

Post 9/11 Pakistan-US Relations : Diverging interests and Compromised Performance.

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Abstract: Pakistan-US relations dates back to 1950s. During Cold War, Pakistan was an important ally of United States. But, their relations got embittered after the cold war, as various kinds of economic sanctions were imposed by US on Pakistan. However, the traumatic incident of September 11 2001, brought a dramatic shift in Pakistan-US relations. As, Pakistan did not only become a frontline state in war on terror, but it also got a Major Non NATO Ally status from US as well. The relations in the post 9/11 period especially after 2011, however, suffered from mistrust and suspicion, because of diverging interests of Pakistan and US, with later accusing Pakistan of 'Double game'.

United States did not only questioned Pakistan's interests in war on terror, but also her strategy as well, with US continuously accusing Pakistan of harbouring and supporting the very terrorists like Haqqani network, whom US is fighting against. Pakistan, on the other hand, denies any terror links rather holds that, US cannot impose her failures in Afghanistan on Pakistan. In this blame game, this paper is an attempt to understand and analyse the major irritants and diverging interests in Pakistan-US relations, besides understanding change and continuity in their relations in the aftermath of 9/11.

Key words: 9/11, United States, War on Terror, Haqqani network, Double game, diverging interests, change and continuity.

1. Introduction : Pakistan's relation with US, since its inception in 1947 as an independent country has traversed through many paths. The relation between the two has been characterized by numerous ups and downs, ifs and buts, various stages of initial hesitation, alignment, detachment, tilt, disenchantment, and the realignment which explains the rollercoaster character of their relationship. As, Shuja Nawaz has candidly put it, "the US and Pakistan is the world's oldest couple with on-again and off-again relationship that has survived since the 1950's."¹

The 9/11 incident and the subsequent 'Global War On Terror'(GWOT), brought the two states close for third time since 1947. This time, however not against communism, but against terrorism. Pakistan enjoyed good relations with US in the aftermath of 9/11, although under constant pressure from United states 'to do more' vis-à-vis terrorism.

However, relations between the two states became soared, when US' most wanted terrorist Osama Bin Ladin was killed by US inside Pakistan. Thereafter US start doubting Pakistan's intentions in War on Terror. The relations reached to a new low in 2016, when president Donald trump publically accused pakistan of 'Double game'. However, the relations were again brought onto track, after Imran khan visited United states in July 2019.² Pakistan-US relations will however, be largely determined by the role pakistan will play in Afghan endgame.

2. 9/11 and pakistan-US relations : The traumatic incident of September 11 2001, brought a dramatic shift in US foreign policy. In its immediate aftermath, G.W. Bush by launching 'Doctrine pre-emption' 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. On September 11 2001, Americas own aircrafts were used as guided missiles by nineteen Saudi born Hijackers, who hit the American symbols of power and

¹Shuja Nawaz, "Courting Pakistan", The wall street journal, vol. XXXIV, No.146(29 March 2010).

² Economic times, july 22, 2019, <https://m.economictimes.com/news/international/world-news/pakistan-pms-us-visit-begins-on-an-embracing-note/articleshow/70324417.cms>

prestige. while addressing the joint session of congress and the American people on the 20th September 2001, Bush stated that, “our war on terror begins with Al-Qaeda, but it does not end there, it will not end until every terrorist group of Global reach had been found, defeated or stopped”.³ As such, President George W. Bush's National Security Strategy (NSS), a policy draft of his administration, announced on 17 September 2002, represents the most sweeping shift in the grand strategy of the United States of the last six decades. It is a transformation from a ‘Strategy of Containment’ by president Truman to one based on what is called ‘Forward Deterrence.’

Following the attack on twin towers on September 11, 2001, Bush administration was quick to declare Osama bin Laden-led Al-Qaeda responsible for these attacks. Consequently, Bush declared the multi-pronged war against the Al-Qaeda and made the following demands to Taliban leadership, who were accused of harbouring Osama:

1. Deliver all Al-Qaeda leaders and members harboured in Afghanistan appropriate US authorities.
2. Immediately and permanently close every terrorist camps in Afghanistan.
3. Provide the United states with full access to training camps, so that their elimination is verified.
4. Release all foreign nationals including US citizens.
5. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers.⁴

The refusal by Taliban to fulfil these demands of Bush administration, consequently, led the US congress, on 14 September 2001, to authorize the president to use all necessary and appropriate force against the targets, nations and organisations or persons responsible for the attacks of 9/11.⁵

Finally, the US and its allies began to mass troops, war planes and aircraft carriers within striking distance in preparation for operation in Afghanistan. On 7 October, 2001, US forces in pursuance of ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ (OEF) bombed Taliban headquarters in Kabul.

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 message to the then ISI chief General Mehmood saying, “Either u are with us or you are with terrorists.”⁶ Pakistan was hesitant to join the US against the Taliban due to its national security interests, which often clashed with the US security interests. However, under threat warrant from US, Pakistan quickly responded that it was on the side of the United States.

In a meeting on 13 September between Armitage, director General of ISI Mehmood Ahmad, and Pakistan’s ambassador to the United States, Maleeha Lodhi, the United States proposed seven demands to Pakistan, that would form the basis of the early crisis partnership. They were:

- to stop Al-Qaida operatives at its border and end all logistical support Bin Laden;
- to give the United States ‘blanket overflight and landing rights’ for all necessary military and intelligence operations;
- to provide territorial access to U.S and allied military intelligence and other personal to conduct operations against Al-Qaida.

³ Ahmed Rashid, Descent into chaos: Pakistan, Afghanistan and the threat to Global security, Penguin Books London, 2009, P.46

⁴ Hafeez Malik, US relations with Afghanistan, The imperial dimension p.185.

⁵ Ibid p.186.

⁶ Ibid, p.271.

- to provide the United States with intelligence information
- to continue to publicly condemn the terrorist acts;
- to cut off all shipments of fuel to the Taliban and stop recruits from going to Afghanistan; and
- if the evidence implicated bin Laden and Al-Qaida and the Taliban continued to harbor them, to break relations with the Taliban government.⁷

Though showing reluctance initially, but, on 13 September, the embassy in Islamabad confirmed Musharraf's acceptance of the seven demands. Thus, it was more than what Colin Powell wanted. US was expecting assurance not the unconditional acceptance of the American demands from Pakistan. The above episode undoubtedly tells us the extent of intimidation felt by Pakistan. Powell later recalled: Three days after 9/11, I called President Musharraf after we had suggested to him, it was time to make strategic decision to move away from that and we gave him something we hope he would do.... and he reversed the direction in which Pakistan was moving.⁸ Musharraf forged a new and robust alliance with Washington and changed certain basic elements of Pakistan's foreign policy posture almost overnight.

Pakistan extended its full-fledged supports to 'Operation Enduring Freedom'. Pakistan deployed around 115,000 troops on Pak-Afghan border which include army, Frontier corps, Frontier Constabulary and Frontier Police. As a result of the US OEF, more than 3500 members of Al-Qaeda were caught trying to escape into Pakistan. Pakistan started war on Terror against Al-Qaeda with great vigour, if not always with fineness through multiple instruments.⁹

Pakistan also shared vital intelligence information with US and other countries, resulting not only in the arrest and killing of dreaded Al-Qaeda terrorists, like Ramzi bin Al-shibh, Abu-zubaida and Shareeb Ahmed, but prevented many attacks in US, U.K. including the prevention of terrorist attack on civilian airplane in August 2006 and thereafter as well.¹⁰ However, Pakistan had to pay a lot sacrifices in War on Terror. As, according to the spokesperson of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government, Mohammad Faisal in a press briefing asserted that Pakistan lost \$123billion since 9/11 besides 70,000 lives. In the post 9/11 period Pakistan, however, received a substantial amount of aid from United States. The total aid given by US to Pakistan upto 2019 amounts to 33.9 billion(approx.)¹¹.

3. Relations after 2011: G. W. Bush's rhetoric of 'Do More' was continued by Barack Obama. Pakistan's claim of killing terrorists without making any difference between 'Good and Bad terrorism' got refuted with the killing of Osama Bin Laden in 2011 by US Navy Seals. This event deteriorated Pakistan-US relations. The Unilateral killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011 in Abotabad, in which the Pakistani military base and the military academy of the Pakistani government were situated was the most soaring event in Pakistan-US relations.¹²

Bin Laden's presence and killing inside Pakistan led to great suspicion from the U.S. side, intensifying tensions between the two governments. Following this raid, American policy makers began to question the purpose and usefulness of military aid to

⁷ The 9/11 Commission Report: The Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States. Authorized ed. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004, P.331.

⁸ Quoted in Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into chaos :Pakistan,Afghanistan and the threat to Global security* p.265

⁹ C. Christine Fair, "Cooperation with Pakistan and India: The Counter Terror Coalition Co-operation with India and Pakistan"(Rand Santa Monica,Calif;2009) , p.21-27.

¹⁰ Dr. Parvaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Global War on Terror: Pakistan's Contributions," South Asian Strategic Stability Institute (SASSI), P.11,(accessed on 27-9-2019)

¹¹ Foreign office spokesperson, M.Faisal said this in his weekly briefing , quoted also by Economic Times, 2-02-2019.

¹² Baker, P., Cooper, H. & Mazzetti, M. (2011). 'Bin Laden is Dead, Obama Says.' *The New York Times*, 1 May, Available from: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/asia/osama-bin-laden-is-killed.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 [Accessed 29 -09-2019].

Pakistan, if some institutions or individuals were either aware or incapable of capturing Bin Ladin.¹³ As according to Hussian Haqqani, the US-Pakistan Partnership was far from an alliance because of diverging interests. Their bilateral relationship has never been based on shared values and interests; instead each of the two partners has always preoccupied with confronting different enemies and pining different expectations to their association.

Bin Ladin's raid further deteriorated Pakistan-US embittered relations, since the Pakistani government considered this raid as 'an unauthorised unilateral action' which violated its sovereignty.¹⁴ This operation also fuelled anti-Americanism in the country. Besides this soaring event, some other events which happened in the same year include _the killing of two dozen Pakistani military men near Salala check Post by NATO airstrikes, Admiral Mullen's accusation that, 'the Haqqani network acts as a veritable arm of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency' and the Raymond Davis Event created further wedges between the two countries. Because of these events, Pakistan in reaction not only blocked NATO forces convoy to Afghanistan which passes through its territory, but also asked the US to leave the Shamsi air base. Moreover, Pakistani government boycotted the international conference in Bonn regarding the future of Afghanistan held in 2011.¹⁵

In August 2017, President Trump severely criticised Pakistan for double game__ offering safe havens to what he called "agents of chaos" and accused Pakistan of taking billions of dollars and giving nothing, but 'deceit and lies' in return. Declaring that the US "can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organisations," Trump demanded Pakistan to change its behaviour immediately.¹⁶ Donald Trump, however, soon realised that squeezing Pakistan would not only push Pakistan closer to China and Russia, but will reverse the gains made so far in Afghanistan, as US can't have a face saving exit from Afghanistan without Pakistan's help. Consequently, Trump sought the help of Imran Khan in having a peaceful solution to Afghan conundrum. Thereafter a various of rounds of Talks between US special envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban happened. But, only peace-oriented negotiations and intense political engagement will bring peace in Afghanistan.⁵ After completion of nine rounds of Talks, Taliban and United States agreed reached to some conclusive agreement.¹⁷

However, before final draft be signed by Taliban and United States at 'Camp David' on September 11, 2019, Donald Trump cancelled talks, owing to the killing of an American Soldier in a Taliban attack at Kabul few days before the signing the peace deal. After the suspension of Peace talks for more than two months, peace talks between Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban have been resumed again by late October 2019. Amongst, all regional players Pakistan have the most important role play in order to facilitate a safe US exit from Afghanistan. That will also determine the future Pakistan -US relations.

Conclusion: After analysing the relationship between Pakistan and the US during eighteen years right from 9/11, it can be said that the relations between them can be described as a kind of 'off-and-on' alliance, always marked by convergence and divergence of national interests, resulting in a cycle of friendship and friction.

Despite existing irritants and diverging interests in their relations like Pakistan's difference between 'Good and Bad Taliban', drone strike, China factor, and Haqqani network, both Pakistan and United States have managed to take relations forward. However, the future relations between Pakistan and United States will be largely determined by the success of US campaign in 'War on Terror' and result of 'Afghan Endgame'.

¹³ Zaidi, S.A. (2011). 'Who Benefits from U.S. Aid to Pakistan?', Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Available from: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/pakistan_aid2011.pdf [Accessed 3-10-2019].

¹⁴ S.L Myers, & J.Perlez, (2011). 'Tensions Rise as U.S. Officials Press Pakistan for Answers.', *The New York Times*, 3 May, Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/04/world/asia/04binladen.html> [Accessed 10-10-2019].

¹⁵ Masood, S., (2011). 'C.I.A Leaves Base in Pakistan Used for Drone Strikes.', *The New York Times*, 11 December, Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/12/world/asia/cia-leaves-pakistan-base-used-for-drone-strikes.html> [Accessed -19-10-2019]

¹⁶ Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 21 August 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/08/21/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-and-south-asia>.

¹⁷ Reuters, 22 August, 2019, available at > <https://www.reuters.co?article/us-usa-afghanistan-talks-iduskcn1vc2A7>. Accessed on, 20- October-2019.