**Afghanistan Under The Shadows Of Terrorism**

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Everything in Afghanistan is not fine. Decades-long unrest continues to spill over in neighbouring states. Pakistan is confronting the most undesired consequences of perpetuating unrest oozing out of unsettled Afghanistan on many accounts. Surging terrorism in areas adjacent to Afghanistan’s borders is an extraordinary security challenge. Well-equipped terrorists, involved in brazen attacks, do not believe in the constitutional framework of the state of Pakistan. Frequent recurrence of attacks on law enforcement agencies, civil armed forces and military troops is undeniable evidence of massive foreign support to these terrorist groups operating under the ideological umbrella of Al-Qaeda, Daesh and TTP.

The frustration of Pakistan about the active presence of hardcore terrorist groups in Afghanistan is neither an undisclosed secret nor an easily deniable fact. Meaningful suggestions of dialogue with terrorist groups pouring in from Kabul on various occasions are a sort of open-ended acceptance of Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan’s presence on Afghan soil. Pakistan has never hesitated in conveying its genuine concerns to Kabul through all available and legitimate channels. Any sort of denial on the part of the Afghan interim government always compels Pakistan to relook at bilateral ties with a security lens. How can Pakistan overlook or neglect the blood bath of its citizens in the hands of those terrorists who openly reject the writ of state?

Persistent denial of genuine claims may be deemed fit to the regimes ruling Kabul but Pakistan is justified in adopting a less tolerant approach towards the unbroken vicious cycle of terrorism. Over a while, the emergence of Afghanistan as the epicentre of all brands of terrorism in the region has enormously endangered regional security. Not only the Pakistan rather various international watchdogs are dispassionately pointing out the presence of hardcore terrorist groups inside Afghanistan. 33rd report submitted to the United Nations Security Council by the monitoring committee tasked with ISIL (Daesh) and Al-Qaeda contains eye-opening details about the active existence of multiple terrorist groups on Afghan soil. Disclosed details are quite disturbing for regional and global players, however, for Pakistan, it appears as a much-needed endorsement of longstanding terrorism-specific concerns. As per disclosures made in the report, multi-dimensional operational support rendered by Al-Qaeda and Daesh is enabling the TTP to confront the rigours of war against the state of Pakistan.

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The severity of this secretive nexus multiplies with the disclosure of significant backing of the interim Afghan government presently ruling Kabul after the mysterious takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. This venomous collaboration comprises the provision of weapons, battle equipment, training and on-ground operational support for the execution of hardcore terrorist operations against Pakistan. This report has validated the objections of Pakistan raised on various occasions on the highly doubtful role of Kabul amid recurring terrorist attacks from Afghan soil.

There is credible evidence about the provision of regular aid from the interim Afghan government to the family members of TTP foot soldiers as well. The nature of such a deeper connection between TTP and the Afghan Taliban is highly toxic and reflects something extraordinarily serious beyond the typical optics of religious synchronization. When the Afghan Taliban dramatically took over Kabul without any resistance from the National Army operating under the Ashraf Ghani regime in 2021, certain quarters expected the uprooting of anti-Pakistan terrorist groups from Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the Interim Afghan Government disappointed the optimistic quarters in Pakistan and adopted a highly controversial stance against all the positive expectations.

The persistent inaction of the Afghan Taliban against the terrorist groups involved in serious attacks inside Pakistan is a major reason behind seriously strained bilateral relations. The unjustified reluctance of the Afghan Taliban to counter the banned TTP is posing a grave threat to the national security of Pakistan. The seriousness of the matter may be assessed from the alarming disclosures made in the report submitted to the UNSC regarding the establishment of training camps in different areas under Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda in the Subcontinent.

Besides enabling TTP against Pakistan, these camps are being used as operational bases by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), Turkestan Islamic Movement (TIM) and Majeed Brigade. Terrorist groups being nurtured in Afghanistan are aiming to spread wings across the whole region. The co-existence of the ethnic terrorist group Majeed Brigade with the self-style religious extremist outfit TTP is sufficient proof of coordinated destabilizing manoeuvres against Pakistan. The followers of two different ideologies, the TTP and Baloch ethnic separatist groups, are marching on the singular drumbeat of anti-Pakistan terrorism.

No rocket science is needed to solve this riddle. The existence of multi-nature terrorist outfits in Afghanistan is part of a larger vicious power contestation between global players. Afghanistan under the Taliban regime should not prolong any further the self-assumed denial of rapidly spreading terrorism threat from its soil. Brazen terrorist attacks in Baluchistan and KP were executed to destabilize the country ahead of elections. Kabul should keep in mind the unconditional support extended by Pakistan on humanitarian grounds at all international forums to the Interim regime lacking international recognition. It is about time for Afghanistan to take an unconditional break from the time-tested flawed strategy of relying on shadowy terrorist groups.

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