

Pakistan: No support for religious fanatics and imperialists

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The 2 October suicidal attack on Asfand Yar Wali Khan's Hujra in Charsada and the 20/9 deadly attack in Islamabad must be condemned by all. So is the case of all the suicidal attacks all over. There must not be any pretext, rationalization or any foundation for such an attack. These are gutless acts by groups claiming to be anti imperialist. The sheer volume of dynamite, over 800 kilogram, used in 20/9 suicidal attack shows that it is not a work of an isolated group. It could be an Alqaida work or a group having similar power and resources.

However, these attacks have created a ground for an all out brutalities by the Pakistani government and the American imperialism against the ordinary citizens in all parts of Pakistan. Any act of individual terrorism can only create a puzzlement, confusion, bafflement, disappointments, panic, alarm, fright, dread, and fear for the time being. In most cases, the state forces immediately reorganize it to respond to these attacks.

It is now feared that whole sale arrests will be made. More people will disappear. Many more will be killed in "defensive" attacks. There could be ban on public gatherings. "Democratic" government of Asif Zardari will be more closely linked with American imperialism. They will go even further in embracing the so-called war on terror. All sort of autocratic, tyrannical and vicious measure will be on the agenda without any hesitation. People like Rehman Malik, the unelected interior adviser (who has powers more than a minister) will do all sort of dictatorial measures on the name of security of Pakistan and the nation.

The killing of two American soldiers and Ambassador of Czech republic during the blast will give an open hand to American imperialism to have an open military basis in Pakistan. It was already agreed that Pakistan will have American military experts based near Islamabad to train the Pakistan military and police officers in curbing the threat of terrorism. This was the first time a public acceptance of American military official presence in Pakistan. The move came after American forces landed in tribal areas on 3 September to kill over 20 "suspected terrorist". Later it was revealed that women and children of a Mullah was the target in this attack. There were other four direct attacks by the Americans inside Pakistan within two weeks of this incident despite the duplicitous hue and cry by the Pakistan Peoples Party government. American commander in chief of army was quick to pay a visit to Islamabad and after talks it was agreed that American will not attack directly inside Pakistan. "We will do the job" was the offer of the Pakistani military chief. Few hours later of these talks of assurances of no more attacks, another American attack killed over 20 again.

The Inside Help

All this was happening within a week of this deadly attack in Islamabad. The 20/9 attack has left whole Pakistan in shock. It was clear that the religious fundamentalist could not do this without an "inside" help. Pakistani military intelligence agencies are littered with elements of religious fanatics. They can not get rid of their past. They had helped to form groups of religious fanatics in Afghanistan on the name of Jihad in early eighties against the threat of communism. That went on openly till 9/11. It is absolute clear that Pakistan military agencies had a lot to contribute in the formation of these religious groups. Those linkages are still not broken in absolute terms.

The changing relationship

After 9/11, the relationship of these forces changed publicly. Those who were friends were declared enemies. Most of the Inter Services Intelligence agents among the civilians doing a holy job paid a high price of their association with ISI. They were either sold to Americans or handed over to please them. Majority of the missing persons after 9/11 are those who had once conducted Jihad to please God and their families with American Dollars.

While helping the Missing persons families during 2007/2008, I found out that majority of the missing persons were closely associated with ISI and were paid regular amounts by the intelligence agencies to feed their families. The ISI had the lists and after 9/11 went on rampage. I heard many relatives crying, " why are they doing it, they were our friends, we have done a job for the country and gone for Jihad when they needed us, why are they ditching us, where are our loved ones, why they have disappeared and so on?

Friends becoming enemies

When a friend becomes an enemy, it creates more pain. That is what had happened in Pakistan. The state and the religious forces were friends. They became enemies at least in public for some times after 9/11. The reasons were not explained. The relationship went on for some time without hurting each other. They both believed that they can fool the American imperialism. The Musharraf dictatorship played both ways. For years after 9/11, it ensured the American imperialism that he is the best to deal with the religious fundamentalist and got a lot of financial help. However, this stage management could not go on very long. Musharraf dictatorship was seen an unproductive force to deal with the religious fanatics. A deal with Benazir Bhutto was agreed to share power. Benazir Bhutto unfortunate death on 27 December 2007 changed the relationship of PPP with Musharraf, but not with the Americans. It was clear that General has Musharraf gone on 18 August 2008 but not his policies.

Pakistan Peoples Party government went further in cooperation with American imperialism than even Musharraf could think of. It was during their seven months rule that American dared to attack directly inside Pakistan. The Americans knew if Musharraf could not do it, how Zardari, the husband of Benazir, could do it. They had to do it themselves. They can only kill people but not the ideas of religious fundamentalism.

The religious fundamentalist, roots and strategies

When analyzing religious fundamentalism, one must understand that the religion of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism are not the same. Islamic fundamentalism is a reactionary non scientific movement aimed at returning society to a centuries old social set up, defying all material and

historical factors. It is an attempt to roll back the wheel of history.

Fundamentalism is a political and not social or religious phenomenon. It is best defined as counter-thesis of modernism. Partly, the growth of religious fundamentalism owes to its peculiar regional and national conditions- Pakistan is not a national state. It is an unnatural and unhistorical country with its borders drawn in the name of religion. Religion was and still is, used to provide a rationale for the country.

The religious fundamentalist groups organized in Mutihida Majlas Amal (MMA) were in power in NWFP during 2002-2007. They had got a massive electoral boost during the 2002 general elections under Musharraf. The 9/11 was afresh in mind. People wanted to go for revenge from the imperialists. General Musharraf also wanted to go a dual game. On one side he wanted to show the Americans the massive power base of the religious fundamentalists to get more aid. On the other hand, the relationship of the state and religious groups were not broken yet and the Musharraf dictatorship provided the needed state help for the religious groups.

The recent growth of Taliban

MMA once in power also played a dual game. They were not challenging the dictatorial rule of General Musharraf. They were all busy to provide all sort of help to those religious groups busy organizing themselves in Afghanistan against the NATO occupation. It was during these years when Taliban of Afghanistan had a place to hide and organise. The influence of Taliban started growing during the power period of MMA in NWFP. However, the Mullahs, once in power forgot all that what was told to them by the religion. They became part of the game. They made money.

The rich politician coming to power can hide their corruption easily but the Mullahs were seen by ordinary people growing in their wealth, and were driving in the most expensive jeeps and cars. They were once from them. The five years power in the province brought them too far from the people's life. They started living in expensive homes and hotels. A lot of land was allotted to their close relations. Finally, they were loosing the social base that they had enjoyed after 9/11. The MMA leadership provided no jobs or the peace in the area that was the need of the hour.

Loosing parliamentary majority

Come, the general election of 2007. The MMA was divided at the time. Jamaat Islami wanted to boycott the election on the bases of their long term strategy. They knew very well that they can not repeat the successes in parliamentary field that they had done in 2002. The Jamiat Ulemai Islam (JUI) of Fazal Rehman could not repeat the same success story of 2002. They ended up less than 3 percent of the total votes. It was over 15 percent of MMA in 2002.

Defeated in the parliamentary field, several new groups emerged to take an old road of Jihad. The religious fanatic groups escalated their effort of Jihad after the 2008 votes. The main target of these fanatics were mainly ANP and PPP before and after the general elections of February 2008.

The failure of negotiation

The masses in NWFP voted in favor of ANP and PPP in the hope of peace. The main slogan of ANP was peace. After the elections, however, instead of mobilizing the masses for peace, the ANP leadership took a road of negotiations. This was a wrong policy. It had been tested time and again and failed. You can not negotiate with the neo fascist trends. The fanatics do not believe in democracy. They believe in the physical elimination of the political opponents. The ANP leadership even went to accept the implantation of "Sharia" in trade of peace. The process of implantation of

“Sharia” is itself a violent act. How could the “Sharia” implementation would bring peace in the region? This strategy of ANP and PPP brought even more disaster. Some of the known religious fanatics were released under the deal. They all went to make the time lost in prisons.

The religious fanatics went on all out war. They organized suicidal attacks, target killings and burning of the schools and other public institutions. They made the life of the locals hell. The suicidal attack on WAH ordinance factory killing over 100 workers opened the eyes of many. There started a new process, a process of countering the religious fanatics by themselves. The locals had also lost all hopes on ANP and PPP coalition provincial and federal government to bring peace.

The emergence of Awami lashkars

The Pakistani Taliban Tehreek, one of the new but the main religious fundamentalist organization and other fanatic groups are facing a massive resistance not by the state, but by the locals. In almost all areas, Awami Lashkar (Peoples Army) are been organized to fight these fanatics. The local life is been destroyed since the escalation of the war in these areas.

Many Taliban have been dealt by these Lashkars in the villages. This has emerged as a new hope for many. These Lashkars are sometime working hands in hands with the state forces. However there are many cases where an independent initiative is taken by the local civil society actors.

In Dir district, over 20,000 have joined such a Lashkar. In Swat valley, while thousands were protesting against the continuous bombing and killings, three persons were killed by army firing. They thousands were breaking the curfew. These Lashkars are also killing the known Taliban. Welcome by many, these Lashkars are also creating a civil war like situation all over. The violent responses of these private counter armies to Taliban are creating some immediate relief but it can not last without the intervention and support of the state. However, the creation of these Lashkars shows a vote of no confidence on the state actors.

What to do?

We must oppose the both, the religious fanatics and imperialist forces. Siding with any one is a recipe of political suicide. They both are not friends of ordinary people. We must create and establish an independent voice of the working people. We must build up a movement of working people to oppose the both particularly in the areas where there are growth of religious fundamentalism. We must not abandon the people on the mercy of the both.

The policies of the present civil government to side publicly and openly with the American imperialism and its so-called war on terror and neo liberal agenda are a real help for the growth of the religious fundamentalists. With the continuation of these policies, one can not expect that the fanatics will end their war and they will be defeated. May be defeated for the time being by military operations, they will come out in new areas with new faces and organizations. You can not kill ideas.

The civil society actors do not have to repeat the mistakes that some of them did after 9/11. They supported the occupation of Afghanistan in the hope that it will end religious fanatics. That did not happen. Let us not do it now, Let oppose the military actions, and the actions of the fanatics in one breath. There is nothing good to choose from them. There is no progressive action by any one of them. ENDS

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