

Pakistan's Emerging Challenges: Increasing Militancy, Decreasing Governance

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Abstract

Geographical location of Pakistan makes her dominant in the region. Sharing North-East frontier with emerging economic giant China, East with emerging global market India, West with Islamic Nuclear State Iran and most focused country for the world Afghanistan and having hot water Sea in the South makes her important for the Central Asian Republican States. Pakistan was once a peaceful country having good relations with the neighbors, however Russian invasion in Afghanistan and then on going Global War Against Terrorism after 9/11, made her safe haven and launching pad for the militants and terrorists. The Pakistani society is a combination of palpable and imperceptible threats, including ethnic divide; erosion of democracy at a quick intermissions; lethargy education; lack of accountability; corruption etc. The government seems to have no writ; condition of the poor remains un-changed. Nation needs to view the issue and devise means to overcome these problems and repair the dent. All is not bad with Pakistan, several features to do well have been highlighted in the study. This study analyses the dynamics of internal threats to Pakistan, suggesting a framework for addressing the tender venues and eliminating the prevalent and potential threats of militancy and terrorism.

Key words: Challenges, Governance, Militancy, Pakistan.

Preamble

Since 9/11 when Pakistan decided to join the international effort to fight Terror; the country has witnessed devastating affects to her peace and stability, while Pakistan continues to be the front line state in providing peace and security to rest of the world. Nonetheless, despite relentless struggle, slow response continues to be seen in a duplicitous role by coalition partners; Pakistan has also been termed as “Epicenter of Terrorism”, and while the wave of extremism and terrorism within the society have continued unabated but for short interludes and pauses.

The concept of national character has been seen as a complex and problematic one by most of social scientists (Abbas, 28 November 2001). It is referred to “relatively functional personality characteristics and patterns that are prototype among the adult members of a society, assuming that virtually all individuals behave in conformity with prescribed norms of their society”.

The malaise that plagues the Pakistani society is a blend of tangible and intangible threats,(Sehgal, 28 March 2004) which includes the much regret ethnic divide; erosion of democratic rule at quick intervals; apathy to education; lack of accountability; rampant corruption; and slavish judiciary. Virtually, a number of states have come up within the state. The government seems to be losing its writ over numerous spheres and regions in the society. Self-seeking personalities, who have been ruling Pakistan through most of its life, have been deluding the masses in the name of religion, modernism, stability, democracy, economic well-being or social uplift. The condition of the poor masses remains unchanged rather it is further deteriorating with every click of clock. If this state of affair prevails for a few more years, the notions mentioned earlier are feared to be approaching some bitter reality. Hence, it is of paramount importance for the leaders as well as the masses to know their rights and responsibilities towards Pakistan. It calls for characteristic attention to take the bull of internal threats by its horns. Nation needs to view the issue facing in an objective rather than subjective manner (Banuri, 2015).It is incumbent upon the ruling elite of Pakistan to formulate practicable and goal oriented policies to contend with each internal threat. This must be done in a manner that state is able to quantify the results.

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of internal threats to governance of Pakistan with a view to recommending a framework for addressing the sore areas and eliminating the prevalent and potential threats of militancy and terrorism.

Militancy

Wide spread militancy

While the whole world struggled long to define and categorize the fundamentalism extremists, militants and terrorists through agonizing long seminars, forums and discussions, the terrorists continued to exercise various hues and colors, acquiring a universal brand name of “Al-Qaeda”, “Taliban”, “Daesh”, “ISIS” etc. and an ever expanding franchise, with global and regional flavors some operating in Pakistan like Afghan Taliban, Haqqani Network, Tehrek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), Jandullah, Jesh-e-Muhammad (JeM), Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JUD), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ), having sympathizers among cross section of society. Paradoxically while these rag tag groups of few hundreds or thousands were considered as surmountable, however their Chemistry and adaptive abilities anointed with so called spirit of Jihad have made them into a very formidable and a resilient force that tend to cross breed at feverish pace (Stephen, 2011). What has then been the formula enabling them to thrive and multiply with impunity?

- Mind set of Militant. Militants are self-centered, self-made custodians of Islam and self-perceived; who generate the idea of liking only their view point and start hating others. Dilemma is that they want every Muslim and the whole world to go about their school of thought. Some of the apparent indicators they adopt are:
- Build on the general appeal of taking up struggle against the global inequities against Muslims.
- Capitalize on anti-West and anti U.S. sentiment that the Imperialist forces in tandem with Zionist forces are oppressing the Muslims.
- Exploiting such misperceptions that the government and Armed Forces are in collusion with Imperialist forces, therefore being equally responsible and justifiable to attack.
- Build on the divisiveness in the society based on sectarian fault lines.
- In overall economic depression win over and exploit the impoverished teeming lot, particularly the youth, by providing basic necessities of food, shelter, clothing and jobs are function of the state which it somehow fails to deliver.

Home grown usage of Militancy

The precise objective of terrorists in Pakistan is to retain the initiative, striking at will with impunity at targets and places of their choice the purpose being to wait and tire out the military, Law Enforcing Agencies, eroding state's capacity and will to fight before affecting a change. Using the mask of terrorists like Taliban etc.; the localized criminals under the shelter of political parties, religious groups, ethnic clusters and sectarian bunches are also accomplishing their agenda (Usman, 23 May 2005.). Street crimes such as snatching of vehicles, cellular phones and other valuables are in increase. These criminals often carry weapons and create terror in public. In the name of security; political figures, religious leaders and other influential have started using private armed guards having sophisticated and even unauthorized caliber weapons. This form of militancy is also in increase and damaging the civilized way of life.

Counter Militancy

Lack of National Strategy

For better part of the period state did not have a comprehensive and effective national strategy until it came up with the three pronged strategy of Dialogue, Deterrence and Development with a stamp of approval from the Parliament (Burki, Pakistan: Fifty Years Of Nationhood, 1999). There quayside political backing and public support provided armed forces the enabling environment to undertake operations successfully. There has been a salutary effect by way of significant scale down of militant's activities but with sporadic incidents of terror, which perhaps in some way is an effort of registering the presence by the militants. This validates yet again the time tested notion that militants and their associates understand tough talk and the language of guns and bullets.

Which Strategy to adopt?

The moot point of whether to have a Counter Terrorism Strategy which is more physical, direct and restrictive in form and format, or to have an Anti-Terrorism Strategy which is rather benign in application an all-encompassing regimen, since while the former is more like an antibiotic that cannot be administered for long and addresses only the immediate concern of terrorism/ extremism, later is like a recuperative tonic which when given with antibiotics yields salubrious results preventing not only the infection of extremism to spread any further but also building the intrinsic body strength to acquit befittingly (Islam, 1990).

Military Operations

Pakistan, lacking an obvious strong political figure, could respond to terrorists in a tit-for-tat manner, refusing to accept their dictates no matter the cost (Jaffrelot, 2002). For a country like Pakistan, already so perilously close to the edge, the stress could lead to war or a violent implosion (Burki, Population as an Asset, 31 July 2001).

Ever since the involvement of Armed Forces in the counter insurgency operation in year 2002, the selective and cautious approach of targeting militants saw operations vacillated from temporal victories to negotiated truces, and fractured settlements, and have been rather reactive in form and manner before Operation Rah-e-Raast, Rah-e-Nijaat and Zarb-e-Azab under a new hypothesis that saw Armed Forces achieve a convincing but a tenuous success. Some of the Discerning Effects are:

- The Period of Appeasement (2002-2008) allowed militants to build their capacities enabling them to challenge the writ of the Government.
- The Period of Active Operations (2009 onwards) not only stemmed the raging militancy but resulted in smoking out of militants from their hideouts in badlands of Federal Administrated Tribal Area (FATA) and Khyber Pakh-tunkhwa (KPK), into and across the frontier and into the metropolis of towns and cities of the country, which eventually again became breeding grounds and also a supply line for weapons and material for militants.
- Instilling of insecurity among the populace.
- Further Radicalization of Society on religious basis from inter sect (Shia-Sunni) to intra sect (Deobandi-Barlevi) a dangerous fault line.

Decreasing Governance

Key Domestic Challenges Facing Pakistan

Pakistan was once leading state amongst the Muslim world and was a model of progressive state for the developing countries. However the menace of fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism has put the state to a constant decline. Political Paradigm, religious extremism and sectarian divisions have aggravated the problem of Governance (Banuri, 2015). Societal crimes in various forms known to be political backed and the criminals are found having links with political parties which is also a big hurdle for the states to deal with such miscreants. Judiciary in Pakistan mainly suffers from lack of independence, corruption, inadequacy and political and bureaucratic influences (Mooraj, Prime ministerial merry-go-round, 2 May 2005.); such judiciary is either incapable or unwilling to announce judgment due to fear or being under influence. Virtually none in Pakistan is content with the state of ability. Actually, successive governments in Pakistan have exploited the process for political expediency (Stephen, 2011). Accountability and transparency have, indeed, become so scarce that honest use of donations for earthquake victims is also being doubted. Corruption is an all embracing and wide-ranging term when it comes to be applied in countries such as Pakistan. Law and Order Situation, Militancy and Sectarianism have generated disharmony to the extent of extreme intolerance.

Weapon culture exists in a number of areas of Pakistan (Mooraj, Open season for crime, 4 April 2005.). According to estimates, there are about 10 million illegal weapons in the country. Afghanistan and Darra-Adamkhel are working as back offices for trade of illegal arms in Pakistan. Pakistan's population is expected to reach 225 million by 2025, and 295 million by 2050. Pakistan's population explosion and Mass Urbanization further added the governance issues especially in mega cities Karachi and Lahore (Stephen, 2011). Literacy rate official 35%, which is utterly doubtful and superfluous, is far below the level of other peer countries (Khan A. A., 23 September 2002). Like other social sectors, health and medication too remains a sore area in the country. Economic Progress is almost to a standstill, the Poverty indicator is going higher due to rising unemployment ratio. Inflation and the petroleum prices are the main reasons for price hike.

Energy and Water Crisis is going beyond control and disaster and crises management is ineffective against natural calamities like flood, earthquake, drought etc. Bomb blasts, target killing and killing of hundreds of innocents in a quick action is far beyond humanity, what to talk of civilization. Militancy is inversely proportion to the governance; economically feeble, socially alienated, politically droopy state Pakistan cannot afford to have nursery, hideouts, launching pads and sympathizers of extremists and militants, furthermore.

Way Forward

Proliferation of Domestic Challenges. An analytical appraisal shows that internal threats in Pakistan mainly emerge from two dimensions, namely, politico-institutional and societal; thus the treatment is also need to be from all extents simultaneous, for effective cure.

Education and Literacy. All features of education are virtually fouled and corrupted in Pakistan. It has become easier to go to China rather than seeking education. Resource pitfalls notwithstanding, education policies have hit her to not been able to boost up literacy rate, encourage female literacy, promote technical education, support higher education, institute scientific education or improve quality of education in the country. The bottom line is that the education system needs to be completely overhauled and institutionalized (Khan A. A., 23 September 2002). Education and literacy must receive top precedence both in short-term and long-term priorities of the government. Textbooks must be revised periodically so as to keep them up-to-date. “Madaris” (religious schools) should be systematically incorporated in mainstream education system.

Economy. Heavy domestic and foreign debts, trade deficit, corruption, embezzlement, mismanagement, slow industrial growth, comparative degeneration of agricultural growth due to uneven distribution of land, illegal trade and smuggling, colossal non-developmental expenditures, massive defense spending and flawed fiscal policies are some of the other hiccups facing Pakistan’s economy (Stephen, 2011). Comparatively smaller Tax - GDP ratio is yet another soar area. Following are few imperatives to contend with the problems facing state’s economy:

- Self-reliance and detachment of economy from overseas influences.
- Increasing the tax-GDP ratio.
- Balancing the development and non-development budget.
- Balancing heavy, medium and small industrial manufacturing.
- Micro credit schemes for skilled and educated people on relaxed terms.
- Initiating measures to check inflation and price hike.
- Managing trade deficit by introducing export friendly policies.

Corruption. Because of poor governance, economic insecurity and decaying social fiber, corruption has become institutionalized (Mazari, 30 November 2005.). People mostly believe that the octopus of corruption is unbeatable because of its longer limbs. None the less, it is considered that it can be beaten through an institutionalized response. Corruption can be exhaled only if the system of accountability and transparency is itself accountable to some supreme body and is transparent enough.

Extremism. Extremism is a notion rather than a physical entity. Hence, the change of air would transpire through a process of conviction rather than use of force. The dilemma is that no conscious efforts have been made by the government and other concerned elements of the society to bring in sectarian harmony (Qaiser, 22 March 2004). Our media, intelligentsia and masses always muse over religio-sectarian differences but never talk of similarities. This breeds discord, which consequently leads to extremism. In so far as madaris (religious schools) are concerned, the triumph does not lie in losing them but rests in winning over them. We need an official mechanism with societal involvement to oversee the affairs of madaris so as to harness the strengths of these vital assets.

Militancy, Terrorism and Societal Crimes. Multi-faced ills like militancy, terrorism and societal crimes have attained longer and stronger roots in Pakistani society. Poverty-stricken people who are forced to commit suicide or kill their children cannot only commit heinous crimes but can easily embrace terrorists’ agenda also (Jaffrelot, 2002). Likewise, extremism and ethno-provincial grievance are principal breeding grounds of terrorism in our country. This denotes that there are no dangers of any international terrorism wave taking roots from Pakistan. The real challenges facing us in this regard are sectarian, ethnic and societal. Following are imperative for the purpose of reducing militancy and religious division:

- A media drive involving Ulema (religious scholars) and intelligentsia initiated to bring in sectarian harmony and balanced religious outlook.
- A think-tank Commission on Police and Jail Reforms is required to be formed to suggest their restructuring for necessary legislation.
- Practicable measures are required to abolish weapon culture.
- Anti-terrorist courts should function effectively under mainstream judiciary having no fear or temptation.
- Where possible, the militants and their sympathizers should be brought to the table of dialogue.

Ethno-Provincial Hitches. Historical events go against federated character of Pakistan (Khan M. A., 1967). History is a source of education for state to plan future based on ethno-provincial harmony. But have the state pillars ever done so or even thought of doing so? is a million dollar question. Regrettably, people at the helm of affairs are reminded of these problems only when the argument turns into encounter and war of word shapes up into war of weapons. These aspects directly impinge on national unity and integration. The government must accord high priority to these by building confidence of all communities and ensuring equitable treatment with all regions and provinces (Rabbani, 14 May 2005).

The Energy and Water Crises. Energy and water security is imperative for physical security of Pakistan. In case of water, there cannot be any two opinions on dire need to construct of a couple of big dams and series of small dams in the country. Wisdom, however, lies in building dams without any jeopardy to national unity. As for energy, exploration of oil and gas within the country, importing gas from abroad, increasing water borne power production and moving further on the way of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is call of the hour. Pakistan must (certainly after national consensus) build at least two big dams e.g. Bhasha and Kala Bagh. Alongside, the opportunities of exporting energy from abroad especially gas must be utilized. Steps must also be taken to further develop nuclear energy for peaceful uses.

Health and Medication. Doctor-patient ratio in the country is becoming dull and drab with every day passing; Hospitals and health centre are so fewer that they often remain packed; Drug Act of 1976 remains unimplemented; these leaves way for nothing but quackery, fraud and forgery. Besides, there is none to regulate the cost of private medication. The real problem is that weaknesses in this sphere have never been considered a threat. This problem may be overcome by allocating reasonable amount in annual budget for health sector; doctors and paramedics should be bound to perform in their native district for a certain time this practice should be mandatory with every promotion, giving Incentives to doctors/ paramedics for services in rural areas. Drug Act of 1976 should be enforced without any exception to wipe out forgery and sham medicines. Steps against quackery must be initiated by promulgating a Medication Act.

Inferences

National Character of Pakistan is a reflection of lost and distorted focus on ideology. Notwithstanding multiple diversities, people of Pakistan have strong affinity as a nation and show the will to stand up to all threats as a nation. Pakistanis are generally excusing and forgiving, therefore are not of fierce nature, however, they do not tolerate any nonsense against their ideals. Pakistan has a vast pool of enthusiastic human resource and capacity for exemplary socio-economic development, and can emerge as self-assured progressive nation with sincere and visionary leadership. Poor governance and absence of statecraft have gradually surrendered the space to radicalism and terrorism. Non adherence to the constitution and lack of respect for law has led to weakening of the social fiber. The present political culture distances the people from participative democracy, thus failing to transform the masses into common citizenry. Poor governance and absence of accountability has overshadowed all spheres of national performance, adversely affecting quality of human life.

Education system aimed at human resource development and character building holds the key to transforming national character. The institutional ill-functioning and politicization has weakened the writ of state denying social justice to the society. Differential development of basic infrastructure has led to sense of deprivation in neglected regions. Uneven distribution of wealth and economic policies driven by vested interests has led to widening of gap between the rich and the poor segment of society. Urge for modernity and sumptuous living style has promoted corruption and damaged moral strength of otherwise a conservative society. Use of religion and ethnic identity to address the political vulnerabilities has damaged the socio-political character. Extremist tendencies are attributed to individualistic egos and non-accommodative attitude. Civil society has yet to shape up in Pakistan.

History reveals that as a nation Pakistanis have been confronted with different challenges of varying proportions dimensions in the past, but none affected their National Security paradigm as has the notion of extremism and militancy. The struggle has to be the Battle of minds and ideas, which is to be fought on the ideological and intellectual plane. Building up of a counter narrative through Education Enlightenment and Emancipation will invisibly humanize the society and induce in the social justice.

The leadership unfortunately remained oblivious of deterioration of the national character and has been playing with internal dynamics for their limited tactical gains. The need for nation building was neither realized nor any effort made in that direction with sincerity of purpose since independence. The scope of the paper does not allow policy suggestions in detail; therefore, psycho-social, political and economic measures suggested herein are a precursor for a whole some exercise at the national level for channelizing the internal dynamics into positive force thus reforming “National Character”.

It is hoped that the Pakistan evolves to a modern, democratic and progressive society based on social justice and Islamic values. The leadership must read the writing on the wall and change itself learning from the latest trends in the Muslim world. The mist of internal threats is completely besieging Pakistan at this defining moment of history. To succeed, firstly, Pakistan as a state needs to bear in mind that unless she puts the house in order, external posture would also remain dull and drab. Secondly, she needs to understand that the cactus of internal menace can vanish only by reaching the roots rather than chopping its thorns. Hence, display and use of muscle power alone would not do all. While dealing with the argumentative ethnic, sectarian and provincial issues, nation will have to move along the road of compromise and conciliation rather than clash and confrontation.

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