**The Taliban: Our Deccan ulcer?**

**With the fall of Kabul, Pakistan, in its naivety, believed that the Western border would now be safe**

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The bitter truth is that we nurtured the serpent in our bosom. Equally responsible are the Western and Muslim countries, who fed and trained the snake to fight against the Soviet invasion.

In the earlier era of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, Pakistan enjoyed a period of relative ease. The Durand Line was quietly considered the accepted border, and the historical ties between the people living in the tribal belt on both sides of the border continued with the same enthusiasm and zeal.

After 9/11, the canvas changed in Afghanistan. Pakistan was forced to undertake the gigantic task of fencing a 2400-kilometre border that was not easy to chart, the region being highly porous and rugged. The exercise cost us the precious lives of innumerable Pakistani soldiers and also drained the national kitty.

During the US occupation, Pakistan had implicit cordial relations with the Afghan Taliban (TTA). For the same reason, it was suspected and accused of playing a double game, even though it is a fact that Pakistan was at the forefront of brokering peace between the US and the Taliban. Regrettably, the US found an easy scapegoat in Pakistan, on which it quickly transferred the burden of its defeat.

[PM Shehbaz to chair cabinet meeting today](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2023/pm-shehbaz-to-chair-cabinet-meeting-today)

If the triumphant Taliban were over joyous on the eve of the ignoble exit of NATO forces from Afghanistan, they had reason to be: earlier, they had defeated the Soviets, and now, the sole superpower of the world was fleeing. It also emboldened them dangerously in our disfavour.

With the fall of Kabul, Pakistan, in its naivety, believed that the Western border would now be safe. The Ghani regime in Afghanistan had developed extremely friendly ties with India, even though during his exile, he had enjoyed a comfortable dwelling in Quetta.

The frantic exodus of the Afghan people upon the news of the Taliban returning to Kabul should have given us pause. It spoke volumes of the unpopularity of the new barbarian regime. As expected, the first victim soon became the poor women forced to live under their dark shadows.

The ideology of TTP and the TTA is the same: imposing their brand of Shariah all over the world by force. After the Kabul regime change, the TTA continued to fool Pakistan by promising that they would rein in the TTP.

[PM directs PTA to immediately restore Wikipedia services](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2023/pm-directs-pta-to-immediately-restore-wikipedia-services)

However, it soon became apparent that the TTA and TTP were two sides of the same coin, and therefore considering them separate entities had been a grave mistake of Pakistani policymakers.

Their close nexus was uncovered soon after the TTA regained power in Afghanistan and proceeded to provide sanctuary to the TTP. Military equipment, including night-vision devices and sophisticated weapons left by the US, came into their possession.

Though not trained in military war colleges, they played their games shrewdly: under the garb of a ceasefire, the TTP reorganised until it was able to declare hostilities against Pakistan openly.

Holding their captors captive at a CTD compound Bannu, attacking polices station in Wana, and a suicidal attack in Islamabad are indicators of the extent they are willing to go and execute their nefarious designs.

Similarly, demands for the removal of the barbed wire from our shared border and the reversal of the mainstreaming of FATA are just the beginning. Though denying it, Kabul is facilitating the TTP to infiltrate and attack Pakistan and flee back to Afghanistan. From this position onward, they will unfold their grand plan to once again make the region unsafe for all. Unless evil is nipped in the bud, this anticipated catastrophe may soon become a reality.

[Cold, dry weather expected in most parts of country](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2023/cold-dry-weather-expected-in-most-parts-of-country)

To check the pulse of people, the TTP re-emerged in Swat a few months back. Earlier in 2007, the locals had hidden in their houses, and the police and administration vanished without a trace, leaving the Taliban to take control of the scenic Swat Valley and establish their rule for a couple of years until they were finally ejected by the Army. The Taliban takeover had deprived the valley of millions of tourists and forced the locals to starve, as their livelihood depended on tourism. Fortunately, this time, the natives reacted valiantly.

The recent unprovoked artillery shelling at the Chaman border, which killed innocent civilians, was enough to clear any remaining doubts in our minds. On top of that, the meek protest by the Pakistani government was embarrassing. More humiliating was the statement coming from a Pakistani minister that the Afghan government had ‘apologised’. NACTA was created in 2009 under the Ministry of Interior to counter-terrorism. It was reformed in 2013 as a corporate body answerable to a board of governors headed by the prime minister. As per its constitution, it is mandated to convene meetings twice a year. It has recently awoken from a two-year slumber after the recent ongoing volley of attacks and casualties.

[Senator Mushahid Hussain urges govt to initiate 'normal traffic' at Thar border](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2023/senator-mushahid-hussain-urges-govt-to-initiate-normal-traffic-at-thar-border)

Interestingly, since its inception, this has been the NACTA pattern. Though it could be a potent authority, it has failed to prove its mettle. Perhaps those posted to this organisation consider it a ‘parked posting’ and therefore avoid exerting their energies on it.

As recently reported, it has now decided to reorganise itself-creating a tactical force - a federal CTD under an IG implying more burden on the government exchequer rather than a distrust of local CTD-paradigm shift from its original mandate of collating, analysing, and researching information on extremism and terrorism, give threat assessment and make counter-terrorism policies.

One forgets that the infamous FSF (Federal Security Force) was created in 1972, and the SIG (Special Investigation Group-FIA) in 2003. The scars inflicted by the former can still be attested by some of its political victims. Prudence would demand that any new authority shun political ambitions like the former FSF, realise the looming threat and take concrete measures to counter the enemy. Pakistan must tread cautiously. RAND study reveals, since 1968, terrorism has successfully been tackled by negotiation 42 percent of the time, 40 percent by police and intelligence operations, 10 percent by military action and only in 8 percent of cases, the terrorist groups gained success. Hence NACTA, LEAs, intelligence agencies and the Armed Forces need to adopt appropriate strategies.

[PM orders restoration of Wikipedia](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2023/pm-orders-restoration-of-wikipedia)

In Pakistan, border diplomacy is in total control of the armed forces. It is high time that the civilian-police step in. Though all-out hostilities are not advisable, the sacrifices of Pakistani law enforcers in erecting the barbed wire fence along the border must not go waste. A bold and befitting response is the need of the time.

The world community should be made to realise the blood shed by thousands of Pakistanis in the US’s War on Terror. If that is not enough, a UN delegation can visit Pakistan’s Armed Forces Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine (AFIRM) and witness for itself the sacrifices of our soldiers who lost their limbs in the war.

On the other hand, since Afghanistan is once again struggling to survive economically and has strained its relations with Pakistan, hostile forces will try to capitalise on the opportunity to take the Taliban into its dominion secretly- as sadly Pakistan is currently also going through its worst political and economic crisis.

The Deccan ulcer ruined Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. His incessant fighting with the Maratha insurgents paved the way for Britain to take control of Hindustan, sinking the sun of Mughal rule. Our resolve should be to cauterise any pernicious wound before it starts transforming into an ulcer.