

The Political Discrepancy of Pakistan towards Afghanistan: Need of the Time

Abstract: After the incident of 9/11, Afghanistan emerged as a terrorist state before the face of the world. To eradicate the militant factors, the USA initiated a war against terror with the help of its allies on the soil of Afghanistan. This paper aims to analyze the efforts of Pakistan to bring harmony, peace and development to Afghanistan. The Afghan political scenario is a "multi-political scenario" in which different types of stakeholders show their political legitimacy over the masses. The capitalist class led by the USA and the socialist class by Russia are the antagonistic factors in this regard. Another major group in this regard is the Islamic agenda group, having the culture of arms and is also the main participant in the Afghan political setup. The political legitimacy of the different groups de-railed whole the system on the verge of chaos. The main focus of this paper is to determine the struggles of Pakistan to restore the true political system in Afghanistan through the participation of all the stakeholders in the scenario.

Key Words: Peace, Taliban, negotiations, harmony, Afghanistan wars, Pakistan's struggles, Islamization, Legitimacy

Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan have had close relations since the independence of Pakistan. However, there exist some crucial points leading to deteriorating the relations between both the countries. Both the countries have many common points of mutual understanding; the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan have close ties with respect to their religion, ethnicity and traditions. These close ties among the masses of both countries are responsible for creating a strong bond of a mutual relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The peace and political stability in Afghanistan is the focal point of

the foreign policy of Pakistan. The impacts of the cold war between the two world's powers, USA and USSR can be seen in the land of Afghanistan. The enmity between these powers brought instability and insecurity to Afghanistan. The USSR war from 1979-1989 and the USA war from 2001-2021 are responsible for the destabilization and poor government system in Afghanistan.

However, Pakistan always tried her best to normalize the situation with positive dialogue and negotiations because Afghanistan is a neighbor and a Muslim country (Durrani, M.U et al., 2009). The tri-party dialogues in Geneva among the

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stakeholders of the Afghan war of 1979-1989 also bore fruits due to the peace interest of Pakistan in the region. Instead of serious efforts by Pakistan, some countries like, Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan pointed out Pakistan as the partner of *the Taliban* in Afghanistan ([Sultana, 2015](#)). The USA is also the main participant in the political scenario of Afghanistan. After the incident of 9/11, the interests of the USA turned towards the Afghan land. Despite the arms race and the trillions of amount in Afghanistan, she could not get her interests.

As we consider the point of legitimacy in the political nature of Afghanistan, than it is fact that the culture of arms always remained as a nominated factor. We cannot eliminate that culture at all, but reduce it to some extent. It is needed to use the arms culture in Afghanistan to bring peace and stability in political matters rather than that destruction. Pakistani premier Imran Khan Niazi stressed over the world's powers to negotiate the matter with positive dialogues instead of military operation in Afghanistan. But unfortunately, in the matter of Afghan issue, there are many jihad groups who do not believe in the negotiations. In the year of 2010, the Afghan president Hamid Karzai formed the HPC (High Peace Council) to dialogue over the issue, but *Talibans* (the legitimated jihadi group for the government in Afghanistan) refused to join the council ([Kuehn, F.2014](#)). Despite the world's pressure on Pakistan after 9/11, Pakistan never seek the Afghan resolution in military aspects because the instability in Afghanistan is also dangerous for Pakistan due to the ethnic relations of the masses across the borders of both the countries ([Ali, M. et al., 2020](#)). Now, it is the obligation of UNO and the world's economies to restore peace and development in Afghanistan to eliminate the weeds of the 9/11 incident.

Methodology

For the collection of data, there are two

broad sources. These sources are the primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary data mainly consisted of the interviews and questionnaires, and the secondary data is in the form of books and articles etc. In the current research, the data is collected by the use of a secondary source of data collection. The books, articles related to the Pak- afghan relations and the documents on Afghan history are critically examined.

USSR Intervention in Afghanistan & Response to Pakistan

The issue of political instability and mass destruction initiated with the commencement of the USSR on Afghan soil. Afghanistan has a special geographical location due to its neighboring with the formal USSR. After World War second, the "cold war" between the world's powers is witnessed in Afghanistan. USSR struggled to her best to grow the seeds of socialism in Afghanistan as the "antagonistic economic philosophy" of the United States. Many other experts revealed that USSR wanted to secure the "Ainak Copper Reserves" so; it made its way to Afghanistan ([Mazhar, MMS et al., 2013](#)). However, the role of Pakistan is considered vital to restoring the peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. Pakistan has close relations with Afghanistan and similarities in religion, culture and traditions in many aspects. During the Afghan war of 1979-1989, Pakistan served the 5.5 million Afghan refugees; it was a great number of people in this regard. Pakistan facilitated these refugees with all kinds of good ([Grau, L.W, 2004](#)). Pakistan showed her concerns towards the afghan issue and assisted the *Taliban* against the USSR intervention. On the other hand, India has considered the assistance of Pakistan towards the *Taliban* as an anti-state policy against India (Kuraishi, 2012).

The Role of Pakistan in the Geneva Accord

The political role of Pakistan is considered vital in the formation of the "Geneva Accord" on April 14, 1988. That was a tri-party political commitment to disarm the region from external intervention. The stakeholders of the accord, the USA, USSR and Afghanistan, consolidated on a framework to pull out the USSR forces from Afghanistan in consideration of Pakistan. Due to its geostrategic position, Pakistan has an important place in the politics of the region. Pakistan assisted the Mujahedeen groups in the Geneva accord for the withdrawal of the USSR forces from Afghanistan (Hanif, K. et al., 2021). The political shift in Pakistan has the core value of determining the political dynamics in Afghanistan.

The factor of Islamization to Consolidate the Powers of Religious Wings

The factor of Islamization in Pakistan is also a helping hand for the insurgent groups in Afghanistan. The General Zia-ul-Haq regime especially is an era of consolidating the Islamic powers of Afghanistan and Pakistan to hold over the political scenario. The term "Political Islam" is a stance to legitimize the Afghan religious groups in government matters. Mobilizing the masses in the name of Islamization is considered a fundamental factor in maintaining the balance of powers in Afghanistan. Due to political Islam, Pakistan has assisted the Afghan *Taliban* to save their interests against external interventions.

9/11 Incident and Political Stance of Pakistan

Another major shift in Pakistan's political setup occurred over the incident of 9/11. After the incident of 9/11, a "new political arena" was developed in Pakistan. Now the

directions of this arena turned towards the West as the anti-dynamics to the *Al-Qaeda* and *Taliban*. That was a highly political change in Pakistan's stance due to the world's pressure. Pakistan fought a "double game" after the 9/11 incident and adopted proxy war strategies against the USA interests in favor of the *Taliban* (Wasi, et al. 2021). A new world order was released to eradicate the roots of terrorism from the world. Pakistan faced serious problems from the insurgent groups from Afghanistan and also within the country. The president of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, said "The United States was not only the casualty of 9/11, the attacks hit Pakistan differently, but with an equally savage force we feel the ramifications to this day. No, another country has faced as many threats on as many fronts" (Musharraf, 2006). Due to its joining in the war on terror, Pakistan faced many types of national security issues within the country from religious groups. The government of Pakistan justified its stance towards the new world order to restore the vote of confidence before its masses. But the religious groups, civil society, and many political parties showed their concerns about that change in the policy.

The Share of Pakistan in the War on Terror

The United States initiated its first war of 21st century from the soil of Afghanistan. USA started the Operation of Enduring Freedom (OEF) against the *Taliban* regime in Afghanistan. Another major military formation also established in the name of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to conduct the strategic operations against the militants' wings in Afghanistan, especially in the Southern part of the country and Kandahar province. ISAF issued a Joint Campaign Plan (JCP) to achieve the objectives of the Afghan war. ISAF worked on the four points agenda (1)

Give a comprehensive focus on the affairs of the Afghan people (2) do their best to increase the logistics capabilities of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), (3) To make the Afghan governance process strong and better, (4), Build the better and affective relations with the Afghan neighboring countries, especially Pakistan. That was the ultimate and sudden change of United States foreign policy dynamics towards Afghanistan.

In this war, NATO, non-NATO allies and Pakistan participated. Pakistan trained the major war groups in Afghanistan from 1979-1989 and shared the important information, so that was a critical situation for Pakistan especially ([Sial, S., 2013](#)). Pakistan has faced multi-directed threats. These threats were from the religious parties in the country, religious insurgent groups, Afghan *Taliban* and also from Russia. Pakistan has remained an anti-state against the USSR in the Afghan war from 1978-1989. So, that was a crucial time for Pakistan to save her interests against USSR's rivalry. On the other hand, there was also a chance of India's surgical strike over the territory of Pakistan due to India's presence in Afghanistan on the Western border of Pakistan (UK. Diss, 2019). The long-term strategic partnership between India and USSR was also a sign of danger for Pakistan.

The Influence of the Taliban Factor on Pakistan

The *Taliban* factor is also a significant factor in the overall strategy of the war. Pakistan has to reduce the two types of *Taliban* influences. The first is the physical attacks of the *Taliban* on the masses and the second is the *Taliban* myth in the people of Pakistan. General Zia-ul-Haq, the former chief of army staff, consolidated the *Taliban* factor with Islamization to hold over the government, so that was difficult to discriminate both types of factors ([Sikand, K, 1990](#)). Generally, the people of Pakistan

have the anti US sentiments so that was a point of difficulty for the government of Pakistan to come over these sentiments. To point out these *Taliban* factors, Pakistan security forces launched a wide range of searching operations in *madaris*. Many initial and necessary steps were taken to cut the *Talibanization* from the country. Besides the searching of *madaris*, all the *madaris* were registered under a single governmental organization, "*Wafaqi tanzees al madaris*," headed by the central government.

Political Dynamics of Pakistan after 9/11

The political dynamics of Pakistan shifted towards the peace after the 9/11 incident. Pakistan joined the world club against the militants' factors. Afghan National Security forces, NATO and Pakistan fought a joint session of war in Afghanistan. On the other hand, some USA military officers and the civilian government blamed Pakistan for the help of the *Taliban and Haqqani* network against the world interests ([ICG, Asia Report, No.262, 2014](#)). Pakistan also saved many core objectives behind this joining in the war on terror. Firstly, Pakistan got the favor of world powers on the issue of Kashmir, and second is the security of national assets and third is the measurements to boost the economic interests. The USA also supported Pakistan with the many types of aid in the form of weapons and handsome amounts due to her cooperation with the USA at this critical situation. Pakistan has achieved the status of a non-NATO allies' country and gained the sum of Billions of dollars in the form of a coalition support fund ([Fair, C. 2009](#)). The amount of humanitarian aid was also in the remarkable figures during the days of the war. So, the shift of Pakistan's national stance in favor of the world club has the amalgam of harms and benefits for Pakistan.

The PTI Government and Afghan Issue

A sudden change in the political objectives of Pakistan also occurred after the general elections of 2018. The ruling party of Pakistan, PTI (*Pakistan Tehrik-e- Insaf*), raised her voice against the drone attacks in the tribal areas of Pakistan. *Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf* also criticized the military operation of NATO in the land of Afghanistan. Chairman *Tehrik-e- Insaf* and sitting Premier of Pakistan Imran Khan Niazi blamed the USA authorities for bloodshed in Afghanistan over the twenty years. The new command of the Pakistan army also added to the stance of PM Imran Khan Niazi and demanded the political negotiations for a sustainable solution to the Afghan matter. Another latest political arena jumped into the political system of Pakistan. The military, civil government and the masses of Pakistan jointly demanded the withdrawal of the armed forces of NATO and the autonomy of Afghanistan. The government of Pakistan also put her frame of action towards the new Afghan government on behalf of peace. The civil government in Pakistan wants to stable the political relations with the new Afghan government and the current authorities of the *Taliban* regime. Due to the neighboring Afghanistan the role of Pakistan is not deniable. All the peace, progress and development in Afghanistan are due to the positive behavior of Pakistan.

Withdrawal of USA Forces from Afghanistan

After the USA presidential elections of 2020, USA president Joe Biden announced his plan to the withdrawal of USA forces from Afghanistan. This announcement was not sudden in this regard because the congress of the USA and other many organizations wanted to withdraw the armed forces from a non-profitable war. The Afghan war has become a hanging sword for the USA economy. This war brought the loss of

Trillions of dollars in the economy of the USA. In the Statistics of the USA, some 89.42 Billion dollars were spent on Afghanistan from 2002-2012 ([Anthony, H. et al., 2012](#)). The former president of the USA, President Obama, also asked for a review of the USA policy towards the Afghan war from the conventional war to comprehensive war strategies, acting on the reports of the USA security advisor.

Analysis

The political history of Afghanistan witnessed three major changes at three major times. These changes were also for Pakistan, a "Shift of Policy" towards Afghanistan. The three times of policy formation for Pakistan were the USSR intervention in Afghanistan, the incident of 9/11, and the withdrawal of USA and NATO forces from Afghanistan. The analysis and comparative study of these stages revealed the reasons behind the political decisions of Pakistan. During the USSR's intervention in Afghanistan, the military government in Pakistan cashed this "Blank Cheque" in response to strengthening their role in government activities. With the help of USAID, a pro-afghan culture has been introduced in Pakistan with the name of "Islamization". So, that was a rather critical but far benefit situation for the military to play a vital role in the government by helping the "*Mujahedeen*" with the all kinds of troops and weapons. The military government of Pakistan and ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) trained the *Taliban* after 1990 (Cottery, 2002).

The post 9/11 era is the era of anti *Talibanization* at the world level. Pakistan also got the favor of the world powers to do so, according to their desires. The words of US president G.W Bush "With us or against us," created a long term shift in policy dynamics in Pakistan. Another military dictator in Pakistan at that situation vowed to join hands to consolidate his powers. That

was the era of anti- *Talibanization* in Pakistan, and the religious classes and some right hands political parties, like *Jamat-e-Islami*, criticized the government policies. A pro-US set up was installed in Pakistan to launch activities against the militants' wings in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

A major turn in the policy was announced after the general election in 2018 by the PTI government with respect to the Afghan issue. The new elected PTI government stressed negotiating with all the stakeholders of the war in Afghanistan. This era can be considered as pro-*Taliban*, but not a strict anti to the USA. Pakistan denied launching the strategic operation against Afghanistan through its land. Pakistan wanted to secure its interests to withdraw the Indian policies from Afghanistan. The presence of India in Afghanistan was a risk for Pakistan, so Pakistan did everything to check the Indian policies in Afghanistan ([Mazhar, MMSetal,2013](#)). The United States stopped the USAID process to some extent, especially on the military based aid process. These were the major shift in policies in the political system of Pakistan with regard to the Afghan situation and the future predictions of the experts. The policy formation in Pakistan is based on two factors, the first is the economic factor and the second is the Islamic bases.

Key Suggestions and Recommendations

1. The "Game Theory" of the world's powers should be stopped immediately in Afghanistan.
2. The agriculture production of Post in Afghanistan is a major source of income, so it should be checked and regularized.
3. The mines production in Afghanistan is the right of the Afghan people, so it should recognize as their natural right.

4. All the Afghan government stakeholders should make harmony in their groups.
5. The culture of arms should be minimized, and it gradually streamlined with negotiations in all the political matters.

Conclusion

Pakistan and Afghanistan are the neighbor countries and have common religious aspects. Both countries share a border of 2250 km along the mountainous region of "Koh-e- Hindukash" on the western border of Pakistan. Due to the geographical location of both countries, this region always remained a focal point of world powers. But unfortunately, the game theory between super powers of the world deteriorated the peace and stability in Afghanistan and also along its borders sides in Pakistan.

The peace in Afghanistan has paralyzed due to the series of foreign interventions and intra- political activities among the different groups in the country. Pakistan has the "Zigzag" policy patterns towards the Afghan issue. The shift of these patterns can be categorized as the Islamic and anti-Islamic steps in the political history of Pakistan. Behind these ups- downs in the policy formations are backed by the military dictators, economic interests and Islamic sentiments in the masses. Pakistan and Afghanistan have their concerns over the matter of the "Durand line" because Afghanistan wants to spread its boundaries in the tribal areas of Pakistan, which were occupied by the Nadir Sha Durrani, the king of Afghanistan ([Anjum, N. et al. 2019](#)).

Pakistan is a developing country and has always saved her interests against any interruption in Afghanistan. Some military dictators like General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervaiz Musharraf also benefited from the shift of policy formation towards the *mujahedeen* and Western pole, respectively, to hold over the political

system of Pakistan. During the USSR-*Mujahedeen* war, Pakistan, the USA and Saudi Arabia jointly assisted the Afghan jihad groups against the USSR interests by sharing the strategic information and the supply of arms (Carter, W.R, 2013). After the 9/11, Pakistan saved the USA interests against the *Talibans*. In the past, the leader of Al- Qaeda, Osama bin Laden assisted by the USA and Saudi Arabia to use against the USSR intervention in Afghanistan. After the USSR, withdrawal from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia expelled him in 1994 from the country ([Kobek, P. et al., 2013](#)).

The latest change in the foreign policy of Pakistan is the era of the anti-western phase of policy. The current government of PTI believes in the political solution to the Afghan issue. Some experts, high command of US army and ISAF forces are also in favor of the negotiations. In the words of US army General David Petraeus, "You cannot kill your way, out of an insurgency". Whereas the USA based army operation in Afghanistan, "Operation Enduring Freedom" (OEF) has failed due to the non-technical and non- political bases. So, it is the chance for the political elites of Pakistan to do a review in the forthcoming with the new Afghan authorities and government.

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