

Terrorism: an apocalyptic menace

Society & SP
6/28/14
news

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Pakistan is afflicted by terrorism as innocent unsuspecting civilians, religious luminaries, politicians, social workers, academics and corporate geniuses are being eliminated almost everyday. Despite tall claims being made by the government of giving exemplary punishment to the perpetrators of such heinous acts, it is seldom that the real culprits are traced out for trial and punishment.

The failure of the agencies responsible for the maintenance of law and order and counter insurgency operations has not only induced a pervasive sense of abiding fear, it is also eating into our economic vitals. The constant threat and fear of abduction, larceny, waylaid or targeted by never missing sharpshooters during broad daylight even in a populated area have many negative impacts on the country's economic progress. By living under constant fear of terrorism, the psyche of the nation has changed. People have become intolerant, submissive, irritating, brooding, complaining and indolent. Parents dread to allow their wards to go out for play and recreation. This fear has grown to such an extent that many people are hesitant to go out for shopping, touring or even for a walk or stroll in a garden lest there be a booby trap hidden under a kiosk.

The menace of terrorism has been afflicting the country for the last two decades. Though no region is now safe, Karachi has been the biggest victim. Being the commercial and economic nerve-centre of Pakistan, the city has apparently been targeted to not only paralyse the economy but to tear it asunder. Though the enemies have not succeeded so far their nefarious efforts have not ceased. The insurrection has now pervaded to far-flung nooks and corners of the country. Despite bold initiatives taken by successive governments the lava of terrorism keeps on erupting at irregular intervals.

The sights and sounds of bullets mercilessly riddling a cross section of people sends cold shivers through spines. The much-heralded campaign against illegal weapons has neither reduced the spate of killings nor palliated the pervasive fears.

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cial institutions to meet their expenses and ingratiate their protectors. They also aim at bringing in desired political objective, whether these are political and economic control of a town, city, province or failing which work for total secession. This group thus merits highest attention from national security viewpoint. As their loyalty may be double or doubtful they are likely to cause biggest damage to the integrity of the country.

The third type is a merely hired and paid professional. These people compelled by their financial needs or having fallen prey to enemy deceit are forced to obey their paymasters. They commit acts of terrorism for money only. They are not motivated people and have loyalty to none. Generally these are the people who are involved in bomb blasts in crowded places, derailment of trains, blasts in public transport and other sabotage activities against lucrative targets as directed by their pay masters.

These people may not be armed as such with lethal weapons, but can certainly be noticed by their fellow beings for having an erratic source of income. There may be other types of terrorists, but the ones operating in Pakistan can generally be grouped amongst these three groups. Additionally the professional thieves, dacoits, smugglers and paid murderers also make the life of ordinary people quite unsafe and are required to be extirpated, but the sectarian and ethnic terrorists require extra special attention as they are a threat to the very fabric of the state.

It may not be so easy to disarm these people. As the sectarian menace has a religious overtone, its activities transcend others. These people can only be controlled through a sustained religious indoctrination aimed at defusing the charged atmosphere through a carefully crafted scheme. Some of these organisations are flourishing on fanning sectarian hatred and defusing of the tension threatens their source of income. So unless their source is dried out they may not succumb to reason.

The ethnic question must be addressed politically and the genuine grievances of the aggrieved people must be attended to. There may be genuine or perceived grievances which need to be addressed. The policy of carrot and stick has to be applied to these people to bring them into the mainstream and turn them into national assets.

The most logical question is: Why do they kill innocent people? What do they want to achieve? Probably there is no comprehensive answer to these questions, but one thing is very clear. The perpetrators of these atrocities are not friends of Pakistan. Though some of them may be doing it as their ill-conceived religious duty or may be an ill-founded act of patriotism; the cumulative effect has brought the country to the brink of being regarded an international pariah. On the one hand we are victims of terrorism and on the other we are being labeled as exporters of terrorism. This is the biggest irony, which demands mulling over of the issue by every sane and prudent citizen.

Who are these terrorists and from where have they come? Where do they live? Do the people know of their presence amongst them? If so why are they not being reported upon? If not, have sufficient steps been taken by the administration to educate the masses to be wary of such characters and report them on suspicion? Have the press and the electronic media performed their duties in educating the masses? The terrorists are trained people who live amongst us. They are either too intelligent and evade detection or live in special hideouts protected by the patronising organisations which escape suspicion/detection.

Apparently, there are three main types of terrorists flourishing across the country. The biggest appear to be the sectarian bigots, who unleash acts of terror to terrorise, coerce, cajole or eliminate their rivals. This is done with panache as it is considered an obligation to the faith (deen) and a matter of *thawab* (blessings).

In retaliation the rival group tries to earn a larger amount of blessings by not only retaliating but also perpetrating additional acts of terrorism. This pandemic exercise proliferates and engulfs many heathens too in the process. These acts of terrorism are quite profitable as these are apparently funded by some foreign agencies. There is no harm in naming RAW (in fact it is reportedly involved in every type of terrorism in Pakistan. The main objective being to cripple Pakistan's economy). The rest are a matter of conjecture. Interestingly the religious bigots may be very patriotic and they may be playing in the hands of foreign sponsors. They are otherwise reported to be pious in the religious parlance.

The other type being ethnic is concentrated in specific areas. The elements involved are out to harass their political opponents. They are big extortionists. They resort to blackmailing of sorts to fleece the rich, loot banks and other finan-

turn them into national assets.

The menace of terrorism cannot be overcome without incorporating the help of the masses. The intelligence agencies have to be specially trained and equipped to intrude into every sectarian, ethnic, political and criminal organization, to identify the criminals and terrorists, so as to apprehend them before they strike. The police and justice system has to be made efficient, people friendly and just so that the people do not resort to accumulation of weapons, private security guards and mafia. Regarding inflow of weapons, the Afghan government must be engaged effectively to stop transfer of weapons to Pakistan.

When we say that the Taliban have control over 90 percent of the country and have a very effective administration then they must demonstrate their effectiveness by clamping on gun-running.

All the *madarassas* in the country must be registered with the government and any institute resisting such registration must be closed. All *madarassas* must conform to a national syllabus, which may be formulated by a group of ulemas. Nothing must be allowed against a particular religious sect and any writing containing objectionable/sacrilegious material be confiscated and offenders punished. The heads of all religious schools of thought must be tasked to draw up a code of ethics, which must be enforced by them amongst their followers.

Without active and willing cooperation of the masses, a well-trained people friendly police and justice system, an efficient and pervasive intelligence network, it will be impossible to nab and eliminate the terrorists. The existing setup is manifestly not trained, equipped and indoctrinated to meet the challenge. A national task force comprising all segments of prominent people should be tasked to look into the grievances of the minorities and the underdeveloped areas to identify their problems. Special funds should be allocated for the uplift of these people/areas so as to bring them at par with the rest of the country.

Pakistan is passing through a critical juncture and it is imperative that those execrable activities, which blemish the national character of Pakistan, be obliterated by a coordinated and unified effort.

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