was cosmetic and devoid of any knowledge about ground realities. Similarly, the focus of Neo-Cons was not in Afghanistan. They were fixated at Iraq, which resulted in several military setbacks to allied forces in Afghanistan" (Ahmed Rashid's *Descent into Chaos*).



2.4- Nuclear Discrimination - US-India Civil Nuclear Deal and Changing Balance of Power in South Asia:

Historically, US has always remained fixated at Pakistan and has deliberately provided strategic leeway to India. While Pakistan faced brunt of Symington and Glenn amendments due to its nuclear programme, India was spared. The growing Indo-US relationship stems from mutual blame game with regards to Pakistan. Signed in 2005, the US-India Civil Nuclear Deal gave blanket cover to Indian nuclear programme and gave it entry into Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). It is a cartel of nuclear trading countries. This nuclear discrimination of US between India and Pakistan stems from US consideration of India as potential counter-weight to contain China. Furthermore, the Indo-Pacific strategy of US under Obama reaffirms that.

2.5- Rising Indian Presence in Afghanistan for Anti-Pakistan activities:

The changing geopolitical sands in Afghanistan during Karzai and later Ashraf Ghani administrations provided India a strategic influence there to destabilise ~~Afghanistan~~ <sup>Pakistan</sup>. The Indian diplomatic conclave was used for anti-Pakistan activities like supporting insurgency in Balochistan by covert means. The arrest of Kulbhushan Yadav, a serving Indian naval officer from Balochistan reaffirms Pakistan's stance.

### 3- Contemporary Repercussions for Pakistan of US led War on Terror:

Following are the contemporary implications of US's war against terrorism for Pakistan:

#### 3.1: Rise of IS-K and other Militant Groups since fall of Kabul:

The abrupt and hasty withdrawal of US in the face of Taliban's bite posed serious geostrategic and geopolitical implications for Pakistan. Since the fall of Kabul in 2021, several militant organisations notably IS-K (Islamic State Khorasan), dormant ITP and Tehrik-i-Jihad have upped their

into against Pakistan.

3.2: Indifference of Afghan Taliban to reign-in militant groups.

The lack of resolve of Afghan Taliban to take kinetic action against militant organisations is an utter violation of Doha Accords. However, sudden withdrawal of Uncle Sam from region has provided these groups a breathing space to undermine regional peace.

3.3- Human rights violations and imposition of Puritanical code of Islam by Afghan Taliban that marginalises women and curtails their mobility and right to education, have spell-over implications for Pakistan. Either it can be radicalisation or <sup>rise</sup> Political Islam.

**Conclusion:** The US led War against terrorism posed a plethora of short and long term repercussions for Pakistan ranging from political, social, economic, security, geostrategic and geopolitical. However, the transactional relationship with US has always put Pakistan at the receiving end. Therefore, this time was no exception, the US still considers Pakistan responsible for its failure in Afghanistan.