

Pakistan-America Relations during Trump Era: The Afghanistan Factor

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the answers of the issue of terrorism in Afghanistan and why America is demanding from Pakistan to take more counter terrorism measures against terrorists groups and organizations? Pakistan and America relations are swayed under influence of different changes those occurred at regional and global level. America declared India as its strategic ally in Afghanistan and is showed dissatisfaction on Pakistan's counter terrorism performance and alleged that Pakistan is provided safe havens to groups those are involved in terrorists activities in Afghanistan. Both states have their own strategic interests so there is divergence in their policies towards terrorism particularly in Afghanistan. Trump administration should keep in mind that India is traditional rival of Pakistan, any significant role given by US to India in Afghanistan will create security threat for Pakistan and US should try to address the Pakistan concerns in this regard.

Key Words: Afghanistan's Policy, Terrorism, Safe Heaven, Strategic Ally, Counterterrorism

Introduction

The relations between Pakistan and America have chaotic as well as complex nature. Their history of partnership is deficient in common vision and rational conceptual frameworks, (Jaffrelot, 2016) because of both countries have diverse strategic goals. So, their relationships are extremely suffered over the years particularly during Trump era. The literature on their relations can be categorized in two broad themes. Some authors describe relations between two states in neo-realistic perspective.

One group of author sees Pakistan as country searching for security (Taliaferro,2001) and other discusses US as power maximizing state and projecting the power to create fear in others (Snyder, G. H. 2002).Authors those discuss Pakistan as security- searching country according to them it will be difficult for US to gain cooperation from Pakistan according to its demands in war against terrorism particularly on issue of Afghan Taliban, because of presence of Indian influence in Afghanistan (Krasner, 2012; Jones, 2008; Tellis, 2008). They write because Pakistan feels security threat from India .So, to balance the Indian influence and hegemony in the region she acquired nuclear capability and are supporting militant groups in Afghanistan and Kashmir (Bazai, 2016). In this background especially Pakistan's army is tackling Afghanistan issue in perspective of India and it will never support any pro Indian government in Afghanistan. This school of thought has the opinion because to counter India in Kashmir and Afghanistan Pakistan army will not support US efforts to crush Afghan Taliban and

other terrorist groups. They recommended that the America should use its diplomatic power on Pakistan to stop seeing Afghanistan as a 'zero-sum game'.

They have opinion that America getting cooperation of Pakistan in war against terrorism and taking effective measures against Al-Qaeda but are reluctant to take solid military action against Afghan Taliban. The reason behind this behavior is that it has security fear from India. So, it facilitates anti Afghan government terrorists groups to counter the presence of Indian influence and friendly Indian government in Afghanistan (Kaura, & Era, 2017).

It is fact that Pakistan has its concerns regarding the government in Afghanistan, because it is significant factor for its security. As we know from history and in present period countries are remained concern about the nature of governments in their neighborhood particularly those have adjacent borders. For example, Monroe doctrine in twentieth century and currently Turkey reservations regarding Syrian government and Saudi Arabia apprehension about volatility in Yemen (Bazai, F. M. 2016). In the light of above mentioned examples it is not objectionable and intolerable that Pakistan is anxious and is worried about nature of regime and influence of India in Afghanistan.

The above mentioned writers admitted that the distraction of resources to Iraq and deficient of Investment for reconstruction of Afghanistan are main reasons for the reemergence of Afghan Taliban. But these scholars are not ready to apply this logic in Pakistan and America relations in perspective of Afghan Taliban.

President Trump shift the responsibility towards Pakistan for revival and strong position of Taliban in Afghanistan by given justification that because these groups have safe havens in Pakistan (Iqbal, 2017). Therefore, NATO and Afghan forces are facing difficulties to counter them.

Pakistan has point of view that there is no safe haven for terrorists in Pakistan because in military operations army destroyed all sanctuaries of terrorists and strong position of these groups is not because of Pakistan but it is because of failure of US policy in Afghanistan.

Other groups of scholars who discuss America as power maximizing state and projecting the power to create fear in others (Schaffer, B. & Schaffer, T. 2011) explain Pakistan and America relations in neo-classical realism background. They write that geo-political identity of Pakistan is the significant factor that is the consequence of perception of the US reliability, enmity with India, brittle relations with Afghanistan

Schaffer, H. B., & Schaffer, T. C (2011) raised some claims in their study but did not give satisfactory justification. For example they argue that Pakistan provided assistance to US in Afghanistan in war on terror because of Indian offer to America to provide bases. But ex president of Pakistan Musharaf in his autobiography, writes that Pakistan cooperated with America and accepted her demands against Al-Qaeda and Taliban because of fear of attack from USA. His claim also confirmed by other writers.

Riedel, B. (2012) also discussed Pakistan and US relations with particular focus on Terrorism. According to him Pakistan especially its security forces responsible for flourish of terrorism in region even at global level. ISI intelligence agency of Pakistan played vital role to promote the Taliban in Afghanistan. According to him Pak-Afghan border area is the most hazardous area of the world. He said because US did not adopt strict policy towards Pakistan so extremism and terrorism damaged the security of America in shape of 9/11 incident. He suggested to US government that it should adopt aggressive policy towards Pakistan and give her threat of harmful consequences in case of denial of Washington demands.

Application of approach to maximization of power through creation of fear in Pakistan US relations is also presented in Husain Haqqani & Lisa Curtis (2017&2009) study. According to this study US government should take following coercive measures to force Pakistan to follow the American policy

- Lessen American aid
- Diplomatically Isolate Pakistan
- Intensify drone attacks in Pakistan
- Travel ban on Pakistani security forces officials identified help terrorists.
- Declaration Pakistan state sponsor terrorism
- hang up Pakistan's status of non-NATO-ally

The Trump government adopted already some above mentioned recommendations to pressurize Pakistan and adopted aggressive policy towards Pakistan and is using threat or fear as means of fulfillment of its demands.

Policy Change under Trump

Shift in US Afghan policy during Trump era was the consequence of emerging perception in the defense circle particularly Pentagon that America's Afghan Policy did not produce fruitful results and was near to subside (Kaura & Era, 2017). War against terrorism that was started by US against al-Qaeda in a Afghanistan after 9/11 and to provide the support to Afghans' government against the Taliban insurgency could not successful. American government alleged that because of Pakistan non supportive attitude towards military action against Afghan terrorists and Taliban instead provided them safety in her region (Jeff, 2018).

Trump in his first telephonic contact with prime minister of Pakistan Muhammad Nawaz Sharif(Press Information Department November 30, 2016)demanding to hand over the Shakil Afridi and threatened that in case of not fulfillment of demand US will stop the \$300 million for compensation to Pakistan 's army expenditure in war on terror and delay the purchasing of F-16 fighter jets(Indian Express, 2017.)

There were two types of opinion present among Senior American officials regarding Pakistan one group consider Pakistan not trustworthy ally in the war on terror and others think that US cannot afford and extract success in Afghanistan with

deployment of troops without to build pressure on Pakistan to take strong measures against terrorists (Kaura & Era, 2017).

Trump government decided to adopt strict policy towards Pakistan and refused to provide any economic and military aid as well as demanded that Pakistan should root out Haqqani network within its territory crush terrorists groups those have links with Afghan Taliban and supporting them.

Trump's Afghan Policy and Pakistan - US Relations

When Donald Trump became president of America he announced new Afghan Policy in which he highlighted his government's plan to get the success in war on terror against terrorists groups in Afghanistan. He also explained direction of his future strategy towards Pakistan. American government insisted on that Pakistan should play effective role and to support the US efforts to crush the Taliban. Trump also alleged that Pakistan is providing safe haven to Afghan Taliban (Wazir, 2017).

It is said by policy statement by US official that it is the right of Pakistan to accept or reject the American offer. But in case of denial serious consequences will be faced by Pakistan(*Dawn, 2017*) President, Vice president and many American officials in their statements explained the nature of consequences that it may be cut of economic and military aid to Pakistan and raised doubt regarding safety of Pakistan nuclear assets.

Pakistan warned by American officials that Pakistan should destroy the sanctuaries of terrorists from her territory otherwise American could unilaterally do this in Afghanistan adjacent areas with Pakistan. Donald Trump declared the India as strategic ally in Afghanistan.

Trump revised his previous stance on presence of American military forces in Afghanistan because he convinced by his security advisors that hasty withdrawal of military will damage American interests regionally and globally.

Therefore, Trump announced to deploy more troops in Afghanistan to support Afghanistan security forces and government against Taliban with justification that quick withdrawal will create vacuum that would be fill by ISIS and al Qaeda. He further said that US troops will be remained there until unless their need for it and assured at last victory will be left for American. He explains that we are not interested in nation building in Afghanistan instead our focused will be on to crush the terrorists.

This statement conveyed the message to Taliban that they should themselves in peace talk otherwise ready to fight for as long as it require as well American strong urge regarding rooted out the terrorism(Laurel E. Miller2017).His statement regarding Pakistan received more appreciation from Afghan and Indian government. He charged that Islamabad is busy in supporting the enemies of US and Afghanistan and stressed Pakistan to revise its policies regarding

terrorists groups. He declared Pakistan as agents of pandemonium and criticized one side Pakistan is taking billions of dollars and other side damaging the American interests through supporting of terrorists that is unbearable for US to avoid any harmful consequences (The White House, 21 August 2017) Pakistan should immediately change her policy.

Like his predecessor Trump government's policy towards Pakistan does not revolve around on religious extremism or terrorism within Pakistan instead demanded to abolish Haqqani network top of the list (Afzal, M. 2018). Because according to US this is backed by Pakistan's security agencies and their attacks in Afghanistan are planned by his network in Pakistan (The White House, 21 August 2017).

There were two opinion prevailed first is there no possibility in change of Pakistan's behavior so, American continues to keep working relations without chimera because non availability of other options. Second was there is need to introduce considerable shift in US policy towards Pakistan and Trump 'policy represents this approach.

Pakistan Response

Announcement of Afghan policy and criticism on Pakistan's strategy on issue of terrorism by American President Donald Trump gave birth to conflict between both countries. Trump charges on Pakistan and declaration of India US ally strategic ally and economically and forced Islamabad to revise its policy towards war on terror particularly in Afghanistan. On 1st January 2017 Trump tweeted that it was foolish decision of previous presidents of US to give approximately 33 billion dollars aid to Pakistan over the last fifteen years in return it has not given anything instead cheated and lies. Pakistan protested on this tweet and denied the allegation of US president.

After this tweet when US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson visited Pakistan in October 2017 he got cool welcome from Pakistan's officials especially from security agencies or institutions. Islamabad also clarifies the nature of its relations with Washington. Pakistan's government conveyed the message to US that American demand of do more to crush terrorism will be reacted with no more (Iqbal, 2017). Pakistan denied that it has harbor of terrorists. Prime Minister of Pakistan said that Pakistan will not be allowed anybody to fight another battle on Pakistan's soil (*The Express Tribune*, 2017). At that time Foreign Minister of Pakistan said that US should not blamed Pakistan for failure of its war on terror in Afghanistan (Hassan, 2017). According to analysts in the reign of Trump both countries experienced Down fall in their relations between. Pakistan put responsibility of bitterness American government harsh policy towards Pakistan. Whereas Trump administration alleged Pakistan's soft corner towards terrorists is reason for this tension.

Officials in Pakistan claimed that triumph administration has feelings of treachery among Pakistanis. Instead of this fact that Pakistan helped the US to crush the al Qaeda and provided full logistic support to security forces in Afghanistan but instead of appreciation received threats, mistrust and allegation from American

government. To pressurize Trump government has also denied assurance of security aid to the Pakistan.

National security committee of Pakistan also criticized and denied the Trump's charges that in Pakistan there are sanctuary of terrorists those are involved in terrorists attacks on Afghan and NATO forces and are destabilizing the Afghanistan. National Assembly also passed resolution and declared Trump's allegations aggressive and intimidating

The Haqqani Network

America considers Haqqani Network deadly for its interests in Afghanistan. It is alleged that it has involved in terrorists activities and high profile attacks in Afghanistan. Strategically it is situated in tribal areas of Pakistan and functionally operating in south-eastern Afghanistan and has connection with Al-Qaeda and Afghan Taliban. North Waziristan one of the the Federally Administered Tribal Area particularly is under the influence of Haqqani network. US alleged that it has also relations with security establishment of Pakistan. US alleged that it has support of Pakistani security forces establishment (Solash & Siddique, 2018). According to US officials Pakistan's goal is to establish pro Pakistan and anti Indian government in Afghanistan. Washington has perception that this network is a big hurdle to maintain peace in Afghanistan. Therefore, Trump government is demanding from Pakistan that Pakistani government should take effective measures against this group. In case of failure serious consequences will be faced by the Pakistan has point of view that it has destroyed terrorists groups in its area (Iqbal, 2017). Terrorists activities in Afghanistan is the responsibility of Afghan government because Pakistan is also facing the issue of terrorism in its territory and its security forces are busy in military operations against terrorists groups. But Trump government rejected the Pakistan's point of view and has decided to take hostile position against Pakistan in this matter.

Indo-US ties in Afghanistan and Pakistan

Trump in his Afghan policy assigned a significant role to India in Afghanistan and give her status of strategic ally. He invited her for taking part in Afghanistan development. India signed a strategic partnership agreement with Afghanistan in 2011. According to this agreement she already is playing significant role in Afghanistan. Indian presence in Afghanistan created fear in Pakistan regarding her security.

Trump in his address in Arab-Islamic-US summit held in Riyadh in May 24, 2017 said that India is affected as well as suffered by terrorism. He did not give any statement regarding Pakistan's role and did not acknowledge efforts of Pakistan Army to root out the terrorists and played a major role in war on terror and have lost many precious lives. In conference Trump avoid meeting with prime minister of Pakistan, in this way he did not give chance to prime minister of Pakistan to present Pakistan point of view. But had a meeting with president of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani (Salim, 2017).

Situation further become serious concern for Pakistan when Trump invited India to support the US in Afghanistan particularly in economic and take part in development of Afghanistan because Pakistan feels security threat from India (Steve, 2017). Trump policy statement regarding India had aggravated Pakistan's main fear by India not only on eastern border but western border as well.

All these development had created trouble for Pakistan and forced her to search other options to protect her interests (Dawn, 2017) June 2017 Indian Prime minister visited US and held a meeting with American president Donald Trump. Both leaders put emphasis on importance of relations between both country to bring stability and reconstruction and assurance of security of Afghanistan.

Although US gave billion of dollars aid to Pakistan, but it also had suffered the loss of lives of thousands of civilians and security forces personnel. It was perception in Pakistan that it cooperated with US in war on terror in return it will be given role in future political set up in Afghanistan and will get support on Kashmir issue but this perception is proved as illusion. Instead Washington is pressurizing Islamabad to stop its support to Kashmiris freedom fighters, declare them as terrorists and does not allow them to use Pakistani territory for planning their operations in India held Kashmir.

Pakistan's army launched many military operations in FATA and other northern areas like operation zarbe-Azab and operation Radul- Fisad are Significant in this regard. But US is not satisfied with actions had taken against terrorists groups in Pakistan and declare operations completed by security forces of Pakistan against terrorists groups or organizations as perfunctory. In this regard American give the example of Haqaninet work and blamed that solid action is not taken by Pakistan particularly Pakistan's army to destroy the Haqaninet work(Kaura & Era, 2017)

Pakistan and America relations became tense on the issue of Pakistan role in Afghanistan. Trump's administration showed distrust towards Pakistan's security forces and said that they are involved in harboring the terrorists those are involved in terrorists' activities and are destabilizing the Afghanistan.

Whereas Pakistan's government sees Indian influence and presence as a source of insecurity and volatility in Afghanistan and showed her cavernous concerns Over Indian support to anti and antagonistic regime in Kabul and alleged that india is supporting and funding terrorists groups who are using Afghanistan as Their base and planed and launch terrorists activities in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The uncertain future of US-Pakistan relations is most influenced by Afghan factor. Pakistan as security searching state define its strategy in war on terror in Afghanistan in perspective of its security needs Whereas America as power maximizing state to enhance its power through creation fear or threat in others. This study explores the answers of the questions those are raised in study for Pakistan and United States relations in perspective of war on terror in Afghanistan. It is found that issue of terrorism in Afghanistan has deeply affected the Pakistan and US

relations because America is believed that there are safe haven of terrorists in territory of Pakistan. Terrorists groups after performed terrorists activities hide themselves in Sanctuaries those are located in Pakistani territory. Washington is demanding from Islamabad that it should destroy these Sanctuaries otherwise should prepare for harmful results. But Pakistan denied and claimed that there are no safe places for terrorists in Pakistan because Pakistan's army destroyed them completely. These contradictory claims create stress between both states .American is not satisfied with the measures those are taken by Pakistan' security forces against terrorists groups because US officials have the opinion that Afghan Taliban has connection with terrorists groups those are operating in Pakistan like Haqqani network and these groups provide them help in terrorists activities in Afghanistan those are creating hurdles b achievement of peace and stability in Afghanistan. American thought that to counter the Indian influence in Kabul Islamabad is reluctant to take strong action against groups those are not direct threat for Pakistan but for India and Afghanistan. Pakistani officials also denied this charge and have opinion that Pakistan totally crushed the terrorists' organizations or groups without any discrimination but US government rejected this claim and are demanding do more and Trump administration has adopted coercive style to force the Pakistan to fulfill the American demands.

Recommendations

It is recommended that

- Pakistan must refrain from meddle in Afghanistan internal affairs.
- American should not ignore the role of Pakistan in reconstruction of Afghanistan.
- US should acknowledge the sacrifices of Pakistan in War on Terror.
- Trump administration should keep in mind that India is traditional rival of Pakistan any significant role given by US to India in Afghanistan will create security threat for Pakistan So, US should try to address the Pakistan concerns in this regard.

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