

IMPACT OF FRAGILE NEIGHBOURHOOD: THE CASE OF PAKISTAN – AFGHANISTAN

Dr Muhammad Farooq Khan*

Abstract

The collapse of state institutions and its administrative structures refer to inability of the state as a sovereign political entity within its geographical borders or in simple term 'fragile' state. A fragile state with declining economic indicators and incapacitated institutions causes economic implications and security threats for the regional states, especially in the neighbourhood. With prolonged violence, conflicts and political instability, Afghanistan has become a fragile state without any legitimate governing authority, inordinate institutions and irrecoverable resources, thus making it dependent on donors' aid. Strict international sanctions regime, deficit of foreign investment and unrecognized governing structure has created a favourable environment for terror nurturing and unpopular policy orientation. Pakistan due to shared borders and legacy of cultural and religious connectivity with Afghanistan, has always faced political, economic and security repercussions of fragile impasse in its neighbourhood. The huge influx of Afghan refugees for a prolonged period and illegal trafficking of routine items and US currency towards Afghanistan has strained Pakistan's economic structure. Similarly, the incapacitated Afghan Taliban could not harness Tehreek-e-Taliban, encouraging the banned outfit to carry out security problems for Pakistan. This research is an endeavour to unveil the impact of fragile Afghanistan for the economic, political and security interests of Pakistan at domestic and regional front. It would also suggest policy orientation for Pakistan in its future engagement with the Afghan Taliban for securing regional peace, stability and prosperity.

Keywords: State, Fragile, economy, security, institutions, Afghanistan, Pakistan

Introduction

Immediately after the cold war, the terms 'failed' state emerged in the international realm focusing on those states which could not come up to the standard of a 'welfare' state of the western philosophy. Due to east west rivalry in the cold war, the repercussions affected the economy and security of the periphery states. Some states became proxy of the global powers which constantly declined and weakened state's structure.

*Dr Muhammad Farooq has done PhD in international relations from Punjab University Lahore. He is author of a book 'From Survival to Identity', apart from various publications in different journals and editorials for different newspapers. His core interests include Pakistan, Afghanistan and India besides regional and global issues. The author can be reached at mfarsam14@yahoo.com.

The welfare policies deteriorated due to inefficient executive, illegitimate governance and autocratic behaviour of the state's institutions. The absence of an international framework and a shared blueprint for action among political, security, development and humanitarian actors has further compounded the situation for such countries, which creates security and economic issues for the regional players, especially the neighbouring states.¹ The concept further changed with the genesis of global war on terror associating fragile state with the security aspects apart from economy. The concept also perceived fragile state as a growing threat to the regional security and stability.

Afghanistan emerged as a state of turmoil and instability, which helped global powers to initiate their vested interests at the regional level. The deepening political instability, internal conflicts and international interference exposed the state's fault lines, attracting international conflicts, resulting in damaged infrastructure and institutions. Lacking political consensus, the country evolved poor governance, deteriorated economy and bleak future, thereby fulfilling the criteria of a 'fragile' state. With a weak institutional grip and a deteriorating economy, the country became vulnerable and a safe haven for terrorists' organizations, including Al-Qaida, which perpetrated the 9/11 attacks on the US. The US invasion of Afghanistan evoked Taliban however brought more devastation for the infrastructure and institutional framework of the country. The two decades war ended with the rise of Taliban in Kabul after the departure of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in August 2021 leaving Afghanistan more vulnerable to terror organizations under international sanctions, oppressive regime and illegitimate power.

Today, the Taliban government lacks legitimacy, popular support and international recognition to rule the country. Their consistent denial to form an inclusive government with credible representation of all sects, introduction of oppressive policies, including limiting basic rights and harbouring terrorist organisations, including TTP, has aggravated the already existing devastation in the country due to imposition of sanctions, freezing of Afghan foreign reserves and diplomatic isolation. All these measures are straining the humanitarian assistance program and threatening precious development gains in the country. The absence of unified authority in Kabul, prolonged war and economic dependence on foreign countries created governance issues, institutional deterioration and deprived the society from orchestrating policy for sustainable growth.

On the regional front, the Afghan crisis has been affecting regional growth and stability due to the spillover effects of the economic and security issues. Pakistan, being geographically contiguous and culturally and historically connected with Afghanistan, has been at the forefront in concluding a peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis. Its association with Afghans during the Soviet invasion and the US-led war on terror and hosting of Afghan refugees further reinforced the people-to-people bond, which facilitated support for war-prone Afghanistan financially and economically. The porous borders facilitated inter-state movement, leading to the spilling over of social, economic and security evils from the war-torn Afghanistan into Pakistan. The overstretched economy of Pakistan, due to a huge influx of Afghan refugees, was further exhausted due to accelerated illegal trafficking of foreign currency as well as routine items, medicines, construction material, etc. Under the Afghan Taliban's patronage, TTP increased its terror attacks inside Pakistan, which deteriorated the law and order situation and terrorised investment opportunities in the country.

Political	Social	Conflict	Economic	External	Geography and climate
Weak institutions (Jackson 1982; Kaplan 2008; Rotberg 2002, 2003)	Limited rights	Civil war (Rotberg 2003; Lindemann 2008; Ross 2004)	Limited growth (Marshall 2008)	Intra-state conflict (Ayoub 1996)	"Bad neighbours syndrome" and urbanization (McLoughlin 2012)
Low participation (Ghani 2009; Mass electoral politics (Mansfield 2008)	Ethnic tensions (Brown 2012; Rotberg 2003)	Enduring light conflict (Rotberg 2011)	Low income and economic decline (McLoughlin 2012; Marshall 2008)	Transnational instability (Ayoub 1996)	Environmental risks (Vallings and Moreno Torres 2005)
Patronage systems (Brown 2012)	Gender oppression	Escalating ethnic conflicts (Goldstone 2008)	Global economic shocks (McLoughlin 2012)	Regional guerillas (Goldstone 2008)	Landlocked infrastructure (Collier 2007)
Leadership mistakes (Rotberg 2003)	Lack of social contract between incumbent elite groups and constituent ethnic communities (Douma 2004)	Revolutionary wars, ethnic wars, genocide and politicide (Esty and others 1998)	Weak infrastructures (Rotberg 2002)	Highly politicized international political economy policies (McLoughlin 2012)	Natural resources (Collier 2007; Mc Loughlin 2012; Vallings and Moreno-Torres 2005; Rotberg 2003; Ross 2004)
Structural flaws (Rotberg 2003)	Group grievances (Christensen 2017)		Increased income inequalities (Sachs 2003)		
"Political capacity": organizational age and legitimacy (Jackmann 1993)	Severe identity fragmentation (McLoughlin 2012)		Lack of competence in economic governance (Brainard and Chollet 2007)		
Repressed political competition (Goldstone 2008)	Horizontal inequalities and poverty (McLoughlin 2012; Hinds 2015)				
Limited resources offered to politicians (Bates 2008)					

The paper will delve into the fragile state of Afghan society and its devastating effects on the governing system and institutions of the country. It will also analyse the impact of fragile Afghanistan on Pakistan's economic, social and security aspects. The research will conclude with policy recommendations for mitigating the effects of the fragile Afghan society on Pakistan.

The Concept of ‘Fragile’ State

The notion of ‘fragility’ initially emerged as a donor concept that measured a state’s capacity through its economic policy, financial governance, and institutional strength.² Many donor countries in the West measured recipient capacity by assessing recipient welfare policies and the provision of basic rights to its citizens, according to the requirements of a Western welfare state. A state was graded as a ‘fragile’ state if it fails to extend its core functions to the public, including services entitlement, justice and security. Such states were also called ‘weak, failing, failed, collapsed, at risk, precarious, vulnerable and recovering’ states.³ It was after the events of 9/11 that the failed or fragile states were associated with the regional and global security apart from economic decline.

Though there are multiple definitions for ‘fragile state’, analysts and researchers agree on the structure of ‘fragile state’ – a state which lacks governance, economic stability, and social and environmental practices. Academically, fragility is based on five drivers, i.e. security, economy, governance, social and environment, which generally overlap and are intermingled.⁴ People in fragile states are victims of persistent poverty, enduring violence, poor public facilities, deteriorating infrastructure, limited civil and political liberties, deteriorating social conditions, minimal to nonexistent economic growth and, often, humanitarian crises.⁵ Globally, people are left behind due to social marginalisation, economic disparities, political ineffectiveness, environmental challenges, and structural challenges. The standard definition of a fragile state offered by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) is, “States which lack political will and capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations.” International Monetary Fund (IMF) defines, “States with impaired economic and social performance, weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crisis, persistent social tensions and often, violence or the legacy of armed conflict and civil war. In these countries, the poor quality of policies, institutions and governance substantially impairs economic performance, the delivery of basic social services and the efficacy of donor assistance. They also have considerable negative spillover effects on economic growth in neighbouring countries”.⁶ According to the World Bank, fragile states lack economic management, structural policies, social inclusion and equity policies, and public sector management and institutions.

According to USAID, fragile states refer to a broad range of failing, failed and recovering states that are unable or unwilling to adequately assure the provision of security and basic services to a significant portion of their population and where the legitimacy of the governments is in question. It distinguishes between fragile states that are vulnerable and those that are already in crisis.

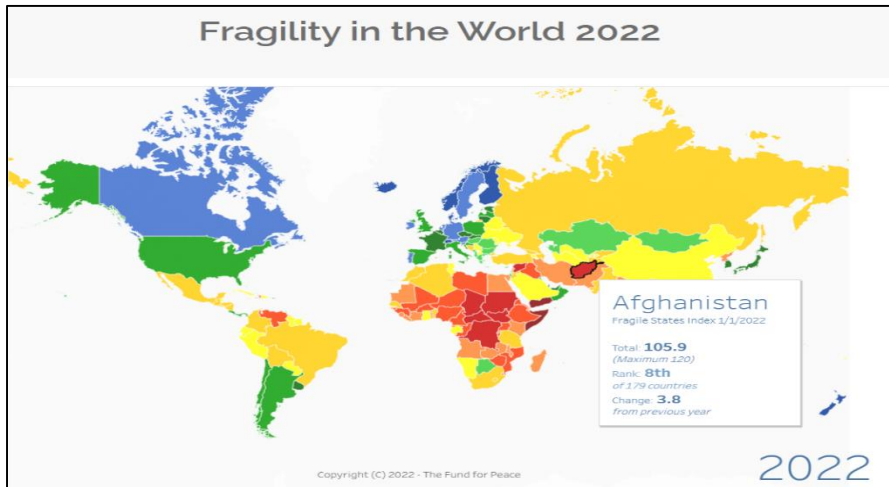
Fragile states are characterised by deep structural economic and political constraints. The term 'fragility' describes a heterogeneous group of countries with problems of governance, security and development.⁷ One consistent theme is the strong correlation between state fragility and conflict. Fragile states suffer from deficits in institutional capacity and political legitimacy that increase the risk of instability and violent conflict, sapping the state's resilience to disruptive shocks. State fragility certainly has a key role to play in facilitating the spread of extremism.⁸ The country's environment is thus prone to armed conflicts and political instability. Research proves a strong correlation between fragility and violent conflict, poverty, extremism and response failure to natural calamities.⁹

Afghanistan – A Fragile State

According to the Norman Paterson School for International Affairs of Carlton University, Canada, authority, legitimacy and capacity are the basic principles of a sovereign, resilient state, which are lacking in a fragile state.¹⁰ Afghanistan fulfils all the criteria of a fragile state due to a broken social contract, weak institutions, deteriorating infrastructure and consistent dependency on donor funding. Though with the rise of the Taliban in post-US Afghanistan has ended the decades-old conflict and civil war, yet the unpopular government lacks authority, legitimacy and capacity to execute public welfare and secure recognition as a responsible state. According to the Fragility Index of 2022, Afghanistan ranks 8th in the world with a total of 105.9 out of 120, making it highly unstable in the international community.¹¹

Afghanistan suffers from deficits in institutional capacity and political legitimacy that increase the risk of instability, violent conflict, and disruptive shocks.¹² The Taliban government have failed to develop a consensus over its legitimacy and use of authority as a representative government. Instead, it has suspended basic human rights, including women's education and liberty to work. The revengeful policies and undemocratic framework of the Taliban government have led to an international response and the imposition of a strict sanctions regime against the Taliban government.

Taliban government have not been recognised due to their consistent refusal to establish inclusive government, extending political rights to public, provision of basic rights including women rights and turn off its association and patronage for the terror groups.



Afghan economy is already paralyzed due to prolonged war, international isolation and has shrunk by 30% since Taliban's take over. Afghanistan has developed weak fiscal capacity due to the emergence of a war economy, failure of successive regimes and consistent violence.¹³ Resultantly, the state's legitimacy, economic growth and private investment have been on decline. The country is the poorest with huge unemployment and corruption, and its industrial base, agricultural production and educational system have collapsed, and the basic rights are not accessible to the public.¹⁴



The stringent international sanctions regime against the Taliban's inhuman policies has led to a humanitarian catastrophe, which would lead the society to an extremely fragile degree.

The increased corrupt practices in Afghan society have subjected donors' assistance to various conditions at various phases. The unethical and unequal distribution of resources and funds has further degraded the economic situation and public frustration. More than 90% of Afghans are suffering from food insecurity and are deprived of health facilities and education rights, resulting in malnutrition, starvation, deaths and health issues.¹⁵ In the absence of donor aid and international support, the Afghan government will be unable to generate its own revenues to sustain its economy and development due to persistent conflict.¹⁶ The uneven justice services and government-sponsored vengeful activities have created an imbalance in society, with public grievances. Agricultural output also decreased during 2022 due to a major drought and lack of affordable access to fertiliser, fuel, and other agricultural inputs. Restrictions on the Afghan central bank have further worsened the situation and deepened the economic collapse. Under international sanctions regime, the government is unable to provide wages to the health workers, academicians and other officials which has further aggravated the situation. Health workers and other public workers have preferred to leave the country due to the unavailability of requisite resources and non-payment of wages. Shortages of banknotes in both US dollars and Afghan currency severely restrict legitimate financial activities by businesses, humanitarian agencies, and ordinary Afghans.¹⁷

Afghanistan, due to its geographical nature and corrupt practices, has become a suitable hideout for terrorist organisations, including Al-Qaida. These organisations have surfaced again in Afghanistan after the departure of ISAF and the fragile status of the Taliban government. The killing of al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul in August 2022 is evidence of al-Qaida's presence in the country. The Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) and the National Resistance Front (NRF) are the main threats to the Taliban government. ISIK has launched many attacks against embassies of China, Pakistan, Russia and is involved in terror strikes against the Afghan public since the Taliban's rise to power. NRF has also pledged to rise against the brutal policies of the Taliban government.¹⁸ The presence of terror organisations and their illegitimate kidnapping for ransom, attacks against foreign and local NGOs and welfare forums have created a hostile environment for foreign investment. The rising extremism and Talibanization in Afghan society has led to the fragile nature of the country, allowing regional instability.

Taliban forces have carried out revenge killings and enforced disappearances of former government officials and security force personnel. They have also summarily executed people they claim are members of the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP). The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) issued a report in August 2022 detailing numerous cases of killings or disappearances committed by Taliban forces since August 2021.¹⁹ It is not always possible to discern those killed were former government personnel or alleged ISKP. In numerous cases over the year, Taliban forces conducted military operations and night raids targeting residents they accuse of harbouring or providing support for ISKP members. During many operations, soldiers assaulted civilians and detained people without due process. Detainees were forcibly disappeared or killed, in some cases by beheading. In some provinces, Taliban authorities dumped bodies in public areas or hung bodies on streets or intersections as warnings.

The Taliban's failure to provide security to at-risk populations and medical and other assistance to survivors and affected families exacerbated the harm caused by the attacks. Beyond their immediate devastation, the attacks exacted a severe long-term toll, depriving survivors and families of victims of breadwinners, often imposing severe medical burdens, and restricting their access to daily life.

With more than half a million people associated with poppy cultivation and drug trafficking, it remained the major source of revenue generation for the Afghan warlords. Afghan drug economy further expanded after the NATO's invasion in 2001 which has tripled till 2020 and amounted for 85% of the global opium production.²⁰ The business is still flourishing under Taliban rule despite the issuance of a decree prohibiting the production and sale of illicit drugs due to international sanctions, freezing of central bank assets, non-availability of foreign aid and resource constraints to capacity building. Today, Afghanistan is well connected to the regional and global drug market with increased supply.



The women and girls are facing oppressive polices of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, including the right of expression, movement, work and accessing education, affecting virtually all their rights, including to life, livelihood, shelter, health care, food, and water. According to new rules, the male members of the family are punished in case of violation of these rules by women. World Food Program surveys revealed that for most of 2022, nearly 100 per cent of female-headed households lacked adequate food, and almost all are taking “drastic measures” to obtain it, including selling vital household items, sending children to work, or marrying off young girls for dowry. The Ministry of Women's Rights has been converted into the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, the religious police for the implementation of the Shariah laws. The Taliban have prohibited most girls from attending secondary school, banned all women from attending and teaching at universities, and prevented women from working. According to UNDP, the deprivation of women to contribute to national growth could cost up to 5 % of Afghanistan's GDP.

With the rise to power, the Taliban revoked all democratic laws, basic rights and introduced their own Islamic-based constitution.²¹ Taliban authorities carried out extensive censorship and violence against the Afghan media in the country. The Taliban have intimidated journalists and restricted press freedoms, leading to the closures of more than two hundred news organisations. Authorities also banned outlets in Afghanistan from broadcasting international news programs, including Voice of America and the BBC, in Dari, Pashto, and Uzbek languages.

Effects of Fragile Afghanistan on Pakistan

Afghanistan always remained central to the strategic planning of Pakistan due to its geographical location as a neighbour, shared cultural and historical values, religious commonality and presence of Pushto-speaking tribes astride borders. Pakistan always viewed its security interests in Afghanistan, which further enhanced due to India's deep engagement and investment with Kabul. Due to common security interests and pursuance of regional peace, Pakistan and Afghanistan remained deeply engaged strategically, politically, diplomatically and economically. Pakistan has been hosting a large influx of Afghan refugees as a result of the Soviet invasion and the later global war on terror.²² The close interaction and free movement of Afghan refugees resulted in many social evils, economic crisis and security issues for Pakistan.

Pakistan suffered through economic burden, law and order situation, aggravated drug and Kalashnikov culture, disturbed demography of tribal areas and Baluchistan, stressed civic amenities, increased unemployment and dragging small businesses in tribal regions, KPK and Baluchistan.²³ Pakistan began to increasingly blame refugees ‘for Peshawar’s and other cities’ growing social ills, including crime, the widespread availability of weapons, drug abuse, prostitution, and the decline in the Pakistan economy.²⁴ A divide in Pakistani society became visible due to the availability of Afghans as cheap labour, which resulted in huge unemployment among the Pakistani youth. The rift further increased, leading to conflicts and antagonization. The capacity of hospitality and international support for the refugees dwindled due to prolonged stay in Pakistan, which further increased the burden on Pakistan’s economy. The weak economic situation, deteriorated security mosaic and international isolation of Afghanistan since August 2021, aggravated the regional stability and have severely impacted Pakistan.

The installation of the Taliban’s illegitimate government in Kabul invoked international sanctions and diplomatic isolation of the country, leading to security issues for Pakistan. Taliban’s desire to collect revenue and inclination towards terror organisations allowed emergence of many terrorists’ groups including Al-Qaida and Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), posing greater regional security challenges. Emboldened by the Taliban’s rise in Kabul, TTP increased its terror activities inside Pakistan, violating the Taliban’s pledge of not allowing its soil to be used for such activities.²⁵ In November 2022, TTP initiated a new series of terror strikes inside Pakistan after revoking the ceasefire agreement unilaterally.²⁶ TTP and its affiliate groups carried out more than 150 attacks in the first 11 months of this year, resulting in more than 150 deaths, a majority of them belonging to law enforcement agencies.²⁷

TTP Attacks in Pakistan²⁸			
Ser	Year	Location attacked	Casualties
1.	Feb 2023	Karachi Police Office	4 killed and 17 injured
2.	Jan 2023	Mosque of Peshawar Police Lines	More than 100 killed and injured
3.	Jan 2023	Sarband Police Station	3 police personnel killed
4.	Dec 2022	CTD compound Bannu	3 officials and 25 terrorists killed
5.	Jan 2022	Security Check Post Kech Dist	13 persons injured
6.	Sep 2020	An IED attack on the LEAs convoy in Quetta	4 persons killed and 20 injured

The group is working inside Afghanistan, and despite Pakistan's protests, Afghanistan has not initiated any action against them. The Afghan Taliban's patronage of TTP is evident from the fact that they released arrested TTP leaders and members after taking over Kabul in August 2021.²⁹ This step is detrimental to regional peace and Pakistan's interests. This led to increased terror attacks inside Pakistan by 56%. The Afghan Taliban have also urged Pakistan to negotiate peace terms with TTP and not military operations, which would allow the Taliban to become mediators between the two sides, with increased dependence of Pakistan on Afghanistan. This will also put Pakistan on the defensive with the Taliban in the driving seat, threatening Pakistan not to interfere in Afghan affairs. The Taliban-TTP relationship is an ideological alignment on a jihadist project seeking to implement a Shariah-compliant political order through force. One explanation for the Taliban's post-takeover position is that they want to use the TTP as bargaining leverage with Pakistan. A competing perspective is that the Taliban want a like-minded political actor, such as the TTP, to ultimately rise to power in Islamabad.³⁰

The dwindling economic and political situation of Pakistan has pushed Afghanistan close to India which also intends strengthening economic and security relations with Taliban government. India has pledged to resume infrastructure development, temporary diplomatic relations and enhanced security collaboration with the new Afghan government. Taliban officials have also committed to accessing the training institutions of India and benefiting from its academic institutions by sending Afghan youth for higher education. This situation would endanger the stability of the region and create a security dilemma for Pakistan. With the reinforced bond between India and Afghanistan, India would enhance its anti-Pakistan activities, including funding and planning of TTP. India would also embroil both Islamic countries through provoking bilateral differences. In February 2022, Taliban acting information minister Zabiullah Mujahid stated, "the issue of the Durand Line- a 2640 km border, is still an unresolved one, while the construction of fencing itself creates rifts within a nation spread across both sides of the border. It amounts to dividing a nation."³¹

The international sanctions and freezing of \$9 billion in Afghan central bank reserves have created a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, leading to growing dependence on neighbouring countries for the provision of routine items. Pakistan, being the closest with more porous borders, is sharing the burden of the economic crisis in Afghanistan.

Lack of daily use items resulted into gross inflation and more inclination towards smuggling of different items and foreign exchange currency. The drainage of these items, including sugar, fertiliser, meat, and chicken, has affected the prices and availability of items in Pakistan, exerting excessive pressure on its economy.³² Pakistan is losing US\$ 2.63 Billion per year due to the smuggling of just 11 goods. The total value of smuggling-prone 11 items stands at US\$ 9 billion, which is equivalent to around 3% percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. The smuggling of millions of dollars to Afghanistan has exacerbated the economic crisis for Pakistan, with resultant price hikes and inflation.³³ Traders and smugglers are bringing as much as \$5 million across the border daily.³⁴ Although the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has denied such reports, independent sources have confirmed the illegal trafficking.

Due to being a landlocked country, having no access to sea trade and a mountainous nature, Afghans remained involved in poppy cultivation and trafficking. The emergence of war economy also needed poppy crops and drug trade for more revenue generation for the warlords and military commanders. Afghanistan thus became a drug heaven with drugs being smuggled to all corners of the world from this “golden crescent”. Pakistan, by virtue of its proximity, was affected the most by this menace.³⁵

With rising terrorism spilling over from its neighbour and a surge in crimes, Pakistan’s tourism industry declined, and KPK, Baluchistan and GB remained hotspots. The situation was further aggravated due to the Indian hybrid war against Pakistan, which was initiated and supported from the border areas of Afghanistan.

Way Forward

According to the US 2002 National Security Strategy, the weak and fragile states are potent threat to the national security and regional stability. To prevent the rise of such states and address their issues of fragility, the 9/11 commission in its report of 2004 pledged to politically dominant solution of the Afghan society. Under Global Fragility Act -2019, US maintained to stabilise the conflict prone areas including Afghanistan.³⁶ The US strategy encompasses prevention of conflicts through peacebuilding engagement, stabilisation through conflict resolution, partnership enhancement and management through prioritisation, integration and focused alliances.

Afghanistan, as a fragile state in Pakistan's neighbourhood, has always posed greater challenges to its political stability, diplomatic access, economic growth and security domain. To prevent the extreme effects of a fragile neighbourhood, Pakistan needs to ensure conflict prevention and address extremism in its society. Extending justice, equality, security, legitimate institutions and economic empowerment would counter the effects of the Taliban's extreme policies. In addition, Pakistan must use its influence and diplomatic outreach to help install an inclusive government in Afghanistan, having representation of all the diversified Afghan society and urge the Taliban to suspend their inhumane policies with a welfare orientation. To convince Taliban for stability, economic support through international donors would balance the environment inside Afghanistan with positive outcome for regional stability. A legitimate government would form the basis of reconstruction and help evolve a system of rehabilitation which necessitates transparent elections with equal rights for all factions to participate.³⁷

To address the humanitarian crisis in the country, Pakistan must use its diplomatic influence for ensuing state building and peace building. The Taliban government must be urged to activate social and democratic aspects of society for the state's legitimacy.³⁸ Measures by the Afghan government to extend basic rights to the citizens and reduce poverty would strengthen its grip over the country and reduce the chances of yet another civil war through the prevention of conflicts and their resolution. This would ultimately result in strengthening the social fabric of the Afghan society and the stability of the region.

To improve its security, Pakistan must urge the Afghan Taliban to attempt a crackdown against TTP. Pakistan should also limit its economic support for Afghanistan and close border crossings to bring enormous pressure on the Taliban till prompt action is taken against TTP leaders and terrorists. Inside Pakistan, all supporters of TTP must be constantly monitored for any anti-state activities, and their assets should be apprehended to deprive them of any financial support. The religious activists and influential Islamic scholars may be activated through the media, condemning terrorists' activities against Pakistan. Promoting transparent, accountable and responsive governance and restoring social cohesion are key to building resilience and thwarting terrorism.³⁹

With increased security threats from TTP and illegal trafficking of routine items, Pakistan should strengthen its border with a fence and a surveillance mechanism to continuously regulate and monitor movement across the border.

Moreover, to prevent the Taliban's leverage over it, Pakistan must directly handle the issue of TTP instead of asking the Taliban to carry out operations against TTP inside Afghanistan. Based on past successful operations against TTP, a direct military action against TTP would create a favourable environment for Pakistan. Pakistan must initiate a strong development program for the terror-prone areas of the tribal areas of KPK and Baluchistan. Since these areas have faced security challenges, preference should be given to the youth of these areas in all job opportunities. The establishment of industries and small businesses would change the orientation of the region.

CPEC provides a greater opportunity for regional integration and enhanced trade cooperation among the neighbouring countries. A free trade policy with Afghanistan and India would pave the way for economic interdependence. To neutralise non-state terrorist groups such as TTP, Pakistan can become a bridge between India and Afghanistan for cheap and enhanced trade cooperation. Pakistan should also accelerate its bilateral engagement with the Afghan Taliban through enhanced diplomatic, security and economic ties. Supply of dry fruit and increased coal export to Pakistan, has provided Afghanistan to improve its revenue generation while Pakistan should provide daily routine items and help Taliban in rehabilitation of the war-torn country.

Pakistan should also initiate a dialogue on its bilateral differences with Afghanistan and amicably resolve issues. Due to its past relations with the Taliban, it would be easy for Pakistan to improve long-term relations and prevent India's exploitation of its relations with Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The rise of the illegitimate Taliban government in Afghanistan has created greater challenges for the regional peace and Pakistan. Though, it has ended the fighting and mitigated the chances of civil war at the moment but prospects of peace are not encouraging due to Taliban's oppressive policies, international isolation and reports of regrouping of opposing Afghan forces and terrorists' organisations.⁴⁰ Deprived of international support, the Taliban might resort to revenue generation by patronising these terror organisations, which are consistently posing a threat to regional security.

Over the past decade, global communities of policymakers, researchers, and practitioners have increasingly understood that the causes of violence and civil war are rooted in fragility, with a growing consensus on key points of action. Now, with the global system straining from multiple crises, the time is right to build on these early steps to eliminate extreme poverty and build a more secure, peaceful and inclusive global community.

Pakistan is most affected by the events in Afghanistan due to cultural and historical links. The fragile state of Afghanistan has severely affected economic and security situation of Pakistan. To prevent ingress of terror and deterioration of economic situation, Pakistan needs to take prompt security, diplomatic and economic measures in collaboration with Afghanistan and other stakeholders.

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