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Pakistan Affairs (CSS-2023)

Date: 2-8-2025

Q. Joining the US led coalition in the war against terrorism has many short and long term repercussions for Pakistan. Elaborate.

A. Introduction.

US president Bush threatened Pakistan with "bombing back to stone age" if they did not co-operate with us in its War on Terror (WOT) against Afghanistan. After 9/11 attack, America pre-empting future terrorist attacks, decided to initiate WOT against Afghanistan to destroy/dismantle Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Decision of Pakistani leadership to unconditionally support US (because of his threats) in its WOT had many short and long term repercussions in security, welfare, law and order, freedom and ideology.

A Macro View of War on Terrorism

On September 11, 2001, World Trade Center of US was attacked by terrorists. As a result the super power got extremely aggressive

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and decided to launch war with a new enemy - terrorists. It was a global counter-terrorism military action and was named as "War on Terror".

The campaign was against Taliban and Al-Qaeda harbored in Afghanistan. Due to geo-strategic location of Pakistan, US considered it crucial to directly involve Pakistan in the war. Keeping in view Pakistan's pro-Afghan foreign policy, US decided not to leave Pakistan with an option to refuse joining WOT. US threatened Pakistan with "a friend or an enemy", "with us or against us", "Pakistan risks being treated like Taliban and Al-Qaeda" and "no more aid, no more alliances - Pakistan will be isolated" - Pakistani government,

unwillingly joined US in its War on Terror, and agreed to US demands of intelligence support, access air, water and ground military bases and supply line and to cut supply lines of Taliban and Al-Qaeda etc.

National Interest Calculus of Pakistan

Since this was a compulsive choice, Pakistan

focused on "minimizing loss". The priority was to avoid direct US aggression, ^{to avoid} economic sanctions, safeguard its Nuclear Program and to avoid political isolation. The indirect gains associated with war were also assumed as following:

1- Strategic Gains: Advanced military technologies, advanced weapon systems, western assistance, release of pressure on Nuclear Program.

2- Economic Gains: Financial aid, economic assistance, deferment of loans and more loans.

3- Political Gains: Appearance and attention in global world, especially west, support in Kashmir issue from US, and preference over India.

But in all this calculus what was ignored was domestic stability, internal security and impact on economy in long terms.

Repercussions - Cost that Pakistan Paid.

By becoming a non-NATO ally of US in its

war, Pakistan paid a huge price that is never appreciated by US or international community. Pakistan is still facing the after effects on involvement in that war. Details of socio-economic, strategic, political and diplomatic repercussions is given in upcoming paras.

1. Security Repercussions for Pakistan

By being a part of war against terrorists, Pakistan triggered many militancy groups. Currently there are 800+ active militant agencies in Pakistan. List of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, post 9/11, is really long but most important being APS eshawor attack in 2014 by Tehrik-i-Taliban (backed by Afghanistan), Karachi suicide bombing on French Engineer (2002), attacks on military establishments (ISI and Army HQ, Mehran Naval Base, Minhas Air Base,) and attacks on religious and civilian setups. Pakistan's 2640 km long Afghanistan border (Durand line) become insecure. The people of Pakistan had increased resentment against Govt.

causing extreme polarity and unrest in country. In strategic domain, Pakistan did get contract for purchasing F-16 from US and the sanctions from Nuclear Program were also lifted, immediately. But in mid-term and long-term, against the gains that Pakistan was expecting, the actual situation was not favorable for Pakistan. US strengthened its strategic partnership with India instead. It included military ties, arms and technology deals, and nuclear and energy deals, that strengthened Pakistan's enemy, decreasing Pakistan's deterrence and reducing security. Drones attacks by US on Pakistan can also not be ignored as well.

2. Economic Repurcussions for Pakistan

Pakistan did get economic aid and loan deferment because of its involvement in war, but compared to adverse effects of war on Pakistan's economic stability and growth, the net result is economic loss. According to The Dawn News, Pakistan suffered an economic loss of approximately 127 billion dollars, directly or indirectly, from 2001 to present. Foreign investment

declined, tourism badly impacted, GDP decreased and inflation rised - Till to date, Pakistan has still not fully recovered from the economic losses.

3. Repercussions on Freedom / Sovereignty

Financial aid that was assumed to be a bounty for Pakistan became a trap - Pakistan got caught into layers of debt that it can probably never pay off - Ultimately, it increased our dependence on other states, to an extent that Pakistan almost lost its dignity and most importantly, to a large extent its free will and sovereignty - Now, willingly or unwillingly, it has accept every demand of US and also holds lower hand in any deal or international matter. Pakistan's foreign policy is no more independent - Impacts are not just limited to international issues, instead US is constantly interfering in domestic matters of Pakistan and dictating its stance in every decision or move of Pakistan Govt. The so called "democratic"

government has turned into a US puppet.

4. Repercussions on Ideology

Pakistan was founded on the basis of two-nation theory, and its support for US and war against Afghanistan was completely against that ideology.

On 15 August, 1947 Quaid-e-Azam said:

"Our objective should be peace within and peace without. We want to live peacefully and maintain cordial and friendly relations with our immediate neighbors and world at large."

Unfortunately, the war on terror left us with no peace within and at our borders. Our relationship with our neighbor got worsed.

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5. Diplomatic Repercussions for Pakistan

Pakistan assumed to come out of the war as an 'international hero', but got the title of 'terrorist' and 'not safe' instead. Pakistan failed at diplomatic grounds. The support it was expecting from West and US, preferred its neighbor India. Instead - After receiving favors from USSR for a long time, now it became US's favorite.

The hopes that Pakistan had from US on Kashmir Issue turned into sadness, as US did not show any interest in resolving Kashmir issue.

Despite its efforts in active engagement in counter-terrorism activities and war on terror Pakistan was added to "grey list" by FATF from June 2018 to October 2022, that not only impacted its international standing but also adversely affected its economy. More sanctions were imposed on Pakistan.

Analysis

According to majority consensus, Pakistan has been unable to fulfil most of its objectives. It bore more losses than gains. Pakistan had failed to avoid losses that it was trying to avoid because of US threats. But this discussion is all based on absolute gains and absolute losses. But unfortunately this was a unique situation that Pakistan has ever faced in the history. Pakistan's involvement in war was not a soft inclusion. Pakistan's decision to join the war was "practical" way at that time. Some schools of thought say that Pakistan was able to avoid the loss to some extent and that being in economic and diplomatic crisis is still better than being "bombed to stone age".

So many factors including media, India and change government of US also contributed to repercussions that Pakistan faced.

So, we can say, overall the "war on terror"

did more bad than good, economically, strategically and diplomatically.

Recommendations

Distancing itself from any external wars, should be Pakistan's top priority in foreign policy.

Pakistan needs to focus on its economic growth by increasing exports, so as to reduce Trade deficit, and dependency on other states. This is the only way it can get its lost freedom / sovereignty, to get out of financial debt and ultimately make progress in strategic domains and technology. All this will improve its international standing and will be beneficial diplomatically as well.

Pakistan should also try to negotiate with its neighbors Afghanistan and Iran to promote friendly relationships and increase border securities. In the time of crisis, such alliances are very important and crucial.

Conclusion

Pakistan unwillingly joined US war on terror against Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, after 9/11 attack on World Trade Center. US government left no choice for Pakistan by saying, "No neutral ground in fight between civilization and terror". But unfortunately, its repercussions for Pakistan are huge. Pakistan paid a great cost for its involvement in the war. Pakistan suffered diplomatically, economically, socially, ideologically and strategically. The suffering and its after effects are still felt in Pakistan, but US immediately forgot all the sacrifices that Pakistan made. National level measures are needed to nullify mid and long term repercussions of this sad incident.
