

# **An Assessment Of Pakistan’s Balancing Act In The US-Led ‘War On Terror’**

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## **Abstract**

This study assesses Pakistan’s balancing act in the US-led ‘War on Terror.’ Pakistan decided to join the US-led War to secure its core national interests. This decision, however, didn’t reflect a structural change in Pakistan’s policy. Islamabad retained a ‘delicate balancing’ in its relations with Washington and Afghan insurgents. Pakistan provided significant assistance to US-led coalition by targeting Al-Qaeda operatives, combating sectarian outfits and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) yet declining to target Afghan Taliban and Kashmir focused groups to achieve its foreign and security policy objectives. The study argues that the US counterterrorism strategy in Afghanistan, its policy in South Asia and Pakistan’s internal political and security dynamics became the reasons for Islamabad’s growing reluctance to align its strategic objectives with the US policy. Nevertheless, Pakistan faced political, economic and strategic constraints while pursuing to retain this delicate balancing act in the US-led ‘War on Terror.’

**Key Words:** Afghan conflict, AfPak, Counterterrorism, India, South Asia, Taliban.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center (New York) and the Pentagon (Washington), totally transformed Pakistan’s relations with United States. The George Bush administration quickly blamed that Al-Qaeda network led by Osama bin Laden, based in Afghanistan, was involved in the 9/11 attacks. Given Pakistan’s proximity to Afghanistan and its diplomatic and military relations with Afghan Taliban, Bush administration sought Pakistan’s cooperation to dismantle Al-Qaeda’s network in Afghanistan and to overthrow the Taliban regime that allegedly provided safe haven to Al-Qaeda’s central leadership (Ali, 2007). Pakistan’s dilemma was that it had supported Taliban regime (1996-2001) in Afghanistan as part of its traditional ‘strategic depth’ policy against India. Pakistan’s strategic depth policy meant a desire to prevent a possible ‘strategic envelopment’ by India through Afghanistan. Pakistan always fears that New Delhi could manipulate events in Afghanistan to cause political and security problems for Islamabad. At the heart of Pakistan’s strategic depth policy is to establish a friendly government in Kabul that at the minimum does not pose a second front in the event of a war with India (Khan, 2003). Another important problem for Islamabad was that Taliban had extensive ethnic, economic, and political ‘connections’ to Pakistan’s tribal areas. In fact, Taliban had access to more influential lobbies

such as state institutions, Inter Services Intelligence Directorate (ISID), major political parties, militant groups, the extensive madaris (Islamic religious schools) network, the drug mafia, business community and transport groups in Pakistan than most Pakistanis (Rashid, 2002, p. 185). Islamabad, therefore, “feared that an abrupt reversal in [Afghan] policy would cause an internal backlash” from Islamic parties, militant groups and Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) (Yusuf, 2010). Faced with intense pressure from US and its allies, General Musharraf agreed to modify the pro-Taliban policy of the state and align it with that of the US objectives in the region (Ali, 2007). Musharraf presumed that engagement in the US-led ‘War on Terror’ would provide Islamabad the opportunities to secure its core national security interests which included: protecting territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country, safeguarding its nuclear and strategic assets, obtaining the US support for Kashmir cause, installing a friendly and ethnically broad-based government in Kabul and securing American economic and military assistance. Musharraf also presumed that military and security cooperation with the US would improve Pakistan’s image as a “responsible and honourable” state (Text: Musharraf Rallies Pakistan, 2001.) Consequently, Pakistan became a ‘frontline state’ of high strategic importance as the US-led ‘War on Terror’ unfolded in neighbouring Afghanistan. As a ‘frontline state’, Islamabad shared military intelligence, provided logistical support, air and naval bases to the US-led coalition forces to topple the Taliban regime, hunt down Al-Qaeda leaders and achieve their military objectives in Afghanistan (Hadar, 2002).

Nevertheless, United States expressed deep concerns about Al-Qaeda sanctuary in Pakistan and the cross-border nature of Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. Since 2003, US military commanders in Afghanistan complained that Taliban had been able to find safe haven across the border in Pakistan to regroup and to carry out hit-and-run attacks against coalition troops, at times in cooperation with Al-Qaeda operatives (Kronstadt, 2006). In fact, US-led coalition forces believed that since 9/11, Pakistan played a “double game” of appearing to combat terrorism by targeting Al-Qaeda and anti-Pakistan Taliban, while at the same time protecting Afghan insurgents. Officials of United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) charged that elements within the military and ISI continue to work with Taliban and thus contribute to their successes, despite Taliban tactical links to Al-Qaeda (McGrath, 2011, pp. 136-138). Arguably, after 9/11, a major reversal in Pakistan’s Afghan policy came as a surprise to certain segments of Pakistani establishment which were sympathetic to Taliban, so certain elements of ISI and military were still tolerant of Afghan Taliban. With the passage of time, the reasons not to target Afghan insurgents appeared increasingly rational to Pakistan. These included: India’s growing influence and intelligence presence in Afghanistan, concerns over US ‘AfPak’ strategy, the progressive deterioration of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, US inadequate economic support to Pakistan’s counterterrorism campaign, Anti-American sentiments in Pakistan and since 2005, the strategy to “hedge against potentially unfavourable outcomes in Kabul,” after Western troops withdrawal by protecting Afghan Taliban as a “force-in-being” (Tellis, 2007). Keeping in view these reasons, General Musharraf pursued a strategy based on a ‘balancing act’ to appease the US without creating an internal backlash. Musharraf regime reluctantly sent military into tribal areas and carried out military operations which were frequently punctuated by peace deals. These agreements took effect in South Waziristan in April 2004 and February 2005 and in North Waziristan in September 2007. United States and

NATO military officials claimed that “a sharp deterioration in border security” was observed following Musharraf regime policy to struck peace agreements with local tribes and militants, that in effect “allowed the militants to operate in Afghanistan without fear of Pakistan’s reprisal.” Though, Washington recognized that there was no purely military solution to militancy in tribal areas; but it maintained that any accord should be “enforceable” by the “credible threat of force” (Leonard, 2008). Pakistan, on the other hand, claimed that it arrested over 700 Al-Qaeda operatives since 9/11 attacks and since 2008, successful military operations against Al-Qaeda and affiliated groups in erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA-now part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) disrupted their activities, and destroyed Al-Qaeda’s command, communication and propaganda centres (Gunaratna & Bukhari, 2009, p. 38).

Notably, since 2009, the resentment inside Pakistan military and strategic community deepened as Obama administration remained unwilling to share its ‘AfPak’ strategy with Pakistan Army. Moreover, the US accelerated drone attacks in Pakistan’s tribal areas and deployed secret agents and contracted personnel who were involved in covert operations across the country thereby generating Anti-American sentiments. Above all, negotiations with Afghan Taliban—which constituted a crucial part of Obama’s ‘AfPak’ strategy—were repeatedly delayed due to reported opposition from the Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Rashid, 2012). All these factors pushed Islamabad to pursue a ‘delicate balancing act’ in the ‘War on Terror’ (Friedman, 2010). Nevertheless, Pakistan faced constraints while pursuing to retain this delicate balancing. This study assesses Pakistan’s balancing act in the US-led ‘War on Terror’ between 2001 and 2014. It also analyses constraints and limitations of Pakistan’s balancing act in its counterterrorism campaign.

## **DISCUSSION: PAKISTAN’S BALANCING ACT IN THE US-LED ‘WAR ON TERROR’**

### **1. Avoiding an Internal Backlash**

A key Pakistan’s objective was to avoid an internal backlash for its decision to be a frontline state in the US-led ‘War on Terror’ from those sections who strongly sympathized with Taliban cause. Pakistan was also worried that there was strong enrage inside military to Washington’s ‘carrot and stick’ approach towards Islamabad. Some military ranks saw that the US-led War threatened Pakistan’s strategic interests in Afghanistan and Kashmir as Washington was heavily tilted towards New Delhi. Aziz (2011) notes: “Operationally, sympathy for the Taliban cause creates the danger of leakage of battle secrecy.” The connivance of some military personnel in the 2009 attack on General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi, and the 2011 attack on Mehran Naval Base in Karachi revealed that there was a real threat of “possible fragmentation” of the military. This fear of fragmentation compelled Pakistan military and civil leadership to evade targeting Haqqani group in North Waziristan.

Pakistan was also cautious that a full-blown operation against Afghan Taliban and Haqqani group would cause these insurgents to turn against Pakistani state. Pakistan’s concerns about a backlash were heightened when General Musharraf faced extreme opposition to send Pakistan army into the tribal region to kill and capture Al-Qaeda operatives and Afghan insurgents in

2002. The tribesmen saw Pakistan army's incursions in tribal areas to capture or kill these "guests" as a breach of trust." With growing hostility towards military operations in tribal region, Islamabad "concluded that defying the US pressure was preferable to launching an all-out war against Afghan insurgent groups" in the tribal areas as such operation was perceived to unite militant organizations and many local tribes against Pakistani state (Yusuf, 2010). For that reason, Islamabad pursued a "segmented counterterrorism" approach whereby it disrupted Al-Qaeda network and some sectarian outfits but made peace deals with the tribes and local militant groups and remained "much more reluctant" to decisively purge Afghan Taliban fighting against US-led coalition in Afghanistan (Tellis, 2008). Even this "segmented approach" failed to avert many "ideologically-motivated" tribesmen to embark on a "domestic insurgency," which was fully joined by Punjab based militant groups—these included for example: Kashmir-focused groups; Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LT); Jaish-e-Muhammad (JM), and the sectarian outfits; Sipah Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ)— after the Red Mosque operation in 2007 (Yusuf, 2010). In effect, Islamabad policy of supporting the 'good Taliban' partly contributed to the resurgence of Afghan Taliban and "ultimately backfired in perfect symbiosis" of Al-Qaeda, TTP and Punjab based militants (Cassidy, 2012, pp. 70-71).

Moreover, Islamabad had little control on all the militants and all the elements of Taliban insurgency. Punjab based militants particularly LJ and LT were showing fission and fragmentation. According to Pakistani intelligence officials, LJ gave birth to eight small, scattered groups to operate more effectively across Pakistan (Z. Khan, 2010). Zahab (2011) highlighted that sectarian militant groups had the potential to destabilize the whole region due to the nexus between LJ and Al-Qaeda. As far as LT was concerned, the reality on the ground was much more complicated and complex. Lashkar-e-Tayyaba split its strength into various factions, which had lost contacts from LT leadership (Hafiz Saeed, the leader of LT/Jamatud Dawa). An analyst pointed out: "You limit their ability to have some possibility of controlling those below. The risk of splintering increases." In fact, the greater the splintering of militant groups, the greater the chances that Pakistan would be deeply embroiled in terrorism and militancy ("Can Pakistan Take," 2009). Siddiqi (2008, p. 54) argues that Pakistan was engaged in a serious counterterrorism campaign against Al-Qaeda, TTP and various splinter groups of Punjab based militants ('Punjabi Taliban') and its army was overtaxed by fighting in various tribal areas. Against this backdrop, Islamabad recognized constraints of its 'delicate balancing act.' It extended cooperation with the US-led coalition as a frontline state in the 'War on Terror', but at the same time, it sought to avoid an internal backlash from Taliban sympathizers and rebels. Pakistan was, hence caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, United States and NATO officials criticized Islamabad for declining to cooperate wholeheartedly. On the other, 'Islamist extremists' and TTP commanders, such as Maulvi Fazalullah rose in rebellion against Pakistani government for joining US-led coalition 'War on Terror' (Innocent, 2011)

## **2. Resentment Over AFPAK: Shifting the Strategic Centre of Gravity of the 'War on Terror' to Pakistan**

Obama's administration 'AfPak' strategy declared its goal to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al-Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan," and to "eventually destroy extremists and their safe

havens within both nations [Afghanistan and Pakistan]” (The White House, 2009). Pakistan policy makers were vexed that Obama’s ‘AfPak’ strategy combined the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and militancy in Pakistan into “single theatre of combat” (Lodhi, 2009). According to an analyst, the White Paper regarding ‘AfPak’ “emphasized Pakistan in the lexicon of the ‘war against terrorism’ and Afghanistan in the lexicon of ‘reconstruction’—moving the strategic centre of gravity of the threat to Pakistan” (A. R. Khan, 2010). According to an analyst, President Obama’s policy of a troop surge of 30,000 announced on December 1, 2009 aimed to demonstrate “sufficient resolve” to bring Taliban to the negotiating table and strike a political agreement with them that will leave in place a stable non-Taliban controlled Afghan government, so that US can “run honourably” from Afghanistan. The first major ‘surge’ operation launched on February 13, 2010 in District Marjah of Afghanistan’s Helmand Province failed to bring peace in the area as the US-led coalition control was “patchy” (Z. Hussain, 2010a, pp. 196-197). The analyst argues that the Karzai government failed to fill the vacuum with good governance in Marjah. Most importantly, Afghan security forces were unable to prevent the Taliban’s return to the area (p. 210). A former Pakistan military General notes that the ‘surge’ strategy, on the contrary, pushed back militants out from Afghanistan into Pakistan’s tribal region, causing spill over effects on Pakistan military operations in the tribal areas (Beg, 2009). This in turn, increased the threat of growing militancy and terrorism in Pakistan.

By December 2010, Obama’s Afghanistan-Pakistan Review was complete, and the US was forced to substantially lower its expectations: “Pakistan is central to our efforts to defeat Al-Qaeda and prevent its return to the region.” Though, the review admitted that the ‘AfPak’ strategy made little progress in degrading the ever-growing Afghan insurgency (Hashmi & Yan, 2010). Yet, Washington argued that it had to “trade-off Pakistani stability for success in Afghanistan at this point” (Yusuf, 2009, p. 21). Clearly, the new US strategy placed Pakistan as the “central node of global terrorism,” which in the words of Markey (2009), shifted the strategy “from ‘AfPak’ to PakAf” (A. R. Khan, 2010).

The US ambiguous ‘AfPak’ policy created profound doubts and suspicions in junior ranks of Pakistan military for launching new operation in North Waziristan targeting Haqqani network about which the US was vociferously insistent (Perlez & Shah, 2008). In this context, Pakistan did not toe the US line that targeting the Haqqani group in North Waziristan would break “the backbone of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan.” As Haider (2010) noted that Afghan insurgency “does not have a defined center of gravity (COG); there are multiple COGs and command lines are much more diffused.” This resulted in “much dispersal” of the leaders and the fighters of the group because of frequent US drone strikes. The dispersal of Haqqani group provided militants “the flexibility to retain their asymmetric advantage over foreign troops in Afghanistan.” However, ‘AfPak’ policy escalated US drone strikes against targets particularly Al-Qaeda in tribal areas especially in North and South Waziristan from 43 strikes during 2004-2008 under Bush administration to 308 under Obama’s first term—a 710 percent increase, (Z. Hussain, 2010a) hence, further destabilizing the tribal region. In Islamabad’s view, the longer the US-led coalition’s military operations in ‘AfPak’ region continued without an explicit political approach, the tougher it became for Pakistan to manage its delicate ‘balancing act.’

### **3. Pakistan's Strategy to 'hedge against potentially unfavourable outcomes' in Afghanistan after US-led Coalition withdrawal**

Pakistani policy makers were deeply concerned by the fact that US failed to bring about a sustained and successful strategy to stabilize Afghanistan. Pakistan believed that Afghan insurgency had developed its "own momentum" due to US 'light footprint' approach in Afghanistan, delays in building up the country's institutional infrastructure, the lack of a comprehensive reconstruction effort, failures in developing the Afghan security sector and the nexus between drugs, narco-trade and militancy. Islamabad maintained that Afghan Taliban's recruitment, training and organization efforts are indigenous, as highlighted by their northward spread towards Kunduz, Baghlan, and even Badakhshan (Partlow, 2010). Hamid Karzai, quoted in a cable sent by the US Ambassador in Kabul (and released by WikiLeaks), underscored this point: "But, Pakistan is a puzzle to me now... "I see things happening on a massive scale in the northwest that are not the work of ISI" (Qazi, 2011). In this context, Pakistan considered Haqqani group "a significant player" and "kept communication lines" with the group open as it would "guarantee" Islamabad "a major role in future negotiations" to end Afghan conflict and to increase its influence in Afghanistan after the coalition forces exit from the country (Perlez & Shah, 2008). Hence, it decided not to target Haqqani network for its foreign policy interests as 'hedge' against adverse outcomes in Afghanistan. Besides, Pakistani officials also pointed out that Kabul had not set up enough border posts along Pak-Afghan border to monitor cross-border movements of insurgents. Mr. Shah Mahmood Qureshi, former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, also sought closer coordination of coalition forces to control the border region "by undertaking an expansion of military deployments and check posts on the Afghan side of the border" to check infiltrations. He also called for robust real time intelligence sharing and "relocation of Afghan refugee camps" from tribal areas and other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to "controlled sites in Afghanistan" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, 2008). Certainly, Pakistan wanted to avoid a scenario in Afghanistan where its own fragile internal security received a further jolt from its western borders. Arguably, treading the delicate balance, Islamabad would continue supporting counterterrorism cooperation with Washington but will be reluctant to target Afghan Taliban and Haqqani group to avoid undesirable outcome in post 2014-Afghanistan.

### **4. Pakistan's Balancing Act in the Context of US Policy in South Asia**

A major challenge Islamabad faced in its engagement with Washington was the US policy in South Asian region. American efforts to assist India to become a world power created anxiety in Pakistan. In this context, US-India cooperation to minimize Pakistan's influence and primacy in Afghanistan affected Pakistan's campaign against militants. From Islamabad's perspective, the US policies were bleak about regional stability in South Asia as these policies ignored Pakistan's legitimate security interests (Fair, 2011, p. 102). United States faced an angry backlash from Pakistani policy makers, as it continued to tilt towards India vis-à-vis Kashmir dispute and Afghan conflict. Pakistan's objectives regarding its eastern border were based on deterring an Indian conventional threat and altering the status-quo in the disputed State of Jammu and Kashmir to ensure its accession to Pakistan (Shahi, 1988, p. 182). But the repeated US declarations that fighting Al-Qaeda is a "vital interest" prompted India to exaggerate Kashmiri insurgents' links to Al-Qaeda, thereby legitimating her state terror tactics

in Washington's eyes. This Indian strategy had negative fallout on Pakistan's support for Kashmiri people's 'right of self-determination' in the post 9/11 scenario. In other words, without the resolution of Kashmir dispute, India and Pakistan remained in a "state of perpetual tension," thereby preventing Islamabad to shift its focus from eastern border to its western border with Afghanistan in the battle against terrorism (J. Husain, 2010).

Furthermore, Islamabad saw with particular concern the scale of New Delhi cooperation with Kabul and Washington and believed that India was acting in concert with the US in Afghanistan (Bhadrakumar, 2008). Pakistan was particularly chagrined that United States "handed the keys of Kabul to India's proxies, i.e., Northern Alliance." In Islamabad's view, United States remained insensitive to its concerns about India's clandestine activities in Afghanistan which were aimed to destabilize Pakistan. Islamabad accused India of interfering in Balochistan and Pakistan's tribal region along Pak-Afghan border ("Proof of India's Involvement," 2009).

It is important to note that Pakistan army also linked peace in Afghanistan to stability in Pakistan. In a press briefing in February 2010, Pakistan Army Chief, General Ashfaq Kayani emphasized that Pakistan's "strategic paradigm needs to be fully realized." He declared:

"We want a strategic depth in Afghanistan... Strategic depth does not imply controlling Afghanistan... If Afghanistan is peaceful, stable and friendly, we have our strategic depth because our western border is secure.... [Then,] you're not looking both ways... [But] an environment hostile to Pakistan could strain its battle against militancy and extremism" (Z. Hussain, 2010b).

Earlier in 2009, US commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal suggested to "scale back" India's increasing presence in Afghanistan in order to decrease tensions in the region ("US General Criticizes." 2009). In his view, New Delhi's growing influence in Afghanistan was "jeopardizing US mission to defeat the Taliban and Al-Qaeda" increased "regional tensions" and encouraged "Pakistani countermeasures in Afghanistan or India" (Varadarajan, 2009). In 2011, US Senator Chuck Hagel noted India as a "troublemaker in the region." He went on to say: "India for some time has always used Afghanistan as a second front, and India has over the years financed problems for Pakistan on that side of the border" (Rajghatta, 2013). Hagel's comments on India's role in Afghanistan provided yet another indication that Pakistan's security concerns vis-à-vis India were well founded and therefore Pakistan's battle against terrorism was perhaps compromised.

Washington, however, did not appreciate Pakistan's security concerns vis-à-vis India. In a major policy speech in Indian city of Chennai on July 20, 2011, the then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton pushed for a leadership role of India in Asia. She articulated: "India has the potential to positively shape the future of the Asia-Pacific." On US policy towards Pakistan, she remarked: "Pakistan must do more to tackle terror groups operating from its territory being used for attacks that destabilize Afghanistan or India" (Shaukat, 2011). India and the US moved significantly closer since then, undermining US-Pakistan ties. In June 2013, US Secretary of State, John Kerry during his visit to India, described New Delhi as a "key partner" of the US "rebalance" in Asia and called for India "to play a central role in the next Afghan elections" in 2014 ("John Kerry Urges," 2013).

Arguably, US efforts to forge a strategic relationship with New Delhi irked Islamabad. Pakistan clearly saw an increasingly “pro-India tilt in US’ South Asia policy” (Yusuf, 2009). From Pakistan’s perspective, the US support to India was leading New Delhi to “military superiority and regional ‘hegemony’” (Bhadrakumar, 2008). In this connection, India gained strategic foothold for the post-2014 scenario in Afghanistan with a Strategic Partnership Agreement that was concluded on October 4, 2011 with US sanction. Under that agreement, “India agreed to assist, as mutually determined, in the training, equipping and capacity building programmes for Afghan National Security Forces [ANSF]” (Routray, 2011). In Islamabad’s view, this agreement jeopardized Pakistan’s position in Afghanistan because Afghan security personnel trained by India would have a “natural affinity” towards New Delhi thereby posing ‘two-front threat’ to Pakistan in any future conflict with India (“Implications of the India,” n.d). On the other hand, US declined to encourage Pakistan’s offers to train Afghan security forces. Therefore, Pakistan saw Indo-Afghan Strategic Partnership Agreement through the lens of US-India nexus in Afghanistan. The agreement was signed against the backdrop of US accusations over Pakistan’s persistent support to Haqqani group and Afghanistan’s allegations of Pakistan’s connection in the assassination of top-peace negotiators including ex-Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani (Taj, 2011). Following the assassination of Rabbani, President Karzai stated that Kabul will forge closer ties with US, European Union and India rather than negotiating with Pakistan-based Taliban. By and large, the US policy towards the region led to the apparently “divided opinion” amongst Pakistani strategic community and policy makers about fighting the war against terrorism. In fact, both United States and India sought to open direct channels for talks with some Afghan Taliban in order to curtail Pakistan’s role in the future Afghan political negotiations. Pakistan’s military officials believed that Washington was deliberately implementing this strategy to neutralize or marginalize Pakistan. Indeed, India sought “a bigger role” in the process of Afghan negotiation process (Khan, 2011). In such scenario, Islamabad maintained a delicate balancing act in the ‘War on Terror’ as it pursued legitimate interests in Afghanistan by supporting Afghan insurgents and defied US pressure (Bhadrakumar, 2008) by targeting Al-Qaeda and TTP. It could be argued that for Pakistan, Afghan Taliban were “a natural boost to Islamabad’s drive to protect its interests” by minimizing Indian influence in Afghanistan (Siddiq, 2011).

## **5. Economic Costs**

Pakistan’s economy remained in a severely troubled state due to terrorism and counterinsurgency campaign and it suffered ‘a colossal loss’ of \$78 billion (7 trillion) between 2001 and 2012 due to ‘War on Terror.’ Islamabad only received Rs. 990 billion in US aid programme through Non-Governmental Organisations and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (“Pakistan Lost Rs. 7,020 billion,” 2012).

In fact, Washington disregarded the “cumulative impact” of the ‘War on Terror’ on Pakistan’s economy such as massive raise in expenditure on military operations and internal security, damages to infrastructure, displacement of population, decline in foreign investments, flight of capital and colossal losses to local economies in tribal areas, Swat/Malakand and other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to estimates, the US spent \$2,000 billion in Afghanistan, Iraq and on upgrading homeland security during 2001-10; Pakistan received only 0.1 percent



(\$20 billion) of this “lion amount” (Husain, 2011). In fact, the \$1.5 billion in annual assistance from 2010 to 2014 under the Kerry-Lugar Bill was “dwarfed” in comparison to the US assistance to these states.

Since 2001, most US foreign aid had been earmarked to Pakistan’s military. Over the period of 2002–2007, Washington provided \$10,097 million in assistance. This included \$2,728 million for economic-related aid and \$7,369 million for security-related aid. Hence, social and economic sector received about one-fourth of the assistance (27 percent) while US assistance to military constituted more than 73 percent of the total aid during 2002–2007. Between 2008 and 2012, US increased economic assistance to Pakistan. Of the total \$15,815 million provided, \$5,958 million (37.67 percent) were allocated for economic support funds (62.32 percent) and \$9,857 million for security-related aid (Kronstadt, 2013). This showed an increase of 10.66 percent in economic assistance during 2008–2012 as compared to that of 2002–2007. Though the US economic aid showed significant improvement in the economic development of Pakistan, but the quality of education and health services provided remained poor and inadequate. As noted by Fair (2009), Washington like other “supply-driven donors in Pakistan, tends to define its output as funds disbursed or things built, such as schools and clinics, rather than services delivered, such as quality of education provided, or quality of medical care delivered.”

In fact, Pakistan reached a point where it was unable to sustain the cost of war any longer, which badly restricted economic growth. Yet, Washington’s transfer of Coalition Support Fund (CSF) to Pakistan was very slow and problematic at a time, when Pakistan’s economic conditions were abysmal (Waraich, 2011). According to Byman (2006, p. 111), denying Pakistan’s security forces ‘resources’ (money transfer) meant that the US remained unable to pull the levers to influence Pakistan army’s strategies in the ‘War on Terror.’ Byman argues that Pakistan was a developing country and faced “structural problems” such as civil-military tension manifested by fears of a military coup, fragile and vulnerable economy and sectarian rifts in the society (pp. 81-82.). The structural weaknesses have a direct political impact that can aid an insurgency by hindering the crafting and the execution of a national counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategies. The implications of such “structural weaknesses” extended “beyond the battlefield” and impacted broader US-Pakistan ties (Cassidy, 2012). Between 2002 and 2014, Pakistan’s insurgency cost 49,000 precious lives of civilians and security personnel, required the mobilization of nearly 150,000 troops on western border and cost its fragile economy about \$102.51 billion (Shaheen, 2014) constraining Pakistan’s role in counterterrorism measures.

## **6. Anti-Americanism**

A major obstacle Islamabad faced was to keep a balance between preserving partnership with Washington and dealing with anti-US sentiments in Pakistan. However, anti-Americanism in Pakistan limited Islamabad’s counterterrorism campaign. Anti-Americanism in Pakistan recognized United States as the “source of all evils afflicting the Islamic as well as the non-Islamic world.” While religious hardliners consider US as “anti-Islam,” the moderate-liberal regard it as “anti-people.” (Raman, 2011, p. 176). Moreover, intense pressure from America on Islamabad to renounce its support for Kashmiri freedom struggle with no “reciprocal

pressure” on New Delhi to end terror practices in Indian occupied Kashmir and Pakistan created deep impression among Pakistanis that the US is indifferent to the precious loss of lives of Kashmiri and Pakistani people (Perkovich, 2011). Arguably, the prevailing anti-America sentiments prevented Pakistan military from adopting a “shared set of counterinsurgency practices” and a “broader strategic outlook” on combating Afghan Taliban and Haqqani group to consolidate its gains against militants in the region. Ultimately, this scenario required Washington to be realistic about its expectations from Pakistan army to “adapt” and effectively combat terrorists and militants (Lalwani, 2010).

Notably, substantial increase in missile strikes by US drones created anger among Pakistani citizens. Though drone strikes targeted some militants successfully, civilian deaths significantly damaged the US image in Pakistan. It was reported that drone strikes in Pakistan since January 14, 2006 to April 8, 2009 killed 2 percent Al-Qaeda operatives and 98 percent innocent Pakistani civilians (Mir, 2009). Of the 1,184 persons killed by the US drone strikes in 2010, 703 (59 percent) were civilians, including women and children and 481 were “suspected militants” (41 percent) (Mir, 2011). Bureau of Investigating Journalism disclosed that CIA’s drone attacks in tribal areas also targeted civilians in “follow-up attacks” who arrived at the scene to help rescue victims (“CIA Drone Strikes,” 2013). Consequently, the continuation of these attacks increased instability in Pakistan and contributed to “a sense of lost of sovereignty” and independence among public (Exum et al., 2009). In a landmark decision on May 9, 2013, Peshawar High Court declared that US drone strikes in Pakistan’s tribal areas as “naked aggression against the country” which constituted “war crimes” (Farooq, 2013). The court ordered the government to raise the drone issue at the United Nations Security Council and to take all possible measures to halt the attacks (Shah, 2013). In this context, Pakistan had to tread the delicate path between cooperation with US and its counterterrorism campaign.

## **7. Political and Ideological Dimension of the ‘War on Terror’**

To reduce the risks and costs of counterterrorism campaign in the tribal areas, Pakistan army required some notion of support by the local population as well as the general Pakistani public. In early 2009, when the insurgency spread to Swat valley and Malakand region and the people recognized the threats from the “collusive aspirations” of TTP and Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) militants, the public support significantly turned in favour of military campaign (Cassidy, 2012, p. 89). In 2014, Pakistani public also supported Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan. Yet, there had not been a considerable shift in attitudes toward cooperation with the US in the ‘War on Terror’ or “alignment” with its “strategic vision for ‘AfPak’” region and beyond. Clearly, Taliban were “draining the state’s political and ideological legitimacy while broadening their own.” This increased the gap between the state and its population. Most Pakistanis might not favour the Taliban’s “puritanical zeal,” but for many, Taliban’s assertion of being ‘jihadi’ or ‘Mujahedeen’ and their backing the idea of an “Islamic welfare state” wrapped the Taliban in the “cloak of Islamic legitimacy.” This Islamic legitimacy had been “incubated” by Pakistan itself during Afghan Jihad in the 1980s and afterwards during Taliban rule (1996-2001) (Siddiqi, 2009). Thus, at political and ideological level, it became a mounting task for the state to “re-characterize this subverted discourse as

illegitimate, terroristic or even anti-state” (Siddiqi, 2008). It was this political and ideological dimension of the ‘War on Terror’ that was jeopardizing Pakistan’s security, because it generated ambiguity amongst Pakistani society, political circles and media about militancy, extremism and terrorism and how the state and society should respond to it effectively. It was unfortunate that Pakistan failed to develop “a consolidated narrative” of the ‘War on Terror’: whether this was Pakistan’s war or America’s war (Siddiqi, 2009). Indeed, it proved a major constraint in Pakistan’s balancing act in its campaign against terrorism.

Despite all these limitations of Pakistan’s balancing act in the ‘War on Terror,’ Pakistan army’s successful military operations in Swat and South Waziristan in 2009 put Taliban on defensive. Pakistan Army’s willingness to “capture, hold and build” the area cleansed of the Taliban presence was evidence to the fact that Pakistan demonstrated political will and sufficient counterinsurgency capability to dislodge the Taliban from their strongholds in tribal areas and Malakand region (Bukhari, 2009). In fact, Pakistan military operations turned TTP insurgency into “an enfeebled insurgency” (A. R. Khan, 2010).

## **CONCLUSION**

Pakistan’s engagement in the US-led ‘War on Terror’ involved a delicate balancing act between US and Afghan Taliban. Pakistan’s engagement in the War was complicated by the fact that Pakistan disagreed with several components of the US policy. Washington insisted only on military solution against Afghan insurgents. Islamabad, on the other hand, was ‘unable or unwilling’ to combat Afghan Taliban and it pursued a ‘selective counterterrorism’ strategy. The US repeatedly pressured Islamabad to modify its regional strategic calculus, which has always been ‘India-centric’ with a fear of a ‘two-front scenario,’ whereby rivalry with India was compounded by a hostile and unfriendly government in Kabul with serious consequences for Pakistan’s internal security. Hence, United States faced difficulties to restructure Pakistan counterterrorism strategies, as Washington remained indifferent to Islamabad’s internal security threats and unwilling to address Pakistan’s vital security concerns vis-à-vis India and Afghanistan.

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