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General Musharaf's Taliban Policy 1999-2008

Naseem Ahmed *

Abstract

In the spring of 1999, Pakistan army chief, General Pervez Musharraf, gained international notoriety for launching an armed assault on the Kargil in Indian Kashmir. In October of the same year, he deposed the elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and was widely condemned in the Western capitals for his military coup. However, his image was completely transformed in Western eyes when he took a U-turn in Pakistan's policy of supporting the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan, in the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, 2001. In fact, in the beginning General Musharraf continued the pervious government policy of supporting the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Although this policy change earned him a considerable disrepute at home, where a large section of the population supported the Taliban and majority of the people in Pakistan opposed the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan. Since Pakistan actively joined American war against Al-Qaeda, and Taliban in Afghanistan, Pakistan took U-turn in her policy towards Taliban. Therefore, in reward Pakistan got U.S. economic and military aid. The main objective of this paper is to discuss General Musharaf's Taliban policy in detail. This paper is divided into two parts: first part of the paper analyzes pre- 9/11 Taliban policy and, post 9/11 policy would be discussed in the second part of the paper.

Keywords: *General Musharraf, Taliban, Afghanistan, Pakistan*

Pre-9/11 Taliban policy

This paper is divided into two parts; in the first part we would discuss Pakistan's pre-9/11 Taliban policy during General Pervez Musharraf regime. Though the civilian government of Nawaz Sharif was overthrown in a military coup mounted by General Pervez Musharraf, still there was no change in Pakistan's policy of supporting Taliban in Afghanistan. The Kargil conflict brought to the surface the brewing

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conflict and lack of trust between the civilian government of Nawaz Sharif and the military particularly with the then Chief of Army Staff General Musharraf. Nawaz Sharif came under substantial pressure from the Clinton administration over the Taliban's association with Osama Bin Laden and the existence of terrorist camps in Taliban-controlled territory. Nawaz Sharif tried to get the UAE and Saudi Arabia, two states that recognized Taliban, to influence the militia's increasingly obstinate leader, Mullah Omar to assist in curbing the cross-border activities of Pakistani anti-Shiite sectarian groups based in Afghanistan.[1]

By late 1999, there was growing frustration, especially amongst the civilian policy-makers in Pakistan that the Taliban leadership was increasingly ignoring some of the Nawaz Sharif administration's complaints regarding the use of Afghan territory by some groups involved in criminal activities within Pakistan. However, the military still contended that the Taliban were Pakistan's most reliable proxy in Afghanistan. Consequently, the civilian administrations' complaints were ignored.[2]

Thus, a major factor behind the coup was the apprehension amongst senior army officers that the civilian government was challenging the army's' corporate interests and undermining its dominant role as an alternative system of power and influence. Nawaz Sharif's sense of political power and his insistence to assert his legal constitutional authority in attempting to remove the army chief brought to the surface the stark reminder that democracy or no democracy, army still remains the paramount institution of the state that could not tolerate any lack of deference to its overwhelming control of the Pakistani state.[3] Finally, General Musharraf took over the government and imposed fourth Martial Law in the short history of Pakistan. General Musharraf had apparently staged a coup against elected Prime Minister who had betrayed Islamic Jihad in Kashmir and expressed dissatisfaction with Pakistan's pervious Taliban policy. All the religious parties, led by Deobandis and their jihadi offshoots, had been rearing to begin a revolt against a pro-India and pro-Washington Prime Minister determined to choke off the financial pipeline that had made them strong and kept them going.[4] To look different from the previous military regimes, General Musharraf declared himself "Chief Executive" and not chief martial law administrator while suspending only parts of the constitution and artfully avoiding imposition of martial law, though for all practical purposes his word was law.[5]

After the take over, General Musharraf in his television address on October 17, 1999, announced the following seven-point agenda to be achieved by his regime: (1) Rebuilding national confidence and morale,

(2) Strengthening the federation with the removal of interprovincial disharmony and restoration of national cohesion, (3) Reviving the economy and restoring investors' confidence, (4) Ensuring law and order and dispensing speedy justice, (5) Depoliticizing state institutions, (6) Devolution of power to the grassroots level, and (7) Most important, ensuring swift and across- the- board accountability.

General Musharraf promised wide-ranging internal reforms after October 12, 1999, but announced that there would be no change in the foreign policy. This meant that Pakistan would carry on the old policy in regard to Kashmir and Afghanistan deemed to have been approved by the army.[6] Therefore, the new military regime in Pakistan continued the support of Taliban.

Historically speaking, the year 1999, saw Pakistan increasingly isolated in Afghanistan as Americans and Russians mobilized the international consensus against the Taliban. Ahmed Shah Masoud embarrassed Pakistan further by revealing that he had hundreds of Pakistani prisoners of war in his custody, including 17 officers of the Pakistan army, which, according to one report published in the Pakistani press, were disowned by Pakistan 'because they were all retired from service and could have gone to Afghanistan on their own.'[7] However, Pakistani generals, including General Musharraf, conceptualized a Talibanised Afghanistan as the army's great victory.

Internationally, Taliban regime was further isolated when on 7 December 2000, a resolution in the UN Security Council was moved by Russia and U.S. asking for strengthening sanctions against the Taliban, including an arms embargo and other measures. The resolution directed the Taliban to close, within thirty days, all the terrorist camps on its territory and to allow, "strict monitoring of such closures by the UN."[8] Pakistan condemned the draft resolution on the ground that it was discriminatory in nature because it did not include Northern Alliance, which, however, welcomed the draft resolution. On the issue of terrorist camps, there was considerable support for Taliban within Pakistani society especially from the religious and sectarian parties.

Thus, there was a threat for Pakistani society, which was passing through the process of Talibanisation. Moreover, the control of Taliban in Afghanistan was a source of inspiration for the jihadi and extremist groups within the country. These groups indented to take Pakistan into a theocracy and introduce a Taliban-style regime in Pakistan. Moreover, these groups had become so strong that now they were putting pressure on government. For example, United Islamic Conference, comprising all major religio-political parties rejected UN sanctions on Afghanistan and urged the Islamic countries, including Pakistan, not to accept these

sanctions.[9] Of late, the Talibanisation of Sawat Vally is the best example of it.

According to some analysts, Taliban forged unspoken alliance with the clerical forces in Pakistan. These clerical forces provided them friendly environment and, in return, they get ready-made constituency for their cause. Moreover, this alliance was supported by elements within the Pakistani establishment, which espoused the Taliban cause in Afghanistan and of jihad in Kashmir.[10]

Thus, the most dangerous trend was the growing support for the Islamic movement from within the army, which now rules the country. There was a growing fear of division along ideological lines in its ranks in the event of the military's confrontation with the Islamists. The leaders of Ikhwan had become more contentious and confident because of its strong network within the army. The entire leadership comprising of retired senior army officers and hundreds of serving officers and soldiers attended the ideological training sessions. In the words of General (R) Hamid Gul, former head of the ISI, who was deeply involved in covert operations in Afghanistan against the Soviet forces in 1980s, "Pakistani army soldiers have always been religious, but now a growing number of officers have turned Islamist."[11] Thus, it was visible that the Pakistani army was divided into Islamists and liberal classes, the former class had strong support for Taliban.

Meanwhile, Taliban Supreme leader Mullah Omar issued a decree ordering the destruction of all statues in Afghanistan. International community criticized the announcement made by Mullah Omar. The UN urged Taliban to denounce the decree. Iran, India, Sri Lanka, the EU all urged the Taliban not to destroy the statues. Finally, Pakistan appealed to the Taliban not to destroy Buddha's statues. A Foreign Office spokesman, in a statement stated, "Pakistan shares the concern of international community and attaches great importance to the preservation of world's historical monuments sites, which were part of the world cultural heritage."[12] This action of Taliban was widely condemned world wide by human rights organizations, historical and cultural organizations and states etc. It resulted in complete isolation of Taliban. However, Taliban did not pay heed to any one but for Pakistan it was really an embarrassing situation because Pakistan was the only country among the international community, which supported Taliban regime at all levels. It was clearly the failure of Pakistan's Taliban policy.

On April 4, 2001, Ahmed Shah Masoud, Vice-President and Defence Minister of the UN recognized Northern Alliance on his first visit to Europe in a press conference at Paris after a closed door meeting

with the French Minister Hurbert Vedrine made an impassioned plea for foreign aid in his war against Taliban and called for diplomatic pressure against Taliban backers in Pakistan. He further added, "faced with the aggression of Pakistan, I give myself the right—to seek aid everywhere—what happened to the British (in the 19th century) and the Soviet Red Army (in the 20th century) will also happen to Pakistan."[13] Accusing Taliban of being directly propped up by Pakistan and Osama Bin Laden, he stated that during his meeting with Vedrine, "to end the war, the international community must place strong pressure on Pakistan."[14] However, Pakistan failed to persuade the Europe to provide diplomatic support for Taliban more due to their hardline policies and violation of human rights.

Meanwhile, Pakistan was facing increasing isolation internationally due to its support of the Kashmir insurgency and its pro-Taliban stance. But, still Musharraf defended his pro-Taliban stand by asserting that national interest and security issues dictated Pakistan's policies and the country could not afford a threat from Afghanistan's side in addition to the one in the East (India).[15]

In March 2000, U.S. president Bill Clinton had been scheduled to visit South Asia, but no clear indications were given till the end, whether he would stop over in Pakistan. Finally, a fairly angry Clinton did visit Pakistan on March 25, 2000, but only for a little more than five hours after a visit to India, where he had stayed for five days. Extraordinary security measures were taken for the visit, and the capital city, Islamabad, was practically handed over to the U.S. Secret Service for the day.

President Clinton had a blunt message for General Musharraf, though conveyed in a friendly and conciliatory manner.[16] The major issues discussed were Pakistan's foreign policy vis-à-vis the ongoing Kashmir insurgency and the Taliban policy of allowing Osama Bin Laden to use Afghanistan as his base camp. Musharraf listened to patiently, but on Kashmir he was not willing to deescalate unilaterally, though he was much more forthcoming on the Osama issue.

On Afghanistan, Clinton administration pressurized General Musharraf to distance his government from Taliban. Fearing a backlash among Islamist elements in Pakistan, the general politely demurred. During his Islamabad meeting with President Clinton, General Musharraf reportedly "said that he wanted to be helpful but stressed how difficult it was to deal with 'people who believe that God is on their side."[17]In fact, General Musharraf emphasized that 'Taliban…control 95% of the territory (Afghanistan) and cannot be wished away…we feel that the international community should engage with Taliban.'[18] This was not

surprising. General Musharraf regime, whose roots of power were in the military establishment, was unlikely to bring about a major change in Pakistan's foreign and security policy. As in the General Zia era, the political decision-making again became the sole prerogative of a relatively small army circle, comprising the COAS, the ISI and MI chiefs, the nine Corps commanders and few other important staff officers in the GHQ. The army's hierarchical command structure and appointment of military 'monitors' in all civil ministries effectively reduced whatever influence the foreign office had on important external policy issues. Pakistan's foreign policy had, indeed, become 'the foreign policy of an army.'[19]Rising sectarianism, economic difficulties and the domestic political crisis had not influenced the military elite to review its Afghan policy until the advent of September 11, 2001.

Post 9/11 Taliban Policy

Here we would discuss General Musharraf's Taliban policy in post 9/11: its U-turn in Pakistan's Taliban policy, and the front-line role that we assumed against Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan and its political and economic implications for Pakistan.

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, triggered a transformation of world politics as profound and far-reaching as the television images of hijacked airliners crashing into the symbols of American military and economic power were surreal. With three thousand people killed and material losses amounting to a hundred billion dollars or more, the unprecedented and never-imagined assault on the U.S. mainland was not merely more destructive than the attacks on Pearl Harbor in 1941, it traumatized the American nation. Its pride and confidence deeply hurt, the United States seethed with anger and the urge for revenge.[20]

Within hours of the deadly September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the U. S. administration concluded that Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda operating from Afghanistan were behind the attacks. As the U.S. media instantly pointed a finger of accusation at Osama Bin Laden, naming him as the mastermind behind the terrorist attacks, implicated the Taliban and speculated about likely U.S. action against them, a sense of crisis and foreboding dominated the air in Islamabad. Because of its geographical location and being the sole supporter of the Taliban, Pakistan was bound to face painful choices in the days ahead.[21] United State could realize that any successful counterstrike would not be possible without the support and assistance of Pakistan. While addressing the American nation after the tragedy, President George W. Bush left no doubt as to the fate of the Taliban regime when he plainly declared that, "We will make

no distinction between those who planned these acts and those who harbor them."[22]

Finally, General Mahmood on September 13, 2001, was handed a formal list of the U.S. demands. 'This is not negotiable,' said Armitage, as he handed him a single sheet of paper with a list of seven demands that the Bush administration wanted him to accept. The General, who was known for his hard-line pro-Taliban position, glanced through the paper for a few seconds and passed it on to Ambassador Lodhi. Before she started reading the paper, General Mahmood replied, 'They are all acceptable to us'. The swift response took Armitage by surprise and left Pakistani officials flabbergasted. 'These are very powerful words, General. Don't you want to discuss this with your President?' he asked. 'I know the President's mind,' replied General Mahmood. A relieved Armitage asked General Mahmood to meet with Tenet at his headquarters at Langley. 'He is waiting for you,' said Armitage.[23] The famous seven demands were as follow:

i). Stop Al-Qaeda operatives coming from Afghanistan to Pakistan, intercept arms shipments through Pakistan, and end all logistical support for Osama Bin Laden.
ii). Give blanket overflight and landing rights to U.S. aircrafts.
iii). Give the U.S. access to Pakistani naval and air bases and to the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
iv). Turn over all intelligence and immigration information.
v). Condemn the September 11 attacks and curb all domestic expressions of support for terrorism.
vi). Cut off all shipments of fuel to the Taliban, and stop Pakistani volunteers from going into Afghanistan to join the Taliban.
vii). Note that, should the evidence strongly implicate Osama Bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan, and should the Taliban continue to harbor him and his accomplices, Pakistan will break diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime, and support for the Taliban, and assist the U.S. in the aforementioned ways to destroy Osama and his network.

There was an imminent danger to Pakistan's security. President Bush declared that, "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. Either you stand with civilization and good (U.S.) or with barbarism and evil (Them). Choose and to those nations that choose wrongly beware."[24] Washington put enormous pressure on Islamabad to join the war on terrorism. Given that Afghanistan was Al-Qaeda's headquarters and that the Pakistan Army—and particularly its Interservices Intelligence (ISI) branch—had a vast store of knowledge about Afghanistan's complex

political landscape, the Bush administration viewed Islamabad's support as vital to the anti-terrorist campaign.

Islamabad seriously started to calculate the cost and benefits of up coming decision, what should be the realistic response of Pakistan regarding the U.S. demands which could not hamper the national interests of Pakistan at domestic and international levels. It was presumable that the U.S. would react with even greater force now. What should be Pakistan's response if the U.S. asked for permission not merely for overflights but also made other, more problematic demands? The question required anticipation and of Pakistan's options. Whilst it was obvious that Pakistan had to avoid opposition to U.S. policy, and a refusal to cooperate would not only be ineffectual but might also provoke U.S. hostility, it was necessary to evolve a strategy of approach, keeping in the forefront both the national interest and the need for a realistic assessment of the obtaining environment.[25] U.S. officials also knew that if they expected General Musharraf to incur the political risks of abandoning a cause many Pakistani believed in, Washington would have to pay Islamabad handsomely. Initially, in September and October, 2001, as the United States prepared to invade Afghanistan, it received from Pakistan airspace rights, access to military bases, and intelligence. In return, Washington waived the remaining nuclear and pro-democracy sanctions; pledged more than a billion dollars in economic assistance, mainly in the areas of health, food, education, democracy promotion, counter-narcotics, and law enforcement.[26]

Pakistan's support was important for the U.S. Its geographic proximity and its vast intelligence information on Afghanistan were seen as crucial for any military action against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Pakistan was one of the three countries—the others were the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia—which had formally recognized the conservative Afghan Islamic government and the only country which had maintained diplomatic relations with Kabul—after having spent the past seven years helping the Taliban consolidate their rule, providing them with military, political and financial support, Pakistan was now being asked by the Bush administration to help the U.S.A. dislodge the Islamic fundamentalist government.[27]

However, General Musharraf was facing pressures from domestic and international forces. Subsequently, the government of Pakistan was seriously considering both factors in taking any decision for future policy. The 9/11 events presented Pakistan a difficult diplomatic terrain to negotiate. Fundamentally, Pakistan had only two options: to stay as an ally and supporter of the Taliban or to join the American-led

international coalition against terrorism (war against Al-Qaeda and Taliban) in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's U-Turn on Taliban Policy

The U-turn in Pakistan Taliban policy would be discussed in the light of the following questions, why did Pakistan take U-turn on Taliban policy? What were its domestic and international implications for Pakistan? General Musharraf condemned the 9/11 tragedy as the "most brutal and horrible act of terror" and in his message to President Bush had said that the world must unite to fight against terrorism in all its forms and root out this modern-day evil.[28] Pakistan was reportedly asked to provide logistical support to the U.S. military along with the use of Pakistani airspace, if the need arose, and to share up-to-date intelligence on suspected terrorist leader Osama Bin Laden and his followers in Afghanistan. U.S. had already given seven point demand list to Pakistan, which we have already mentioned above. Washington had also asked for a comprehensive report from the ISI about every detail it had on bin Laden, including his contacts with Pakistani and other Islamic militant organizations.

Pakistan eventually negotiated with the U.S.A. that no combat missions would be carried out from its territory and, instead of blanket over-flight rights, an air corridor was assigned to U.S. planes. Pakistan was ready to break diplomatic relations with the Taliban government immediately, but the move was delayed on American advice. The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Christina Rocca, told Ambassador Lodhi that Pakistan should keep the diplomatic channel open with the Taliban until the U.S. invasion was completed.[29] General Musharraf met with his Cabinet and national security team. The task was to decide whether the Pakistani government would accede to the demands made by the United States in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Corps Commanders met in a nuclear bunker near Islamabad on September 14, 2001, believing that they could talk without the risk of U.S. surveillance in a highly secured location. Nine corps commanders and dozen other senior staff officers at the army's General Headquarters (GHQ) were in attendance, including the chiefs of the ISI and MI.

General Musharraf did not find it hard to convince his handpicked civilian cabinet, but it was not so much smooth when it came to his top commanders and members of his military junta. There was a complete division over the issue. At least four top commanders, including General Mahmood who had earlier, in Washington, signed on the dotted line, showed reservations on the decision to provide unqualified support to the United States in its war on Afghanistan. Lt.-

General Mohammed Aziz, Corps Commander Lahore, Lt.-General Jamshed Gulzar Kiani, Corps Commander, Rawalpindi, and Lt.-General Muzaffar Usmani, Deputy Chief of Army Staff, were among those who opposed pulling out support for the Taliban regime. They had all played key roles in the 1999 military coup. Musharraf, however, had the backing of other Corps Commanders. It was a precarious situation for him.[30]
General Musharraf gave out a cogent exposition of why Pakistan had to stand with America. He told them that Pakistan faced a stark choice—it could either join the U.S. coalition that was supported by the United Nations Security Council, or expect to be declared a terrorist state, leading to economic sanctions. Most of his commanders nodded in sage agreement, but General Mahmood sat in sullen silence; Lieutenant General Aziz registered his polite disagreement; General Mushtaq was entirely consistent and honorable in dissent; and the unfortunate Lieutenant General Jamshed Gulzar seemed to have lost his sanity and discovered his nonexistent heroism to join the dissenters. But it was General Khalid Maqbool who really sparkled, giving a glittering performance of unctuous courtiership. In the process he won the heart of Musharraf by pleading his infallibility. And Lieutenant General Muzaffar Usmani, the number two man in the army, a self-confessed "soldier of God," registered his impolite disagreement.[31] General Usmani's argument was that ditching the long-standing Pakistan policy of supporting the Taliban without any specific American incentive in return should be avoided.[32]

The turnaround was met with astonishment by the military. They had been actively supporting the Pakhtun Taliban regime, which, according to them, provided Pakistan with 'strategic depth' against any aggression from arch rival, India. Pakistani military feared that they would lose their strategic depth in Kabul if they withdrew support from the hard-line Islamic regime.[33]

However, Pakistan Army, being the main facilitator and patron of the Taliban, was faced with a stark choice. It could persist in assisting the Taliban or side with the U.S. Pakistan's arch foe, India, had already given its complete support for U.S. military action in Afghanistan and offered Washington base facilities. A similar stance was taken by Russia and the Central Asian States. Even Washington's' bete noire in the region, Iran, rather discreetly conveyed its willingness to assist the U.S. [34] Pakistan might be bracketed with Taliban, declared a 'terrorist state' and its territory subjected to attacks to neutralize resistance. Pakistan's vital interests would be in jeopardy if India was given a free hand against Pakistan. The Kashmiri freedom struggle might be labeled as a terrorist insurgency. Azad Kashmir and Pakistan territory could be attacked under

the pretext of eliminating terrorist bases. It was known that in the 1980s, India had pondered an attack on Kahuta. It might again entertain thoughts of targeting Pakistan's nuclear assets.[35]

Finally, the point that had helped General Musharraf clinch the argument during the corps commanders' meeting earlier, in reference to India, was in fact substantial. Of course, General Musharraf and his corps commanders were unaware that hardly a few hours before their meeting had commenced, the leading Indian intelligence service, named the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), had convinced the CIA that "Pakistani jihadists" were planning an "imminent attack on the White House," and as a precautionary measure that U.S. secret Service had even made arrangements to evacuate President Bush from White House.[36]

On one hand General Musharraf had made his mind to go with U.S. in war against terrorism and, on the other hand he also tried to influence the Taliban leadership to hand over Osama Bin Laden to United States and close down the terrorist camps on Afghanistan soil. General Mahmood arrived in Kandahar on September 17, 2001, and met with Mullah Omar without any aides. A senior Pakistani foreign ministry official who accompanied the ISI chief said he was surprised when the ISI chief asked him to stay outside and insisted on meeting the Taliban supreme leader alone. No one knew what transpired in the meeting.[37]

A few days later, General Mahmood sent a delegation of religious scholars to Mullah Omar. Interestingly, the delegation comprised hardline pro-Taliban clerics headed by Mufti Nizamullah Shamzai, who later issued a fatwa (religious edict) for jihad against the American led coalition forces. While he himself led violent protests against the General Musharraf government, one of his sons went to Afghanistan to fight on behalf of the Taliban. There was a strong suspicion that the ISI chief may have been involved in deception. Some officials suggest that he had told Mullah Omar to remain steadfast and not to succumb to American pressure.[38] Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, head of the famous Deobandi Madrassa in Binori town, Karachi. It is the same Madrassa where Osama Bin Laden first met Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban, a few years ago. The mission failed, which was expected, but more worrisome was the revelation that Mufti Shamzai, instead of conveying the official message, encouraged Mullah Omar to start a jihad against the United States if it attacked Afghanistan.[39]

Pakistani mission to get Mullah Omar to change his mind on retaining Osama Bin Laden had failed. Actually, Mahmood did not really press Omar very hard, as he was instructed to do. In any case Omar gave no ground. In geopolitical terms, Musharraf and his colleagues realized

that non-cooperation with the U.S. on this issue would not only enhance Indian power but also in the longer run weaken the military's institutional interprets and its hold over the state.[40]

However, General Musharraf was under immense pressure, both domestically and from the United States on how to proceed vis-à-vis U.S. demands and expectations. While talking to a selected gathering of retired generals, seasoned diplomats, and politicians, on September 18, Musharraf argued that the decision to extend "unstinting support" to the United States was taken under tremendous pressure and in the face of fears, that in case of refusal, a direct military action by a coalition of the United States, India, and Israel against Pakistan was a real possibility.[41]

Donning his military uniform, General Musharraf looked stressed as he appeared on state television on the evening of 19 September to explain why he had decided to side with the U.S.A. in the war on terror. His tone was highly defensive as he told his countrymen how hard he had tried to defend Taliban against all odds. He justified his decision saying it was done to save the country's strategic assets, safeguard the cause of Kashmir and prevent Pakistan from being declared a terrorist state.[42]

General Musharraf's September 19 speech to his nation left no doubt as to what was at stake for Pakistan. If it did not join the U.S. war effort, the country would be marginalized and isolated. Noting that India had already offered its full cooperation to the United States, General Musharraf warned that Islamabad's refusal to toe the line would result in Pakistan's being branded a terrorism-supporting state and in the loss of any lingering international sympathy for the Pakistani position on Kashmir. He also implied, obliquely, that the very survival of Pakistan's hard-won nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles was in jeopardy.[43] He proffered five reasons for choosing this course of action:

i). Secure Pakistan's strategic assets,
ii). Safeguard the cause of Kashmir,
iii). Prevent Pakistan from being declared a terrorist state,
iv). Prevent an anti-Pakistani government from coming to power in Kabul,
v). Have Pakistan re-emerged politically as a responsible and dignified nation.

It was assumed that major powers would extend cooperation to the United States in punishing the terrorists. None would oppose a likely U.S. decision to mount an attack against the Taliban. No proof would be asked, or considered necessary, of Taliban complicity with bin Laden. Already, a year earlier, the Security Council had condemned and

imposed sanctions on the Taliban precisely because they provided bin Laden with sanctuary and a base for terrorist activities. In the presence of the new, more grave circumstances, the Security Council would be even more sympathetic to the United States. Some of the major powers might even join in the attack, and the Arab countries and Central Asian neighbours of Afghanistan would probably agree to allow use of landing facilities for U.S. aircraft. India, already canvassing Indo-U.S. cooperation against terrorism, was likely to provide assistance.[44]

General Musharraf stated that India was trying to get Pakistan declared a terrorist state and wanted to expand the scope of the war against global terrorism to include the militant camps in Pakistani Kashmir. The generals in Islamabad were cognizant of the fact that their county's geographical position, its links with the Pakhtuns of Afghanistan and its comprehensive engagement with Taliban military apparatus made Pakistan the most vital state in the entire region for any U.S. success in Afghanistan. Woodward correctly notes that Pakistan was the 'linchpin for any strategy to isolate and eventually attack al-Qaeda and the Taliban.'[45]

An objective analysis of the situation pointed to an obvious conclusion: Pakistan had to pursue a strategy that would reduce risks to Pakistan's own security and strategic interests. It had to steer clear of defiance and avoid offence to the United States. The question was not whether Pakistan could exploit its strategic location for economic or political benefits from the United States, the weightier and decisive factor was the predictable cost of non-cooperation. At the same time, long term considerations and cultural and geographical bonds with Afghanistan precluded any actions that might offend the interests or sensibilities of the Afghan people.[46]

General Musharraf was finally shown some evidence on October 3, 2001. A day later that the Pakistan Foreign Office declared that the "material provides sufficient basis for (bin Laden's) indictment in a court of law."[47] Anyhow, General Musharraf knew that war was coming to Afghanistan. Taliban leadership rejected Washington's' ultimatum. According to Taliban Ambassador Mullah Abdus Salam Zaeef to Islamabad, Osama Bin Laden could not be handed over to the Americans as this was an 'issue of faith.'[48] Taliban refused to hand over bin Laden and to close down the terrorists' camps in Afghanistan**.** As Pakistan's desperate diplomatic efforts failed to make Mullah Omar change his mind, by the end of September American forces were making final preparations to launch an attack on Afghanistan. They had already acquired three air bases in Pakistan. Subsequently, once again Afghanistan was going under attack, after the dismemberment of Soviet

Union, United States the only superpower of the world attacked Afghanistan on October 7, 2001.

With its deep involvement in Afghanistan, the ISI had the most extensive intelligence data on that country and the Taliban. When Pakistan changed its course, it also brought about a reversal in the ISI's role. The ISI was back together with the CIA for a new war, very different from the one that they had fought in the 1980s. It was not the convergence of interests that fostered the alliance this time, but a forced relationship. The agency was now required to undo the politics of militancy, which it had actively promoted for almost a quarter of a century. It had never been easy for the agency to completely break its association with the Islamists.[49]

General Musharraf was determined to overhaul the services and removed mid-level Islamic fundamentalist officers also, who worked with the Taliban. He carried out a massive reshuffle in the army's senior command and disbanded two major army units of its powerful intelligence services that had close links to Islamic militants in Afghanistan and Kashmir.[50]

The changes coincided with the launching of the joint U.S.—British military operation in Afghanistan, and were seen as a part of General Musharraf's plan to appoint to key positions those officers who would support his pro-West policy shift. The shake-up in the army high command changed the entire composition of the junta, which had ruled the country since seizing power in October, 1999, and consolidated General Musharraf's position as the sole power centre. In the past every decision taken by the cabinet and the National Security Council had to be stamped by the powerful coterie of generals. The top brass now bore a totally new and liberal image, tailored to the requirement of the new situation with Pakistan trying to cut its umbilical cord with militant Islam and the Taliban.[51]

According to *The New York Times* report, 'the move would result in the transfer of perhaps 40 percent of forces assigned to the secretive organization, the ISI, which draws its manpower from military. The agency's size is an official secret, but some officials claim that the cut could amount to at least 4,000 to 10,000 personnel and would be reassigned to their parent units in the army's infantry, armour, artillery and other forces.'[52]

This change in policy needed a change of faces as well. Gauging the mood, General Mahmood, through a close friend of Musharraf, put in a request to be retained as director general of ISI.[53] General Musharraf refused and General Mahmood had to go home. General Aziz retained the esteem and affection of his boss to fill the office so recently refused

by Mahmood, and General Usmani packed his bags and vanished. Shortly thereafter Generals Mushtaq and Gulzar lost their commands and were sidelined, and Khalid Maqbool was made governor of the largest and most populous province in the country. With General Ghulam Ahmed already having passed away, and General Amjad not being a part of General Musharraf's inner core, there was no one left in the fighting army with courage enough to register a disagreement with their chief. Ironically, General Musharraf mistakenly took this as an omen of his rising popularity in the army.[54]

Their policy of backing Afghan Islamist forces for politic-strategic reasons had come full circle. From the onset of the 1990s, the army's use of Islamist forces had more to do with enhancing security of the Pakistani state rather than any deep ideological commitment to Islamic solidarity. The generals concluded that the utility of the Taliban had run its course; the militia was now expendable in order to safeguard the 'national' interest. Consequently, the military elite decided to give the United States 'unstinted' support in its 'War on Terrorism.'[55]

However, there was a historic sense of déjà vu in this decision. In 1979, the military allied Pakistan with the U.S. to launch the twentieth century's' greatest jihad and now in 2001, the military once more aligned itself with Washington to destroy the very forces which had emerged because of that Jihad.[56] Pakistan had taken a historical U-turn in its policy towards the Taliban by fully supporting the U.S. military campaign. On the domestic scene, General Musharraf started to announce measures against the hardline religious groups and limit the license of the mullahs. Most Pakistani heaved a sigh of relief—for those oppressed by all and sundry.[57]

General Musharraf's backing for the Bush administration's action in Afghanistan once again made it possible for Pakistan to secure U.S. economic assistance and access to weaponry as the U.S. decided to lift the sanctions imposed on Pakistan by late 2001. General Musharraf claimed that Pakistan was facing a crucial situation after the 1971 debacle and the government will take decisions in the supreme interest of the country, since any wrong decision might lead the country to face disastrous consequences.[58] He extended assistance to the United States in its war against terrorism and said that the country was proud to take a stand among the international community.[59] Thus, Pakistan became once again the front-line state in war against terrorism, and an important part of the American plan for the defeat of Afghanistan's Taliban regime was having General Musharraf join the 'war on terror'.

However, General Musharraf made the right decision in supporting the United States new war against terrorism—directed against

Pakistan's former ally, Taliban. It was a timely decision dictated by Pakistan's prudence and difficult circumstances. Any delay or margin of error would have taken the initiative away from Pakistan and perhaps might have pushed Pakistan to the brink of diplomatic and even strategic disaster. The government, understanding the gravity of the situation, the intensity of the international revulsion against terrorism, and the global sympathy and support for the United States, could easily read the grave dangers that wavering, hedging out, and riding on the public's emotions could pose to national interests.[60]

General Musharraf made a swift decision to end his government's support for Taliban regime in Afghanistan and joined the U.S.-led anti-terrorism coalition. This decision was supported by democratic and liberal forces in Pakistan but, at the same time, the decision was widely criticized by religious political parties and Taliban supporters in Pakistan.

Some religious leaders mobilized people to challenge the government decision and to go to Afghanistan for Jihad against American forces. Sufi Muhammed took ten thousands Taliban (students of madrassa and young people from North West Frontier Province) along with him to fight against American forces in Afghanistan and most of them were killed by bombing of American forces. Religious leaders were trying to emotionalize the issue. However, this policy change by General Musharraf did not get support of the religious people and some elements in country's military and intelligence organizations.

Thus, General Musharraf took correct decision in the national interest of Pakistan, otherwise Pakistan had remained isolated in world community and Pakistan could face the hardships. General Musharraf's decision in U-turn on Taliban policy is widely appreciated by Western countries particularly by United States. Rightly supported by A. Z. Hilali that Pakistan was the creator, backer and supporter of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 1994 but the tragedy of the twin towers left no option for Pakistan but to revise its pro-Taliban policy and cooperate with the United States against the war on terrorism. It was a necessary and intelligent decision of the General Musharraf to protect Pakistan's vital interest and prevent India from taking advantage of the situation.[61]

Events in Washington and Islamabad during the week following September 11, provided an interesting insight into the decision-making process in Pakistan on crucial national security and foreign policy issues. Like the policy to support Taliban regime, the decision on the about-turn was also taken by just a few people. There were no consultations at any level when President Musharraf decided to abandon support for Taliban

and gave the American forces complete access to Pakistani territory and airspace.[62]

General Musharraf later declared, it was all done in the best national interest. The military leader had offered the same argument when Pakistan got into a messy situation by supporting Taliban.[63] However, Pakistan army leadership always played central role in foreign and defence policy making by giving the argument that it has always been in the vital or supreme national interests.

Post Taliban Pak-Afghan Relationship

Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan for more than two decades leading to the establishment of the Taliban regime, and now its frontline position in the war against terrorism that has targeted the Taliban, its former allies and partners in Afghanistan, raises serious questions about the efficacy of its foreign policy today which stands in stark contrast to what it was before September 11, 2001. That tragic event gave Pakistan a good excuse to change the direction of its Afghan policy. But its involvement with the Afghan groups locked in internal struggle for power left Pakistan with fewer friends and more enemies in Afghanistan, particularly among the literate urban middle class and non-Pakhtuns.

It has been a difficult task for Pakistan to forge new ties with the new rulers of Afghanistan for a number of reasons. Pakistan's image as a strong supporter of the Taliban and considerable evidence that it allowed supplies of men and material to assist the religious militia to defeat their ethnic and sectarian rivals in Afghanistan proved a psychological barrier in the way of accepting Islamabad as a partner. The leaders of the Northern Front in particular were overtly hostile, for they attributed their human and territorial loss, human suffering, and misery indirectly to Pakistan.[64] Despite Pakistan's utmost cooperation with post-Taliban Afghanistan, a cloud of uncertainty still hangs over bilateral relations. It is widely believed that elements of Northern Alliance that provided the foot soldiers of the American invasion continue to undermine Pakistan's relations.[65]

As Afghanistan is itself on the course to national recovery, so are its relations with Pakistan. There is a growing realization that the two countries are inextricably linked to each other in a number of important ways. It is to be hoped that the forces of history, ethnicity, markets, and logic of profit would bring the two people closer and that the flow in both directions would remain constant. Among the many lessons that Pakistan can draw from its Afghan experience, one stands out very clearly: the free-spirited Afghan want friends, not masters.[66] This view is also supported by General Hamid Gul, a veteran Pakistani army general

and one time ISI chief, who had been directly involved in Afghan affairs. General Gul stressed that "no body who knows Afghan nation would concede to the idea that a force can be imposed on Afghanistan. Afghanistan is not that nation and that is why they have never been subjugated in their entire history, because they are as ferociously independent as people psychologically.[67]

However, the Northern Front leaders who hold key positions in the new government have slowly reassessed the need to forge relations with Pakistan on pragmatic grounds. It was in part the influence of Karazi and in part a gesture of goodwill to Pakistan on the part of Abdul Rashid Dostum, Uzbek warlord, that he released 400 Pakistani prisoners in May, 2002, in addition to the 500 that he released earlier.[68] Pakistan on its part has tried to reassure all factions in Afghanistan that it has a new out look and it would neither side with any faction nor would it allow its territory to be used for any hostile action against the new government in Kabul.

Islamabad used its influence indirectly and by pushing the idea that the neglect or alienation of the Pakhtun majority would not bring about stability and peace. The feelings of alienation among the Pakhtun do exist but with Hamid Karazi as head of the government and co-operation of other Pakhtuns into decision-making, power-sharing arrangements are better than at any other time during the past twenty years.[69] Subsequently, the relations between the two countries have improved substantially. The leaders of the two countries have been regularly visiting each other. The two countries have revived the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan gas pipeline project which was thrown into cold storage after UNOCAL, a United States—based consortium of companies withdrew from the project. They signed a landmark tripartite agreement on December 27, 2002, to construct a 1,400 kilometer pipeline from Daulatabad gas fields in Turkmenistan to Multan in Pakistan. The $2.7 billion project would immensely contribute to the economy of Afghanistan and integrate the economies of South and Central Asian regions.[70]

However, there are a number of problems that the two countries have yet to resolve—repatriation of refugees, release of Pakistani prisoners of war and, transit trade facility etc. Above all, our interest is in securing the return to Afghanistan of the 2.5 million acknowledged refugees that continue to be in Pakistan. These refugees are a considerable drain on our economy. They make a substantial contribution to weapons proliferation in Pakistan. They exacerbate sectarian difference within the country and are in many ways the shock troops for religious parties in the country.[71]

Since Pakistan is a party of war on terror, consequently it is facing serious domestic repercussions as fallout of the war from religio-political parties especially their militant wings. But, at the same time General Musharraf has been trying his best to please America but Americans, coallition forces and Hamid Karazi are not much satisfied with Pakistan's performance and are continuously asking "do more." Since early 2003, U.S. military commanders overseeing "Operation Enduring Freedom" have been complaining that renegade Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters remain able to attack coalition troops in Afghanistan and, then escape across the Pakistani frontier. They have been expressing dismay time and again at the slow pace of progress in capturing wanted fugitives in Pakistan and urge Islamabad to "do more" to secure its rugged western border area.

U.S. government officials have been expressing similar worries, even expressing concern that elements of Pakistan's intelligence agency might be assisting members of the Taliban. The Head of the U.S. Spy Operation said on January 18, 2007 that Pakistan must do more to address the sanctuary that Taliban fighters enjoy in Pakistan before security can improve in Afghanistan. Since the re-emergence of Taliban as challenger on the political horizon of Afghanistan, it is on the record that president Karazi and commanders of NATO forces are alleging that they are re-uniting in Afghanistan with the covert assistance of ISI. Concurrently, U.S. efforts to pursue counter-terror operations in Pakistan are complicated by alleged assistance given to the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and indigenous Pakistani terrorist groups by elements of Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI).[72]

Earlier Pakistani President General Musharraf rejected the allegations in his interview with *CNN*, 'these are unfortunate statements by any leader. I don't think any other leader has said that we are not doing enough and we need to do more. It is unfortunate that these statements come from the Afghan leadership'…'this is a terrible thing to be accusing each other. We are fighting the same enemy. We are fighting Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and the rebels. If we start throwing blame on each other, we weaken our positions'...'these Al-Qaeda operatives are operating on both sides of the border, less in Pakistan, more in Afghanistan. Let there be no Afghan leader to repeat this accusation that everything is happening from Pakistan that is not the case. Let everyone to stop bad-mouthing Pakistan ... we are one country that has done the maximum against Al-Qaeda, the world knows it and everyone should know it.'[73] Later on, President General Musharraf said that some retired Inter-Services Intelligence officials could be assisting Taliban insurgents, further he added "we are keeping a very tight watch and we will get hold

of them if that at all happened."[74] But at the same time he rejected allegations as baseless, "the ISI was at present acting in collusion with the Taliban." Pakistan government at diplomatic fronts is also continuously denying any involvement of ISI in the re-emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan.

In August, 2004, General Musharraf hosted Karzai in Islamabad and, assured the Afghan president that Pakistan would not allow extremists to use its territory to disrupt coming October elections in Afghanistan. Again concern about cross-border infiltrations sharpened in the spring of 2005, with U.S. military officials in Afghanistan indicating that insurgents opposed to the Kabul government continue to cross into Afghanistan to attack U.S.-led forces before returning to Pakistan. Once again, in summer 2005, Afghan leaders accused Islamabad of actively supporting insurgents and providing their leadership with safe haven. Pakistan adamantly denied the charges as baseless and sought to reassure Kabul by dispatching an additional 9,500 troops to border areas to bolster security.

In March, 2005, U.S. Defense Intelligence Director Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby told a Senate panel that "international and indigenous terrorists pose a high threat to senior Pakistani government officials, military officers, and U.S. interests." During the September 2005 visit to the region, U.S. National Security Advisor Hadley also urged Pakistan and Afghanistan to work together more closely on security matters. The spokesman of U.S. States Department, Sean McCormack told in an official briefing in Washington on December 12, 2006 that insurgents had safe heavens along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and they were using them for attacking Afghan and U.S.-led coalition forces. But, on February 12, 2007, U.S. Secretary of State for Defence, Robert Gates eulogized the contribution made by Pakistan as an important U.S. ally in the war on terror. He said, "Negative comments are never productive; it is always easier to comment at a distance when you are not in the battle itself."

On the other hand Dick Cheney during his sudden visit to Pakistan on February 26, 2007, has expressed U.S. apprehensions to General Musharraf about the regrouping of Al-Qaeda in the tribal region of Waziristan and called for concerted efforts in countering the threat. Cheney also communicated Washington's serious concerns about the intelligence on an impending Taliban regrouping in Pakistan's tribal areas and the possible Taliban spring offensive against the allied forces. However, U.S. showed its serious concern regarding the effective role of Pakistan in war against terrorism, Taliban and Al-Qaeda by passing a bill in the House of Representatives. The bill requiring President Bush to

certify Pakistan is making "all possible efforts" to prevent the Taliban from operating in areas under its control as a condition of continued U.S. military aid.

Thus, it is also frequently alleged by Afghan government that Taliban sympathizers continue to remain active within Pakistan's security apparatus. High Afghan officials have regularly accused Pakistan of tolerating militant recruitment, training camps, and arms depots on its territory. Subsequently, on February, 2006, trip to Islamabad, Karzai presented the Pakistani President and his aides with a list of names, addresses, and phone numbers of ranking Taliban figures, more than implying that their presence and movements were with the knowledge and perhaps approval of ISI. Musharraf's response came a week later and he criticized Karzai.

It did just shortly before a state visit by President Bush, Karzai's actions were intended to maximize impact on Pakistan at a time when increasing Taliban activity in Afghanistan had drawn American concern. When President Bush visited Pakistan in March, 2006, the security of Islamabad was handed over to Americans, some ten thousand troops and police were deployed on security duty and anti-aircraft guns were installed on the surrounding hills. The extraordinary security measures were necessary as the shadow of Al-Qaeda continued to hang heavy over Pakistan.[75] While praising Musharraf for his 'courage,' Bush called upon his 'buddy' to do more to curb Islamic militancy and stop cross-border infiltration of Taliban insurgents into Afghanistan.[76]

In New Delhi, U.S. President had hailed India as an emerging world power and awarded it an unprecedented, civilian nuclear technology deal, but all General Musharraf got was a lecture on getting tougher with Taliban and vague promises of future economic, military and technological assistance.[77] The visit caused great embarrassment and frustration among the army officers because Bush's main stress and concern during his visit to Pakistan remained to convey his strong message to Pakistan that Pakistan needs to do more to counter terrorism in Afghanistan, while military government in Pakistan was looking for some economic and military aid. Although Pakistan remained central to U.S. security interests in the region, this raw deal raised skepticism among Pakistan army officers, who had little trust anyway in any long-term U.S. commitment to Pakistan. Bush administration continues to back General Musharraf as a valuable ally, but he stood on weaker ground than ever.[78]

However, General Musharraf appeared visibly uncomfortable as he stood by Bush at their joint press conference on March 4, 2006, and heard the U.S. President say that he had come to Islamabad to determine

whether or not the Pakistani leader was as committed as he had been in the past to the war on terror. The comments reflected the growing frustration and distrust of the American administration over General Musharraf's failure to stop Taliban insurgents using Pakistani territory as a base for attacks on the coalition forces in Afghanistan. More American soldiers were killed in the fighting in early 2006 than in the last four years following the ousting of the Taliban regime in December, 2001.

In an interview with foreign journalists on December 12, 2006, Karzai accused Pakistan of being the boss of Taliban. He said, "the state of Pakistan was supporting the Taliban, so we presume if Taliban still active, they are being supported by a state elements. If the world community does not realize the extent of Pakistan's interference in Afghanistan, does not find a solution to the current Pakistani military intervention in Afghanistan, the flames of the fire will spread to the region and the world."

Subsequently, to stop cross border infiltration of Taliban, General Musharraf called for installation of the state-of-the art system to record all movements across the Pak-Afghan border. The plan seeks to redress the grievances of the Afghan government, which continues to moan about lack of resolve by Pakistan to root out militancy from its side of the border. If Pakistan succeeds in fencing or mining notorious passages, it would break the back of allegation mongering against Pakistan.[79]

General Pervez Musharraf in his press conference in Rawalpindi on February 2, 2007 has said that Pakistan has decided to fence over 35km of its border with Afghanistan in FATA, South and Northern Waziristan in the first phase. Border would be fenced at seven or eight points at this stage. In the second phase, he said 250km of Pak-Afghan border in Balochistan would be fenced. The places where border fencing was planed in North Waziristan and South Waziristan had been identified and surveyed.[80]

This decision was widely criticized, at national level by the secular and religious-political parties and at international level Britain, NATO countries and America criticized the Pakistan government's decision and the United Nations also criticized Islamabad for mining the Western border. Afghanistan quickly objected to the idea of fence along the rugged border, whose demarcation is disputed by the two nations. On January 10, 2007, Afghanistan Foreign Minister Rangeen Dadfar Spanta has written a letter to the UN Secretary General to express deep concern over Pakistan's plan to mine and fence their disputed border. World Human Rights Organizations also showed their concern regarding the human more casualties in Afghanistan if Pakistan could implement this

decision, due to international apprehensions Pakistan did not fence the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

However, Afghanistan government still regularly blame on Pakistan for infiltration and the re-emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan. Therefore, the mistrust and uncertainty are visible in the relationship between the Islamabad and Kabul.

In April, 2007, with the help of Turkish President, the President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai and the President of Pakistan General Musharraf signed the Ankara Declaration. During the meeting both the leaders emphasized that Afghanistan and Pakistan should work together, "to bring peace, security, stability and economic development in the region." They also agreed to continue dialogue and cooperation in all dimensions between the two brotherly countries and to combine their efforts to enhance prosperity of their peoples. The two Presidents "agreed that their historical ties serve as a common basis to address all challenges hampering the stability, security and the development of their region and to enhance their cooperation." Both the leaders agreed to "strengthen bilateral relations on the basis of good-neighbourliness, respect for territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs." Further, they reiterated their commitment "to continue supporting moderation, fighting all forms of extremism and terrorism through coordinated action."

However, Ankara talks is a step forward towards the mutual understanding between the two leaders, which could bring end to the "blaming game" from the both sides and work together against the economic, political and security threats to the Afghanistan and Pakistan in the future.

Another development which took place on August 09-12, 2007, was the holding of "Pak-Afghan Peace Jirga." In this peace Jirga, the same old players participated like Ustad Rabbani, Ustad Rasool Sayaf, Pir Sayyed Ahmed Gillani, Ismail Khan Toran, Rasheed Dostum and Pir Sayyed Mujadadi. Of course, the late Ahmed Shah Masud succeeded by Ameen Faheem and Younas Qanooni. The main spokesman Abdullah Abdullah co-chaired the Jirga with Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao from Pakistan's side.

The Jirga was also attended by the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan. This was the first historic event of its kind that opened a channel of people-to-people dialogue in which around 700 people including members of the parliaments, political parties, religious scholars, tribal elders, provincial councils, civil society and business community of both countries participated.

However, Afghan side had prepared very well for this Jirga, with the aim of putting the whole blame on Pakistan for the present situation in Afghanistan. They wanted the delegates from Pakistan to believe that all Taliban under Mullah Omar are Pakistanis or have been trained by Pakistan and are being financed and directed by it.

The final declaration of the Jirga says, "Joint Peace Jirga strongly recognizes the fact that terrorism is a common threat to both countries and the war on terror should continue to be an integral part of the national policies and security strategies of both countries." It declared that the stemming of the increasing Al-Qaeda and Taliban threat in the region must be part of both countries national policies. The declaration further forbids any tribe from giving sanctuary to Al-Qaeda-linked Islamic militants. Lastly, the Jirga called on the Afghan government to "expedite the ongoing process of dialogue for peace and reconciliation with the opposition"—chiefly the Taliban militia. And "the Joint Peace Jirga resolved to constitute a smaller Jirga consisting of 25 prominent members from each side" both countries will appoint 25 members each in the committee.

Finally, General Pervez Musharraf urged the two Muslims neighbours to overcome their mutual mistrust. Therefore, the two governments must try to remove mutual misgiving and misunderstanding on the issues, the continuation of which can have disastrous consequences for both the countries as well as for the rest of the region. Thus, it is in the best interests of both Kabul and Islamabad to stop blaming each other and work together to counter terrorism and develop their future relationship on mutual trust.

Conclusion

Before 9/11, General Musharraf continued the policy of supporting the Taliban on the notion that it was in the national interest of Pakistan. However, Pakistani military generals including General Musharraf conceptualized a Talibanised Afghanistan as the army's great victory. General Musharraf defended his pro-Taliban stand by asserting that national interest and security issues dictated Pakistan's policies and the country could not afford a threat from Afghanistan's side in addition to the one in the East (India).[81] Militant Islamic groups were either created or were otherwise indulged by Pakistan's security forces as instruments of Islamabad's jihad policy in Kashmir and Afghanistan. There was a holy alliance between the militant organizations and the state in Pakistan before 9/11 tragedy.

After 9/11, under great U.S. pressure Pakistan took U-turn in its policy towards the Taliban as well as militant and extremist

organizations within Pakistan. U.S. decision to take military action against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban–it's harbor in Afghanistan, resultantly Pakistan once again became a "frontline state" in U.S. war on terror. General Musharraf, whether under strong U.S. diplomatic pressure or on his own diplomatic play, offered President Bush, Pakistan's "unstinted cooperation in the fight against terrorism." The reverse in Pakistan's policy towards the Taliban led to the breakdown of time honored alliance between the state and the militant organizations in Pakistan.

General Musharraf, very prudently and in a well calculated move, decided to cooperate with the U.S. on account of its own reasons. It was not only a compulsion but also a very rational move. Resultantly, U.S. sanctions, related to Pakistan's 1998 nuclear tests and 1999 military coup, were waive off. A large amount of U.S. aid began flowing into Pakistan. Direct assistance programmes include training and equipment for Pakistan security forces along with aid for health, education, food, democracy promotion, human rights improvement, counter narcotics, border security and law enforcement, as well as trade preference benefits. The United States also supports grant, loan, and debt rescheduling programmes for Pakistan by the various major international financial donor institutions. To show America's long term commitment to Pakistan, President Bush designated Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally in June 2004.

The Taliban movement had extremely serious political and economic implications for Pakistan. In order to have deeper understanding of the implications of Pakistan's Taliban policy on it, one has to focus it from three perspectives: international, regional and domestic. Internationally, the United Nations, on several occasions, strongly criticized the Taliban policies and the role of Pakistan was also criticized by the Western powers. Regionally, all the neighbours, friends and regional powers did not recognize the Taliban regime and insisted on the political settlement of the crisis. At one stage, Pakistan relations with Iran, Russia, Central Asia and China were tense on the issue of the Taliban. Pakistan lost its friend Iran and was slowly eroding its credibility with its biggest strategic friend, China. Domestically, Pakistan harvested serious implications of its Taliban policy. Sectarian violence took a heavy hand on Pakistan and many a valuable personnel perished. And it also gave a new impetus to jihadi culture in Pakistan particularly in the youth.

In short, Pakistan military, as it considers itself as the guardian of the country's borders and ideology, supported the Taliban by giving the reason that it was in the supreme national interest of Pakistan. As realists believe that the security of any state is a primary concern in

anarchic world system—where each state depends on itself for its survival because there is no guarantee of security of a state in international political system. Pakistan's historical experiences with India (wars in 1948, 1965, 1971, 1999) and troubles with Afghanistan over Durand Line and Pakhtunistan increased the fears of insecurity in the minds of the Pakistanis. By giving the same reason of 'national interest' General Musharraf took U-turn on its Taliban policy, as result of it, on one hand he got international support for his regime and on other hand he also got huge military and economic aid from U.S.

Now, what could be the likely repercussions for Pakistan if the war in Afghanistan is continued? Firstly, the absence of peace in Afghanistan means a continuation of the infiltration of refugees and along with them the infusion of heavy doses of drugs and weapons. It will put extra economic constraints on already fragile economy of Pakistan and will also intensify criminalization of the Pakistani society. Worse still, it will increase extremism, fundamentalism and political instability in Pakistan. Pakistan sought to get 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan and to build a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan to Pakistan to supply its growing energy needs. However, a stable and peaceful Afghanistan is an ultimate prerequisite. Therefore, further it needs to investigate the implications of war against terrorism (Al-Qadea and Taliban) on Pakistani state and society.

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