

The menace of terrorism

The government could not let terrorists spread scare and terror. My government shall not be deterred by such acts and we shall chase them till the last of the terrorists is apprehended." — President, General Pervez Musharraf

The fresh wave of terrorism in different parts of the country was predicted long ago but those responsible for maintaining law and order had failed to take cognizance of the situation and act accordingly. In the last one year, hundreds of doctors, lawyers, journalists, teachers, government officials, politicians, businessmen and religious scholars have been ambushed by various terrorist gangs. By targeting such people, terrorists have challenged not only the state authority but have also given the message that they can physically eliminate more professionals and those holding respect in society. Emerging in the backdrop of the Afghan war and the rise of religious and ethnic intolerance, terrorist elements now appear to have gained substantial strength and resources.

With the proliferation of weapons and the rise of fanatic religious groups vowing to eliminate their opponents by force, the situation was created for executing the 'evil agenda' of such groups who either enjoyed patronage from some sections of society or from the state. When the state failed to rein in such terrorist elements, the stage was set for taking the entire nation as hostage. Target killings of professionals and people with civilised background became the normal practice. Big claims were made by the government to eradicate violence from the society by enforcing the rule of law. The campaign of dewatering was launched but it failed to take off. Sloppy handling of law and order situation by the concerned authorities was covered up and scapegoats were found to hide their own incompetence.

While the economic and social dynamics of Pakistani society have changed in the last fifteen years with violence and the illegal use of force becoming acceptable norms, the state remained indifferent to the rise

of terrorism. What is quite alarming in the current spell of terrorism is the loss of sense of security among those people who are law abiding and could be called as the most responsible and sensible segment of society. Taking advantage of the weak response of the government to the acts of terrorism and violence, invisible terrorist groups, along with their paymasters, have got a free hand. Certainly, Pakistan is moving towards a very dangerous phase despite the fact that those who are supposed to ensure law and order are at the helm of affairs.



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ities in the country.

Second, the administrative machinery, which is supposed to maintain law and order, is itself divided and polarised. Apart from its ineptness and failure to provide basic sense of security to people, those who are supposed to enforce the rule of law are themselves influenced by sectarian and ethnic politics. It is strange that General Musharraf, who after assuming the office of Presidency is the most powerful person in

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Three important conclusions could be drawn from the menace of terrorism and how a sense of security and confidence could be provided to the people. First, the most important purpose of terrorist killings, particularly of professionals and people having an educated background is to get rid of all such people who are conscious and aware about the issues. The biggest obstacle which fascist elements in Pakistan see in their way is the educated class. If they are eliminated from the scene, it will become possible for people who are trying to impose their ideology on others to capture power. Such a situation was created in Afghanistan and in other countries, where people propagating a particular brand of ideology were able to physically eliminate the enlightened and conscious elements of society. On these grounds, there exists a logical connection between the motive of extremist groups in Pakistan and recent terrorist acts. The failure of the government to take any

effective action against sectarian and ethnic groups has resulted in escalation of terrorist activities in the country. The country, is also helpless in combating the forces of terrorism and violence. The government has presented so many plans and proposals to combat terrorism and establish the rule of law, but it has failed to seek their implementation. Most important, incidents of terrorism are covered up and in most cases either the culprits are not apprehended or if arrested are not severely punished. As a result, the menace of terrorism has permeated in our society and people have lost their confidence on those who are responsible to provide them a basic sense of security.

Finally, terrorism in Pakistan has taken a serious shape because of the economic and political mess in the country. Terrorism is an effect of poverty, social injustices and the failure of people at the helm of affairs to provide better governance. One cannot entirely put the blame on terrorists for their acts because the society and the govern-

ment are also responsible for not dealing with the issues, which breed violence and terrorism. Faced with growing unemployment, illiteracy and class contradictions, numerous gangs have emerged who are in a position to take the law into their own hands. Sectarian and the Jehadi forces propagating intolerance, hate and violence have not emerged overnight but have reached this position because of the breakdown of state structures, absence of a viable political process and unprecedented greed and apathy in society.

There is no shortcut to effectively dealing with the rise in violence and terrorist activities in the country. If the government wants to save this country from further instability, it should embark on short and long-term plans to weed out all such elements who want to take law into their own hands and are able to succeed in their objectives because of the patronage which they are getting from a particular section of society and the establishment. Short-term measures would require immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of those found guilty of violence and various terrorist acts. Long-term measures need the restructuring of the country's administrative, economic, educational, political and religious institutions and orders. If terrorists are given the message that they will get a rough deal and the government will act with courage and precision in seeking their elimination, it is certain that they will be neutralised and eliminated from the scene.

Enough damage has been done because of the covering up of acts of terrorism. As rightly said the other day by the Governor of State Bank Dr Ishrat Hussain, if violence and terrorism continue, neither there will be local nor foreign investment. Before, Pakistan reaches a breaking point, the government should deal with this issue in a firm and an uncompromising manner. Attempts to cover up terrorist killings and undermine the threat of intolerance will be counter-productive and take the country to the brink of final disaster.

This and other English newspapers are read by perhaps 25,000 people in Lahore, 15,000 in Islamabad and a max of 50,000 in Karachi. That is it. Yet, these few are also the high and mighty, the chosen few, the Elite of our country who make, break, crystallize and certainly influence public policy. What a truly frightening prospect that the fortunes of our oft quoted 140 million "Awam" are in the hands of this minuscule minority.

The elite, dear readers, is you and I and all the people we meet at dinners and "Charity" Balls and in the normal everyday routine of our lives. The real people of our country are very different from us and most of "us" have very little contact with or understanding of "them". It is as if two absolutely different nations are living together in one country.

Leaving further analysis of this fact and its implications to more intelligent people all I wanted to share with my peers is a personal experiences of this "disconnect", of this lack of understanding between 'us' and 'them'.

When I began active farming a long time ago I was warned by my more experienced fellow farmers and even my own Munshi that modern management theories had no place in our rural areas. Specifically, motivating workers through performance bonuses was a real no no. In fact the more money you gave your agri labourer the less he worked and if you gave him money in

A rural myth confronted

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bulk, as a bonus, he would stop working all together!!

Believe it or not, everybody told me that the hungrier the workers the more they worked and you had to keep your farm workers at a certain level of deprivation if you wanted to be a successful farmer.

I obviously laughed at this strange theory which flew in the face of whatever I had learned at Business School and was clearly against fundamental human nature. I mean its so simple—labour works hard—farm produces profit—labour gets bonus—labour becomes more loyal and works even harder in expectation of future rewards.

Unfazed, I put theory into practice. As soon as the farms income increased significantly I, triumphantly, announced and paid a decent bonus and even made a stirring speech to all my hard working and dedicated workers, exhorting them to future glory.

The next working day I made it a point to be personally present at the daily "haziri" to see if my workers were smiling and geared up for work.

What I faced was devastating! Of my labour force of 50 only 10 turned up (so much for my motivating speech!) I

The farm worker's experience is that life is and will always be miserable.

tried to believe they had all had food poisoning or something like that but it was really my bonus that had done it. All these guys just stopped coming to work and stayed home! My speech notwithstanding. All the time when I was making my speech on our future these guys knew they would not be coming to work the next day.

What went wrong?! What happened to all the motivation theories? Were the laws of human nature not applicable to rural Pakistan?

It took me a long time to figure it out. Slowly I began to comprehend the enormity of the divide between 'us' and 'them'.

The explanation for this supposedly "odd" behaviour is very simple. A Farm worker performs backbreaking labour at only subsistence wages. He has to work for eight to 10 hours a day, seven days a week in unbelievable heat. Although winters are relatively mild his lack of adequate clothes and working in the open combine to make even winters severe. His wages do not even allow him to bring meat to the table more than a couple of times a year. He has very few rights as labour laws do not apply, no overtime, almost no holidays and no access to the most basic health care facilities. He hates and detests his job. The guy is illiterate and, therefore, cannot hope for advancing to a better job.

His experience and that of his father, his grandfather, his relatives and all his acquaintances is that life is and will always be miserable. The face of the employer will change, Elections will come and go, this party will replace that party but for him and his peers nothing will change as it hasn't changed in living memory. He only works because he has to feed himself and his family-period.

Put yourself in his shoes for a mo-

Lment and think how you would behave if you got a bonus. Would you go back and work harder? Or would you take a holiday and bask in the luxury of being able to feed oneself and the family for a month or so without having to break your back in the most punishing of work.

I don't know about you but the Farm worker definitely takes a holiday that he really needs. Not having to work, my friends, is his version of supreme luxury.

As far as the future is concerned, he has grown up being exploited and knows he will always be exploited, the deck will always be stacked against him. He has seen even do-gooders come and go, sometimes giving the poor extras, but only to lessen their own guilt. He learns to cope by becoming fatalistic and never expecting good stuff to happen to him consistently.

When the extra money has been spent he will try to find a job somewhere or the other, apologise to his previous employer – start all over again.

In a nutshell, only if the farm worker had a minimum education or at least the opportunity, basic health care, decent wages, the protection of the very basic labour laws that his industrial cousin enjoys, would we be justified in expecting him to behave according to our notions of "rationality" otherwise he will continue to behave according to the rationality of his own reality.

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