
Emergence of Taliban Militia, Pakistan's Disappointments and U.S. Concerns

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Abstract

With the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the Cold War came to an end and U.S. terminated its interests in the area and left Afghanistan in a hazardous situation. Eventually Afghanistan entered in to a civil war. This was worrisome situation for Pakistan that had been deeply involved in the Afghanistan's affairs as a front line state during the time of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Using its influence as facilitator and mediator, Pakistan tried to remove differences between all Afghan political factions and bring them to some kind of understanding aimed at ending anarchism in the country and forming an effective government setup in Kabul. The intention of Pakistan's Afghanistan policy was to seek a like-minded setup in Kabul that could provide an assurance of political, economic and strategic partnership to Islamabad. Pakistan's policy was based on 'strategic depth' concept that could make Pakistan's western border quiet and provide a save trade route for Pakistan's goods to Central Asia. Though Pakistan succeeded for establishment of Taliban rule, it could not achieve the particular objectives. This article is an attempt to explore the efforts of Pakistan to bring Taliban militia in power and its fallouts employed for Pakistan's image on international level. The US had its reservations and concerns over rise of Taliban militia. Pakistan's narrative for upholding Taliban militia did not convince US government. Article also traces the US concern and policy of discounting Taliban. American policy towards Taliban was circumscribed by the unreceptive approach of US civil society towards Taliban's human rights violations and specially treatment to women as well as Taliban's links with Al-Qaeda.

Elevation of Taliban Militia

The Pakistan's mediation efforts resulted in an agreement signed by the Mujahideen parties in April 1992 that is known as the 'Peshawar Accord' which envisaged a plan for a peaceful transfer of power in Kabul.¹ However, it failed to bring political stability in the country. Pakistan again sponsored an agreement named as 'Islamabad Accord' accepted by all Afghan Mujahideen factions on March 7, 1993.

The Islamabad Accord underlined end of the power struggle among all Afghan factions and restoration of peace and stability in the country through building a consensus among all Afghan leaders for the formation of a broad based government in Kabul.² Ghulam Ishaq Khan, then President of Pakistan, termed the Islamabad Accord a 'historic document' that called people of Afghanistan for second Jihad for return of peace, calm, rebuilding of the country and recovery of its economy.³ The United States which was in a wait and see position with regard to Afghanistan situation also welcomed the Islamabad peace agreement as a "positive step forward" towards peace and stability in the area.⁴ The Islamabad Accord also soon lost its worth and Afghan warring factions continued inter-Afghan fight for power. This civil war had dragged the war-torn Afghanistan to darkness of chaos. Amid this situation, the Taliban militia was strengthened and rapidly it turned into a movement that quickly ascent to power in September 1996.

Viewing its failed efforts for a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan, Islamabad did not regard the rise of Taliban movement as opposing to the interests of Pakistan's Policy for creating a strategic depth in Afghanistan. As the Taliban militia was dominated by Pashtuns belonging to the areas bordering Pakistan, its leadership mostly was settled in Pakistan during the Russians' occupation of Afghanistan and got education from Deeni Madaris (religious seminaries) mainly located in Quetta, Peshawar, Akora Khatak, Chaman, Pishin, and Karachi, run by Jamiat-i-Ulema-e-Islam (a religious political party in Pakistan).⁵ Pakistan's secret agencies maneuvered the relations between Taliban militia and its sympathizers in Pakistan so that the strategic depth concept could be turned in to a reality.

The first formal contact between Taliban militia and government of Pakistan took place in November 1994 when a Pakistan's convoy of thirty vehicles loaded with sugar, rice, flour, medicines, surgical instruments and X-ray machines, moving on its way to Central Asia, was looted by local warlords near Kandahar. The indisposed response of Kandahar administration to release the convoy caused to bring the Taliban leaders and Pakistan authorities in contact and Taliban militia rescued the convoy after mini battle with local commanders.⁶ This Taliban's successful action gained attention of Pakistani officials and subsequently the ground was paved for close links between the both sides. Special measures were taken in this regard by the interior minister of the Benazir Bhutto government, Naseerullah Babar, to give support to the Taliban militia. Dennis Kux said that Babar organized ISI personnel to deliver transportation, fuel, communications, apparatus, and instruction to the movement. To coordinate assistance to the Taliban, Babar established an Afghan cell in the Interior Ministry.⁷ Amin Saikal commented that the ISI immediately initiated work on the plan to convert the Taliban in to a reliable and dependable ideological and fighting force. The militia was facilitated with training, arms, , logistic support and money.⁸ Kamal Matinuddin mentioned that Pakistan not only provided moral and diplomatic support to the Taliban, but was also extended

financial and technical assistance to them for the rehabilitation of the Chaman-Kandahar-Herat- Kushka highway.”⁹Under the ‘Islamabad-Kandahar agreement,’ Pakistan opened utility stores in Taliban-controlled areas and established satellite communication system between Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad and other different cities of Afghanistan. Pakistan also sent medical teams to Kandahar and Herat. Pakistani government further eased the mobilization of students studying in Madaris in Quetta and other cities of Pakistan to join Taliban forces in Afghanistan.¹⁰ With every coming day, the Taliban movement got momentum and after the capture of Khandhar on November 5, 1994, the Taliban forces rapidly advanced to Kabul which finally fell to them on September 27, 1996 and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan emerged. Pakistan was the first country that recognized the Taliban regime.¹¹

Exhausting situation for Pakistan

Pakistan had a pragmatic approach towards the Taliban government. Its strong control created stability in the Pashtun regions of Afghanistan, which are significant for Pakistan’s security. It laid off the Indian influence on Afghanistan and nurtured expectations regarding a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan and trade with the Central Asian states. But Pakistan’s support to Taliban created challenges for it on external and internal level. Pakistan’s recognition of the Taliban government had harmful impact on its relations with other countries of the region. India, Iran, Russia, China and the Central Asian states flatly opposed the Taliban regime. They continued to recognize Rabani government despite it had control on only one-third of the country. This situation also spoiled Pakistan’s economic interests in Central Asia. The Taliban government’s policies based on extreme religious approach exerting to promote Jihad and export Taliban’s brand of Islam to other neighboring Muslim states as well as the severe regulation of life under the peculiar theocratic thoughts put Taliban rule at odd in world. The Taliban regime was castigated by the international community because its extreme policies had no conformity with the international laws and norms of civilized societies. Its treatment with its own people, particularly women, was not in consonance with moral and social values and laws in Muslim and non-Muslim societies.¹² The human rights lobbies in Europe and United States were irked against the Taliban. Thus no government in West contemplated dealing with the Taliban. The United States standing beside the international community also did not recognize the Taliban government. However the United States backed UN efforts to end the strife in the country and to curtail the regional problem flowing from Afghanistan including illegal drug trafficking, violations of human rights and terrorism.¹³

On the domestic front, Taliban’s links with Islamic radical groups in Pakistan had grown immensely. Consequently a pro-Taliban Jihadi environment had been developed in Pakistan that augmented the influence of the religious political parties and elevated the fear of Pakistan being taken over by extremist

religious political circles. This apprehension had rather been materialized with the electoral victory of the Mutahidda Majlis-i-Amal (United Action Council), an alliance of religious parties. Pro-Taliban feelings deepened in Pakistan and emerged as an important force in the political process of Pakistan.

The emergence of Taliban militia was not unnoticed by the U.S. government. Pakistan's optimistic arguments for linking the rise of Taliban to the peace and stability in the country also captivated the U.S. officials but the extremist religious approach of the Taliban government that ultimately led it to be the part of international Islamic radical movement against the United States and its Arab allies developed a furious situation against Taliban. Taliban government's decision to grant sanctuary to Osama Bin Laden, and refusal to Washington to hand over Bin Laden for trial, further exasperated the U.S. officials. Taliban government was featured as a part of international terrorism network and on August 20, 1998 the United States launched a missile strike on Afghanistan to eliminate terrorist training camps of Al-Qaeda. Pakistani government was even not informed prior to the fire of cruise missiles.¹⁴

Pakistan's policy of supporting the Taliban was isolated in character. Pakistan was defamed internationally as a promoter of terrorism. On one occasion, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State of South Asia Karl Inderfurth said that Pakistan's policy of supporting Taliban had made it isolated in world and deteriorated its relations with a number of nations.¹⁵

India took advantage of Pakistan's pro-Taliban policy to exploit the mood of international community in support of its efforts to cope with insurgency in Kashmir. The armed struggle of Kashmiris was described as the part of rising tide of international Islamic terrorism. Pakistan was targeted for supporting the Kashmiri Muslim insurgents by training, arming and infiltrating the terrorists into the Indian-held Kashmir. India painted Pakistan as promoter of religious terrorism.¹⁶ This Indian move bore fruit because the U.S. policy makers had envisioned the possibility of emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in the area after the end of Soviet Communism. So they bracketed Pakistan with the countries like Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics which were supposed to sponsor the Islamic fundamentalism.¹⁷ The primary cause of development of the U.S. perception of Islamic fundamentalism was the rise of movement of political Islam in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan that, as it was perceived, could be spilled out to the Central Asian States. During his visit to Pakistan in January 1992, the U.S. Senator Larry Pressler talked about the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in the region and commented that the "Islamic fundamentalism can travel from Pakistan."¹⁸

The U.S. administration showed its concern to Pakistani government on rising Islamic fanaticism in the region. It was also debated that the wave of terrorism covered the Kashmir region where the insurgency in the Indian-held Kashmir was sponsored and promoted by Pakistan. As the Americans had been convinced so far

over it, they referred alarmingly the U.S. concern and warned Pakistan. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Arnold Kanter warned that if Pakistan sustained its undercover help for the Kashmir uprising, it would have a risk to be avowed a country supported terrorism.¹⁹ The Secretary of State James Baker wrote a letter to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and cautioned that Pakistan would be designated “as a terrorist state under a 1985 Congressional mandate” if it continued aid to the Kashmiris.²⁰ Although Pakistan was not added to the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, it was placed under observation for four to six months like Sudan, on the charge of supporting insurgents in Kashmir. Over time question of Pakistan’s support to Kashmiri separatists became more complex. During the Kargil conflict in Kashmir region between India and Pakistan in May-June 1999, Pakistan was severely criticized for instigating this conflict through a covert military maneuver in Dras and Kargil sectors with help of diehard shaveng links with the Taliban militia and other Islamic radical groups fighting in Kashmir.²¹ Kargil crisis had raised so much alarm internationally and it was viewed as an extension of terrorism. The American officials were apprehensive that if Kargil like actions were not prevented, the situation could intensify the religious extremism that might finally lead to “Talibanization of Pakistan.”²²

The American and Indian officials held high-level talks in Washington. The talks represented a new level of American-Indian diplomatic cooperation. The both sides’ officials discussed the Taliban government’s policies in Afghanistan and agreed to rebuff the growing strategic alliance between Pakistan and Afghanistan. They regarded the Pakistan-organized guerilla war in Kargil region as part of the strategic plan of this Pakistan-Afghanistan military partnership.²³ The United States pressurized Pakistan to calm the situation through withdrawal of the Pakistan-sponsored Islamic militant from Kargil. President Clinton in a telephonic talk urged Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on June 15, 1999 to draw infiltrators from Kargil. The Clinton administration even indicated to stop the installment of IMF loan to Pakistan, if infiltrators did not vacate the Kargil heights.²⁴ The U.S. Commander – in-Chief of CENTCOM, General Toni Zinni visited Pakistan in June and warned that if Pakistan failed to pull back, there would be a war and it would finally bring nuclear annihilation down. That would be a very bad news for everybody.²⁵ On July 1, 1999 a resolution was adopted by the U.S. Congress Committee for Foreign Relations which denounced Pakistan for precipitating Kargil conflict and urged President Bill Clinton to oppose the release of IMF and other multilateral assistance to Pakistan unless “Pakistan-backed forces” were withdrawn. The resolution underlined Pakistan for economic and military support to armed infiltration into the India-held Kashmir. The resolution also probed Pakistan for withdrawal and asked the U.S. administration to work in this regard.²⁶

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Bill Clinton signed ‘Washington Declaration’ on July 4, 1999 that also pressed Pakistan for pulling out of militants

from Kargil sector. Subsequently Pakistani government successfully attempted for evacuation of militants from Drass and Kargil region. This Pakistan's maneuvering exposed its earlier assertion that it had no control on intruders, and they moved freely and independently to capture the heights in Drass and Kargil sectors and Pakistan even did not support them in planning and executing the operation. Pakistan's action also divulged the scope and scale of the Pakistan's involvement with Islamic radical groups.²⁷ Consequently Pakistan's strategy towards Taliban and Kashmiri insurgents damaged its credibility in the eyes of international community. Later on the hijacking of an Indian commercial flight in the last week of December 1999 further bewildered the situation for Pakistan. India also leveled blame on Pakistan for hatching the plot of hijacking and thus the Indians tried to develop a connection between Pakistan and Taliban. However, they could not produce any evidence in support their claim.

The United States had come to believe that Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen (HUM), a Pakistan-based radical Kashmiri group, was responsible for hijacking of an Indian airlines jet. During their visit to Pakistan in January 2000, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Karl F. Inderfurth, the State Department Counterterrorism Chief Michael Sheehan, and the South Asia specialist in the National Security Council Donald Kamp told the Pakistan's Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf that America had come to know the Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen was "responsible for the hijacking and clandestinely with the support of Pakistani military and intelligence services." The American officials were reported to ask their Pakistani counterparts to end the government's support for the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, as well as for the Taliban government, which was harboring Osama bin Ladin.²⁸

U.S. Anxieties

Eventually the free mobility of religious militants groups, who had been directly and indirectly associated with Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, on Pakistan's soil defamed the image of the country. The US National Commission on Terrorism (NTC), in its report titled 'Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism,' of June 5, 2000 mentioned Pakistan's links with terrorist organizations and labeled Pakistan as supporter to terrorism.²⁹ The report recommended that the U.S. government should put Pakistan in the list of countries which were not cooperating fully with the U.S. anti-terrorism efforts. The report also suggested that enlisting Pakistan as 'Not Cooperating Fully,' sanctions should be imposed on Pakistan with warning that if it continued its non-cooperative behavior, it could be designated as a state, sponsoring terrorism.³⁰

The free movement of militant groups in Pakistan was also highlighted by the U.S. State Department report on terrorism, 'Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000'. It noted that militant organizations operated in Pakistan for raising funds and hiring new squad. Several of these groups were held responsible for assaultson

civilians in India-held Kashmir.³¹ The report said that the United States remained anxious about Pakistan's aid for the Taliban's military movements in Afghanistan. Credible reports indicated that Pakistan provided the Taliban with "material, fuel, funding, technical assistance, and military hardware and advisers." Pakistani government also failed to check the activities of certain madrassas, or religious schools that served as recruiting camps for terrorists.³²

The report of U.S. National Commission on Terrorism titled, 'Background and Issues for Congress,' released on February 6, 2001 said that the safe haven was provided by Pakistan to terrorists, and some radical groups were facilitated with moral, political and diplomatic aid.³³ Similarly Congressional Research Service Study (CRSS) titled, 'Terrorism: Near Eastern Groups and State Sponsors, 2001,' issued on September 10, 2001, mentioned Pakistan's links with 'terrorists' organizations including Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. The study described the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen as responsible for the December 1999 hijacking of an Indian airliner. ³⁴The CRSS also referred that the Jaish-e-Muhammad (JEM) was more radical splinter group of the HUM formed by Masood Azhar in February 2000. The group had been politically aligned with bin Laden, the Taliban, and the pro-Taliban religious political group in Pakistan, named Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam. It probably received some funds from bin Laden.³⁵ Enlisting the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Harkat-ul-Jihad-Islami, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, the study further observed that these organizations had motivated for attacks on United States and avowed themselves an ally of bin Laden."³⁶

The American experts also assembled consensus that Pakistan promoted Islamic extremist groups that had secured training camps in Afghanistan and waged terrorism in India-held Kashmir. Stephen Philip Cohen said that the Pakistan-based terrorist groups were active in Afghanistan and they used the state of Pakistan.³⁷ Similarly Selig S. Harrison wrote that Pakistan kept the Kabul regime "on life support with military and economic aid".³⁸ An American Eurasia News Analyst, Alan F. Fogelquist, wrote that Pakistan had been a hostage to the militant groups, which had developed their own independent power bases and political, military, and financial resources.³⁹

Operation Enduring Freedom

The U.S. policy of hot pursuit of terrorists after 9//11 targeted Afghanistan where bin Laden and other leaders of Al-Qaeda had been harbored. The U.S.-led international coalition against terrorism was fully backed by the UN Security Council and international community showed complete solidarity with United States. Muslim world also upheld the U.S. approach to combat terrorism. Pakistan along with Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) was exasperated by the Taliban extremist policies. Pakistan's image as a promoter of Taliban had damaged its passive feature isolating it in international community. Islamabad and Kabul also

had differences over Durand Line issue, and human rights issue. Islamabad also wanted to consolidate the strategic depth by keeping Afghanistan under its sphere of influence. Pakistan efforts in this regard to create a zone of influence in Afghanistan were also unproductive as Taliban considered it as open interference of Pakistan. 40

Pakistan's approach towards Taliban government was pragmatic. The Pashtun areas of Afghanistan which are important for Pakistan's security remained stable under Taliban control. The Indian influence in Afghanistan came to an end and hopes were elevated for a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan and trade channels with the Central Asian states. But Pakistan's strategic partnership with Taliban brought domestic and foreign policy costs. Engagement with the Taliban proved to be a chaotic affair for Pakistan. At the end, Pakistan gained very little out of its policy of assisting and promoting Taliban. Pakistan's dream of initiating trade with Central Asia also remained unrealized. The reason was the Pakistan's pro-Taliban policy. Central Asian states did not recognize Taliban government. The United States, European countries, and even China were all offended over Pakistan's failure to influence the Taliban's strategies on any issue. Despite facing critical situation on domestic and foreign policy fronts, and international isolation, Pakistan's association with Taliban sustained.

The 9/11 terrorist incidents created difficult situation for Pakistan. Pakistan had only two options: Side with Taliban or be part of the U.S.-led international campaign for hot pursuit of terrorists. There was no middle way between these two alternatives, and furthermore the quick, calculated and forceful respond of the United States left no room for Pakistan to maneuver. By calculating risks and cost of the two options, the government of General Pervez Musharraf took decision to be part of international coalition against terrorism. It was a timely decision, keeping in view the Pakistan's challenging circumstances, national security interests, and intensity of global revulsion against terrorism. Pakistan's decision ceased opportunity for India to join the international league against terrorism, which had been ready to lead this formidable international coalition of forces for hot pursuit of terrorists. It is assumed that if India had taken on such place, Pakistan could have been on the hit list as the source of expanding terrorism. Pakistan could have suffered countless damage, including the demolition of its nuclear assets. Pakistan's decision to fight an international war against terrorism brought it to be, for the second time in twenty years, a frontline state. International community focused Pakistan as a main player of war. Pakistan's participation in war was in a variety of ways, offering its bases for reconnaissance and rescue operations, logistic support to the coalition forces operating in Afghanistan, intelligence resources and airspace for strikes against the Taliban and Al Qaeda targets.

Thus Pakistan's role in Operation 'Enduring Freedom' was not overlooked. The U.S. officials, in their statements, highlighted the worth of Pakistan's cooperation. 41 Pakistan initially accepted and cooperated with United States on seven demands like:

1. Halt Al-Qaeda operators at its border and terminate all logistical support for bin Laden.
2. Provide United States blanket over flight and landing rights for all essential military and intelligence operations.
3. Provide territorial access to United States and allied military intelligence and other personnel to conduct operation against Al-Qaeda.
4. Share the intelligence information with the United States.
5. Condemn publically and persistently the terrorist acts.
6. Stop all shipments of fuel to the Taliban and halt recruits from going to Afghanistan.
7. If the proofs indicated that bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, were constantly harbored by Taliban break relations with Taliban government.⁴²

Being part of hot pursuit of terrorists, Pakistan offered military and intelligence support that became critical in sliding the Taliban regime and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Pakistan's association provided new opportunities for eliminating hurdles in the America- Pakistan relations and building a new partnership between the two countries. Islamabad was provided with military, economic and diplomatic aid that had been unimaginable before September 11. Sanctions levied on Pakistan since 1990 under the Glenn, Pressler, and Symington amendments were lifted. Bush administration announced an outright cash grant \$50 million for Pakistan.⁴³ On October 17, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted a bill that authorized President Bush to renounce all sanctions against Pakistan, including democracy sanctions.⁴⁴

President Musharraf's decision to join the international coalition against terrorism created a convulsive situation in Pakistan. Mixed responses came from different circles of society. Religious, political and non-political groups agitated against this decision of government. However a sound consensus had been built in the country to support the United States in war on terrorism. A former General of Pakistan Army Sardar F.S Lodi remarked that standing by the World community, Pakistan had moved to join the path of rationality and reason in forging ahead towards a peaceful and stable world governed by the civilized norms of justice and the law.⁴⁵

The American and Pakistani military officials concluded a meeting on September 27, 2001 with regard to cooperation between the two sides.⁴⁶ The United States asked Pakistan for assistance in three fields. Pakistan committed to give unstinted cooperation. These areas of cooperation were:

1. Collaboration in intelligence sharing with regards to Taliban regime and the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden and other members of Al-Qaeda.
2. Permission to use Pakistan bases, air space and ports.
3. Granting the logistic support that meant non –military administrative support presumably for American armed forces and their military or non-military maneuvers in Afghanistan.

Pakistan also permitted the U.S. Special Forces and personals of American investigation agency to function in Pakistan to hunt out the fugitives of AL-Qaeda and Taliban. During the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Pakistan allowed the US forces to operate from air bases at Pasni and Jacobabad.⁴⁷ After joining the U.S.-led war against terrorism, Pakistani government also terminated links with the Taliban government, arrested a number of people belonged to several extremist organizations and introduced regulations to take the religious schools under government control and check the influence of extremists.

President Musharraf's decision for an immediate and unconditional support to the U.S.-led military campaign against Taliban regime provided Pakistan an opportunity to open a new chapter of cordial relations with America. The Americans not only praised the Pakistani government's actions but rewarded with pledge of military and economic assistance. More important, Pakistan was designated as a major non-NATO ally of United States in June 2004 making easier for Pakistan to acquire the US arms. Getting the status of a non-NATO ally, Pakistan was exempted from the suspension of American military aid and qualified to get surplus defense material from the U.S. weapons stockpiles. Daily Times reported that Pakistan had been eligible to have the "U.S. military stockpiles on its territory outside of U.S. installations, entering certain cooperative training agreements with the United States, and eligibility for expedited processing of export license of commercial satellites."⁴⁸ Commenting on Pakistan's role in the war on terrorism, the 9/11 Commission Report quoted that immediately after 9/11, Pakistan took a strategic decision. Pakistani government stood aside and permitted the U.S.-led coalition to destroy the Taliban regime. In other ways, Pakistan actively supported too. Pakistani authorities arrested more than 500 Al-Qaeda operatives and Taliban members, and Pakistani forces played a leading role in tracking down KSM (Khalid Sheikh Mohammad) Abu Zubaydah, and other key Al-Qaeda figures.⁴⁹

More than 100 countries supported the global war on terrorism. This anti-terrorism coalition actively functioned to defeat terrorism. Coalition forces furnished vital contributions in the war across the spectrum of operations. Particular contributions comprised the vital intelligence sharing, personnel, equipment and assets for use on the ground, air and sea. Members of coalition also provided liaison teams, participated in planning, provided bases and granted over-flight permissions-

as well as sizable contributions of humanitarian assistance.⁵⁰ The coalition forces had following targets: ⁵¹

1. End of the Taliban rule and demolition of Al-Qaeda's network in Afghanistan.
2. Interruption of Al-Qaeda's global maneuvers and terrorist financing webs.
3. Devastation of Al-Qaeda training camps.
4. Help of the innocent people of Afghanistan escape from the Taliban's sway of terror.
5. Help of Afghans end the old disputes to formulate a new interim government that would represent all Afghans-including women.⁵²

The coalition successfully achieved its targets. Powell spoke to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on October 25, 2001 that without this coalition, the U.S. President could not be able to do what was needed to be done. Without this coalition, we would have not collected a number of countries on our side supporting us in the prosecution of our military campaign. So this was a coalition that was of massive value, and what was exclusive about this coalition that made it different than any other coalition anyone had ever put together was that, except for about three or four countries, every other country in the world had signed up.⁵³

Concluding Remarks

Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan from 1994 to 2001 focused on formulation of Taliban militia and its organization and every support to establish its rule in Kabul. This policy of Pakistan was basically based on its plan to gain the strategic depth in Afghanistan. This theory emerged as the main objective of Pakistan's Afghan policy during 1990s, particularly during Taliban period.

Strategic depth approach based on geo-strategic interests marked at affirming Pakistan influence over Afghanistan through a likeminded government in Kabul that could provide strategic benefits guaranteeing ideological and physical security to Pakistan in the event of war with India and it would also offer a secure passage to Central Asian markets for Pakistani goods. Pakistani military designers had realized that strategic depth policy could never take a solid shape in the complex power struggle among the Afghan war lords. Northern Alliance government in Kabul, comprised of almost all warring factions had loosened its control on the country, though there was a need of a stable and united Afghanistan under control of one warring group in Kabul. Thus Pakistan finally worked on fetching out country from the chaos and bringing Kabul under control of one faction. Pakistan finally succeeded through Pashtun dominated Taliban government to turn strategic depth in to reality but it could not be functional. Pakistan polity was held hostage by Taliban. Pakistan

had viewed Taliban as a pro-Pakistan force that would protect Pakistan's strategic interests in the region vis-a-vis India, Russia and Iran. Pakistan recognized Taliban government and also pursued the international community for diplomatic support to Taliban government, but Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates only followed Pakistan. In fact Taliban's political, social and economic ineptitude and regressive approach was not accepted to the international community. Pakistan was widely criticized for its support to Taliban on international level. Consequently Pakistan's image was dented on international level. It stood isolated on question of recognition of Taliban government and started to be painted as a promoter of terrorism. The U.S. response in beginning was somewhat leaning as the Americans took Taliban as a binding force that could be helpful to achieve U.S. political and economic interests in the region. Politically it was perceived as an anti-Iran power that would be functioning to prevent the Iranian influence in the region. Secondly the Americans thought that end of civil war in Afghanistan and one party rule in Kabul also would provide a safeguard to the U.S. economic interests in the region, particularly with reference to a gas pipeline, a project of U.S. oil company-UNOCAL- that was to be laid from Turkmenistan to Pakistan, through Afghanistan. The contacts between the United States and Taliban government proceeded smoothly for reconciliation. Both governments' officials exchanged visits and held talks focused on gas pipeline and recognition to the Taliban government. But the Taliban's links with Al Qaeda and its regressive, and fanatic policies externally and internally, and ruthless behavior towards the Afghan women in particular, routed the U.S. government already obsessed with bin Laden issue to close all channels for settlement. International community was alienated. Over time soon Saudi Arabia and UAE and Pakistan itself also were irritated over Taliban government's policies. Though Taliban government existed in Kabul from 1996 to 2001, the strategic depth concept could not be functional. Instead post-Taliban Afghanistan emerged as a more ill-disposed country that extremely endangered Pakistan's security interests.

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