

Has the impact of 9  
11 been baneful or  
beneficial?



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October 2012 Has the impact of 9/11 been baneful or beneficial to Pakistan's security environment? Analyze. The second year of the new millennium was witness to an event which might have perhaps altered the geo-political structure of the world and gave birth to a whole new phenomenon, one, which has been directing foreign policy affairs of the world for almost a decade now.

This event comprised the four terrorist attacks on United States soil, on September the eleventh, 2001, in which hijacked planes crashed into the twin towers of the world trade centre, the Pentagon and one fell short of its target in Shanksville Pennsylvania. These events gave birth to the " war on terror", which has not only affected the United States but a lot of other countries as well, especially Pakistan, who had a prominent geo strategic location in the vicinity of the battle grounds for this war. This war has had both positive and negative effects on the security and general stability of Pakistan.

This essay will try to discern these effects and establish whether in the long run, the impact of 9/11 has been baneful or beneficial to Pakistan's security environment. Firstly, the positive impacts of the war on terror will be considered. Since the perpetrators of the attacks were considered to be hiding in Afghanistan, all the surrounding countries in the region became important strategic partners of the United States and its allies. Pakistan, perhaps the most influential since it had a long history of dealing with the Taliban and had in depth knowledge of the terrain and surrounding area.

Chairperson, Department of Political Science, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Professor Razia Musarrat claims that “ Pakistan’s geographical location, its nearness with Afghanistan, its close relations with the Taliban regime, its deep knowledge of the rugged terrain of Afghanistan, and its history of Cold War alliance made Pakistan obviously the most important strategic asset for the United States. ” Pakistan offered its support to the United States including airbases and military intelligence to help eradicate the terrorist elements present in Afghanistan. As a result over the years Pakistan has received military assistance and aid from the United States, helping in bringing military and technological advancements to the country. It is important to note that at the time of these attacks, Pakistan was in isolation at the world stage due to sanctions imposed on it, after it carried out nuclear tests in 1998. India too was facing the same sanctions, but having a stronger economy meant that it managed to survive this dry spell comparatively more easily than Pakistan. Pakistan on the other hand was suffering from the consequences of these sanctions and the war on terror surprisingly came as a relief.

Pakistan has been given economic assistance of almost ten billion dollars over a period of ten years as its ties with the world slowly improved. This aid rescued its stagnant economy and ensured that Pakistan’s economic woes were overcome, a change, very welcome for the Musharraf regime. Thirdly, post 9/11, South Asia became the centre of the World’s attention. A senior political analyst notes, that “ with the presence of two nuclear power friends, and an Al-Qaeda-strewn Afghanistan, South Asia assumed a strategic status

in American eyes. The rebirth of South Asia prominence was not limited to America, rather for whole the world.

There was a long chain of Heads of States, and highest officials visiting the region every alternative day were evidence of long term strategic interests of the US in the region. " This new found attention allowed internationally isolated Pakistan and India back into the main stream of world politics and bolstered the image of the country in the eyes of the world, as a nation that was againstterrorism. A somewhat debateable positive outcome, but one that could be true is that this war against terrorism helped to control the spread of militancy in the country.

Former foreign minister of Pakistan, Mr Abdul Sattar argues that, " another significant benefit of the post-9/11 policy has been containment of the baneful influence of extremists and militants. " Had the war on terror not been targeted against organizations like Al-Qaeda, they might have consolidated their positions in Afghanistan and Pakistan and continued to follow their own agenda's. The post 9/11 policy helped to contain this spread of ideology but unfortunately could not eliminate it from society completely. Another major impact of the war on terror, it can be argued, is that it led to stability in the region.

The main cause of instability in the region over the years has been hostile Pakistan, India relations. Three major wars and countless other incidents aimed at undermining the other country, have soured an already messydivorce. The acquisition of nuclear warheads by both states coupled with the Kashmir issue, have caused this region to become highly volatile. This was also the case post 9/11, when after an attack on the Indian

parliament in December of 2001, India mobilized its military forces on a large scale against Pakistan.

Pakistan too responded and both armies stood face to face with each other opposite the international borders. There was a very serious threat of an outbreak of nuclear war and alarm bells started ringing in the international arena. Eventually it was the presence of the United States in the region which helped diffuse the highly volatile situation. The threat of nuclear war, coupled with the fear that a Pakistan-India war would be harmful to the war on terror, meant that the United States put in a full hearted effort to ease tensions.

This was eventually the case and stability was brought to the region again. These are some of the positive outcomes to the war on terror for Pakistan. But there have been dreadful negative consequences for the country as well. Firstly, just like it can be argued that just like US presence brought stability to the region; it also brought a lot of instability. This is evident from the impact of the war on Afghanistan, where Prof. Dr. Razia Musarrat argues, that the “ Taliban government had been successful to restore a kind of stability in Afghanistan for the first time after a very long period of unrest.

America, by ripping to pieces the Taliban regime, once again pushed Afghanistan into a new phase of insurgency and civil war. This unstable and troubled situation will not remain confined within the Afghan borders; rather will soon spread into the neighbouring states. We can see for ourselves that the unrest and turbulence in Afghanistan has leaked out into Pakistan. ” This has been a cause of great concern for Pakistan, because the Afghani brand

of militancy and extremism has seeped in the country and has started rearing its ugly head against the state.

Secondly, Pakistan had friendly relations with the Taliban prior to the American offensive. So much so that they were considered supporters of the Taliban, a notion which caused concern to other surrounding countries like India. But after the war, the northern alliance came into power and the resulting Afghan government did not have a favourable view of Pakistan. India on the other hand took advantage of this and firmly established itself in Afghanistan. It became the largest regional donor of aid to Afghanistan in the post war period.

Strong relations with Afghanistan could very beneficial for Indian foreign policy since Afghanistan shares such a large border with Pakistan. Having strong relations with a hostile neighbour's neighbour is a strategically strong move and puts Pakistan in a delicate situation. Also, India could have easy access to Central Asia via Afghanistan, which could give it access to their abundant natural resources and open other cheaper trading avenues. India would not have to be dependent on Pakistan for access to Central Asia, which might come across as another blow to Pakistan.

Another cause of concern for Pakistan, at the political level, was constant Indian pressure that Pakistan provided a safe haven for terrorists. India took advantage of American presence in the region and looked at this as an opportunity to further one of its foreign policy goals, that is, to ensure that Pakistan was strongly implicated in harbouring terrorists under its roof. The case for this argument was of course Pakistan's close relations with the

Taliban and the fact that Pakistan was a big supporter of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Secondly India had claimed time and again that Pakistan uses terrorist groups to promote their foreign policy agenda's. They claimed that the Pakistani intelligence cell, the ISI, with the blessings of the government equipped, trained and infiltrated militants into Kashmir. This was a very serious claim considering Pakistan was a nuclear state which endorsed state sponsored terrorism. The Indian government hoped that the United States would finally understand India's point of view and become an ally of India against Pakistan's state-sponsored terrorism. Indian security agencies hope that the terrorist attack in New York on Tuesday will see the United States put pressure on Pakistan to extradite Dawood Ibrahim, Tiger Memon, Chhota Shakeel and others, who masterminded the serial bomb blasts in Mumbai in March 1993. " Domestically, Pakistan has had to pay a very heavy price for the part it has played in the war. There has been a huge increase in the number of terrorist and militant organizations in the country after the war.

Following the events of the 2001-2002 standoff between Pakistan and India, Musharraf, pledged to crack down on the militant organizations working in the country. They were obviously not willing to go easily and put up resistance by targeting government and security establishments. Thousands of innocent civilians were killed as result of suicide attacks and the whole country was gripped in a constant state of fear. The law and order situation got so wore that the president himself narrowly survived two bold attempts on his life.

The backlash was the worst in the north western region, for the people divided by international borders shared the same strong bonds of ethnicity and culture. Taking cue from the Taliban of Afghanistan, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan became an active anti-state terrorist organization comprised of mostly Pashtoons, just like the Afghani Taliban. It is responsible for carrying out hundreds of terrorist attacks on state owned institutions and civilians as well. They were perhaps behind the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and one of the biggest causes for instability in the Khyber-Pukhtoonkhwa province.

The situation became too bad to be ignored and the Pakistan military launched a full scale military operation in which thousands of troops were involved to deal with this menace. Even though millions of rupees and a lot of soldiers were lost in the operation, the operation was unsuccessful and the Taliban continue living in the mountains of the Waziristan region, albeit as outlaws and vigilantes. This religious extremist ideology, unfortunately, is not only confined to Pakistan's western provinces. This menace has slowly started spreading in the comparatively more peaceful Punjab and Sindh provinces as well.

The society is slowly becoming more polarised on the issue of whether Pakistan should keep on fighting America's war. Others however believe this is a war for Pakistan's own survival. Whatever the case is, the country has been gripped in a constant state of fear and gloom. Notions of national cohesiveness and unity are fast withering away as the Pashtoon and Baloch communities claim they have felt the brunt of the war on terror, a notion that is true considering the drone attacks that are carried out in their homelands.



A 2012 report on the security situation of 2011 in Pakistan puts the matter in better perspective. " While FATA continued to reel under the impact of terrorism, there was no respite from terror in KP as well. Sindh continued to experience a more centralized pattern of violence in and around Karachi. However, the extension of the influence of armed extremist political, ethnic, sectarian and criminal groups in the city, and the chances of violence spreading to other areas of the Province, could not be ruled out. " Overall the costs of this war on terror have been staggering for Pakistan.

The costs, in terms of monetary terms, political terms, social terms and most importantly loss of life are so huge, that Pakistan is still reeling from the blow. The report mentioned earlier, gives an idea regarding the losses sustained by Pakistan. " Pakistan's continuing engagement with the production and export of Islamist extremism and terrorism continued to produce a bloody blowback at home, with a total of at least 6, 142 persons, including of 2, 797 militants, 2, 580 civilians and 765 Security Forces (SFs) personnel killed in 2011.

However, even this worrying total constituted an improvement of 17. 75 per cent over the preceding year. 7, 435 persons, including 5, 170 militants, 1, 796 civilians and 469 SF personnel, had been killed in 2010. " Secondly, the war has almost dried up foreign investment in Pakistan, as no one is willing to come here considering the prevailing security situation and the unstable political scenario.

The economy is in shambles as a major chunk of the budget goes to the army and less and less is spent on the people. It is true that Pakistan is getting aid from outside, but it cannot just rely on aid to survive in the

future. A major energy crisis has added to the woes of the country and caused great distress to the public. Anti American sentiments are now at an all time high and the country looks forward to the day it does not have to deal with these issues any more.

As former foreign minister Abdul Sattar says, " So colossal have been the human and material ravages our country has suffered during the last decade that no sensitive citizen can but wish Pakistan had followed a different course, one that might have saved our country and people from the nightmare in which we are still trapped. " If the positive and negative outcomes of the post 9/11 policy are weighed against each other, it can be concluded that it has been overall more baneful than beneficial to the country.

Yes, the policy allowed Pakistan to come back into the main stream of international politics and yes, it caused an influx of foreign aid into the country which rescued a stagnant economy, but at what cost? The material costs of thousands of dollars or the cost of human life, to which a value cannot be assigned, have been tremendous. The country is gripped by a war that is ravaging its socio-political fabric. The economy is once again in shambles and the country stands on the brink of bankruptcy.

The more alarming thought is that, the war on terror is still not over and its consequences keep haunting the country. Once the coalition troops leave Afghanistan, the whole region will be locked in a geo-political struggle for supremacy and with major players like hostile India involved, the odds do not look good for Pakistan. Works Cited: Balakrishnan, S. " India Hopes US Will Now Pressurise Pak. " The Times Of India. N. p. , 2001. Web. 14 Oct. 2012. . "

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