**The Enigma of Terrorism**

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Decades upon decades, and here is Pakistan, still battling with acts of terrorism. Following the formation of the new government, the country has received multiple security issues – the attack on the naval base in Balochistan, skirmishes on the Afghan border and the recent suicide bomb attack on the Chinese convoy which killed five Chinese nationals. As the state struggles through other major problems at hand such as economic instability, unemployment and political divide, with the addition of terrorist activities, the newly formed government could either make it or break it.

The country has been fighting the war against non-state actors for a long period. The armed forces of Pakistan have carried out multiple operations to combat insurgencies rooted in several regions of erstwhile FATA and Balochistan. Along with the security personnel, the civilians too have suffered a lot and given their lives on the path to peace. The military’s efforts have immensely reduced the number and intensity of terrorist acts, however, the energies failed to yield a long-lasting solution – as Pakistan is once again caught in the fragility trap.

The state must tighten its security, particularly on the Afghan border and in Balochistan and KP.

The attack on a naval base by the Baloch insurgents is not one of its kind. There have been various cases of insurgent attacks on the Gwadar Port and the CPEC sites – including last year’s ambush on the convoy of Chinese engineers. The perpetrators undeniably want to disrupt Pak-China relations in the economic realm. A recent report reveals that Chinese companies have temporarily suspended work on the Dasu and Daimer-Basha Dams, following the deadly attack on Chinese engineers. Most Pakistani leaders refer to Pak-China friendship as ‘Deeper than ocean and sweeter than honey’. However, a good friendship requires efforts from both sides – it is a two-way process. From Pakistan’s side, there seems to be less development done in this regard.

Finding a great ally in the international system is very hard – thanks to Chinese diplomacy, Pakistan still enjoys peaceful relations with the country. To secure its political objectives China wants the security of its economic projects and hence peaceful relations with other states. Being a firm believer and practiser of diplomacy, the economic giant would never like to halt relations with Pakistan. However, if terrorist elements continue to disrupt the CPEC project, it might affect Pak-China friendship because the country has long been cooperating with Pakistan on countless occasions.

While some might see it as an institutional failure, things in Pakistan are so muddy and complex. The majority of Pakistan’s population is religiously driven due to the fact that it is an ‘ISLAMIC Republic of Pakistan’. People seem to be less conforming to Quaid-e-Azam’s principle which is summarized as “keep your religion at home”. Unfortunately, people become highly sensitive in terms of religion and violently react to religious sentiments – in a way they try to impose religion on others. And that is perhaps the reason why terrorists conduct such heinous crimes, they are brainwashed into believing that they are doing it for a good cause.

Terrorist activities not only cause a sense of insecurity among the populace but also dampen the economic growth of the country. The PMLN government is expected to pave the way for economic growth given the harsh conditions of Pakistan’s GDP. The country’s economic debt is at an all-time high and by November 2024 the government has to repay $19.71 billion to IMF. And it remains unsure whether the government will be able to execute its plan successfully in the presence of security issues. Nevertheless, the main culprits behind terrorist attacks remain anonymous, but whoever is conducting such activities, does not want Pakistan to stand on its feet.

Unfortunately, due to the Kashmir issue, Pakistan does not even trade with India, which is the fifth-largest economy in the world. However, the country needs to take lessons from its neighbours – despite their skirmishes in the Ladakh region China and India continue their economic activity. Similarly, Pakistan needs a more holistic approach to dealing with India to enhance cooperation and bolster its economy. In this globalized world, isolation is merely a bad option for the weaker state.

There is a famous saying, “If you cannot run from it, embrace it” – one thing is for sure, Pakistan is not going anywhere without bringing an end to terrorism. The state must tighten its security, particularly on the Afghan border and in Balochistan and KP. Due to the menace of terrorism, the whole nation gets into a feeling of insecurity and distress. Especially students and employees prove to be less efficient with their everyday jobs due to the presence of security threats. While terrorist activities might not be the only cause which compromises the productivity of the people or destabilizes the economy, it is certainly one of the main reasons.

The government needs to show serious concern towards it, otherwise, the enigma of terrorism will choke it out.

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