**Justified Hot Pursuit**

[Faisal Ahmad](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/faisal-ahmad/)

March 26, 2024

Shocking cross-border terrorist attacks from Afghan soil have been testing the patience limit of Pakistan for a long. Eventually, Pakistan had to strike the terrorists’ safe havens inside Afghanistan.

Multiple terrorist groups operating from Afghanistan under the umbrella of banned Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) share a common ideology of dislodging the constitutional order of the state. The imposition of a self-styled religious system with the force of violence is the only goal propagated frequently by banned outfits through various forums. It is not possible for terrorist outfits without denting the writ of state inside Pakistan. Surging terrorism with full impunity puts big question marks on the role of the Afghan Taliban.

Ironically, these terrorists enjoy the support of those dissenting elements of the interim Afghan setup who are well aligned with the agenda of TTP. It was pointed out to the Afghan interim setup from the Pakistani side that banned TTP and its all splinter terrorist outfits are red line amid an intolerable chain of violence. Besides regular diplomatic channels, Pakistan has been approaching the Afghan interim setup through non-conventional reliable means. Visits of renowned religious figures, tribal elders, politicians, parliamentarians, and delegations comprising ministers and security officials were all part of sincere efforts put in by Pakistan to tackle the menace of terrorism with joint efforts.

The harsh response from the interim Afghan setup reflects an absolute misinterpretation of the Pakistani strikes precisely executed on hardcore terrorists affiliated with the Hafiz Gul Bahadur faction of TTP.

Against all the wishes, the Afghan interim setup remained inactive on this sensitive issue. The severity and alarmingly upward frequency of terrorist attacks in KP and Baluchistan indicate the rapid unfolding of a sinister plan against Pakistan. The martyrdom of seven officers and soldiers during the terrorist attack on Mir Ali camp in North Waziristan in the second week of March has compelled Pakistan to a hot pursuit response.

Hue and cry from the Afghan side on this justified response is misplaced. The spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed the attack in a statement and reminded the Afghan interim setup of its obligations. Pakistan’s foreign office has emphasized finding a joint solution to counter terrorism and prevent terrorist outfits from sabotaging bilateral relations with Afghanistan.

Foreign Office statement said that Pakistan fully realized the challenges Afghan authorities faced in combating the threat posed by TTP, adding that terrorist groups like TTP were a collective threat to regional peace and security. Those who are trying to stir bitterness in Pak-Afghan relations should focus on the statement of the foreign office spokesperson which said, “Pakistan has great respect for the people of Afghanistan. However, certain elements among those in power in Afghanistan are actively patronizing TTP and using them as a proxy against Pakistan. Such an approach against a brotherly country, which stood with the people of Afghanistan through thick and thin, manifests shortsightedness. We urge these elements in power to rethink the policy of siding with Kharijite terrorists shedding the blood of innocent Pakistanis and to make a clear choice to stand with the people of Pakistan.”

Zero tolerance policy towards terrorism is very much evident from the official statement of the foreign office. As spelled out by PM as well the state of Pakistan and its masses have no confrontation with the people of Afghanistan. The supportive role of Pakistan for the Afghani people after the soviet invasion is now part of history.

After the swift evaporation of the Ghani regime and the surprising take-over of the Taliban, Pakistan continued to plead the case of Afghanistan to seek humanitarian aid at a time when the global community was reluctant to recognize the self-style interim setup of the Taliban. Pakistan is home to many Afghanis. Hundreds of Afghan students are studying in Pakistani universities under generous scholarship programs.

The harsh response from the interim Afghan setup reflects an absolute misinterpretation of the Pakistani strikes precisely executed on hardcore terrorists affiliated with the Hafiz Gul Bahadur faction of TTP. The stance of the Taliban-led interim set up on the active presence of TTP doesn’t hold water. The interim government’s policy of denying the active presence of TTP on Afghan soil left a strong impression of a soft corner for anti-Pakistan terrorists.

The patience of Pakistan on the issue of cross-border terrorism was misunderstood as a sign of weakness. Retaliatory strikes on terrorist hideouts inside Afghanistan have sent a clear message to TTP, its backers and sympathizers. If the interim Afghan setup lacks due sensibility on the shared threats of terrorism, then Pakistan has all the rights to chase and hunt down the wanted culprits without any regrets. It is about time for the interim Taliban setup to introspect the flawed strategy of collaborating with terrorist outfits while having zero recognition in the international community.

Swift comprehension of a message coded in Pakistani strikes will be better for the future of bilateral ties and regional peace. Afghan Taliban should sort out the devil’s advocates hidden in their ranks. Enough is enough!

*A graduate of QAU, PhD scholar & freelance writer. Can be reached at fa7263125@gmail.com*