
Other Side of the Picture: Suppression of Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force and its Relation with Terrorism in Pakistan (A Review)

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Abstract

This study focuses on the issue of suppression of Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force and its relation with terrorism in Pakistan. The methodology adopted for carrying out this study is based on secondary data. After the 9/11, the situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa deteriorated moment after moment. Prior to this event (9/11) the seeds of extremism and terrorism were sworn in Pakistan. Since long through this process, Pakhtun Nationalist feelings were suppressed by and through orthodox, radical and extremist ideologies by the state of Pakistan.

However, with the winning of the election of 2008 by the Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force, the situation is on the reverse towards normalization in the Province. It is argued that if the world generally and Pakistan especially wants to control and improve the situation in the region they need to support the peace loving, democratic Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force.

Keywords: Pakhtun, Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force, Radicalization, Extremism, Terrorism, and Pakistan.

Introduction

Restraining, overlooking and exploiting some of the ethnic groups in a “multi-lingual, multi-ethnic” and multi-national state (Rahman, 1998; and Ahmad, 1972) create a vacuum/gape in a society that may be filled by some other forces e.g. radical, extremist, and terrorist. Suppressing, marginalizing and ignoring Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force in Pakistan (Zaidi, 1992) creates vacuum in Pakhtun society and culture which is filled by radical, extremist and terrorist forces.

The absence of Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force provided a fertile ground for the terrorists. During the war against terrorism the Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force is targeted by terrorist organizations. The place of Pakhtun nationalism has taken by so called “Islamic” radicalisms and extremism in this region, due to which the world is facing an unprecedented problem of terrorism. The war against terrorism is heavily financed by the whole world and United States. The security forces are also getting heavy losses of their lives. Counter terrorism strategies have been formulated and implemented, however, the result is not encouraging and satisfactory. The common people across the border are on the verge of complete devastation since this war.

Political, economic and social lives of the Pakhtuns on both sides of the border are ruined due to ongoing terrorist attacks and war against terrorism. The aim of this paper is to identify one of the important factors, if taken care of, would bring real change in the present scenario.

Review of Literature

The perception of the Punjabi, Sindhi, Pakhtuns and Balouch people as distinct nationalities is not based on the mischief of anti-state elements as Pakistan’s rulers would want us to believe (Ahmad, 1972). Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force has been suppressed by the state since Pakistan came into being. Dr. Khan Sahib elected government (Leader of Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force, “Khodie Khedmatgar” servants of God) is ousted by the then Governor General of Pakistan on the charge of being anti-Pakistan (Shah, 1999; and Khattak et al. (n.d)). The same practice with Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force continues with every changing government. State backed propaganda against the leaders and the workers of these true and real representatives of Pakhtun ethnic group enormously created a situation of confusion and identity crisis among the Pakhtuns itself (Rahman, 98).

This period of marginalization of Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force and confusion and identity crisis in the mind of the common people has been utilized by the establishment of Pakistan and General Zia (a dictator, 1977-88) regime registered and installed hundreds of

Madaris in Pakistan and especially in Pakhtun belt which resulted in the promotion of radicalization and emotional disturbance in the Pakhtuns (Muhammad et al, 2011; and Ali, 2001).

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has further provided grounds for marginalizing Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force. The place of Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force has been taken by extremist forces in this region and subsequently provided a fertile ground for radicalization. Hence, extremism and terrorism struck Pakhtuns' belt (Zaidi, 1992).

Panwar (2010) described that Soviet invasion of Afghanistan transform the political, religious and ethnic consciousness among Pakhtuns in particular. Other forces in the shape of agencies supported radical Islamists and brought foreigners to the region for using them to fight with Soviet Union and installing a government that is suitable to the interest of Pakistan as perceived by them. However, this strategy of agencies soon received its fate. In this process Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force was marginalized and kept sidelined as it was trying to save Pakhtuns from indulging in this war and was declaring it the war of two super powers having nothing to do with Jihad.

According to Behra (2000) "the levers of state power tends to alienate and marginalized the sub-regional identities." The discriminatory policies and failure of both Centre and state authorities in addressing socio-economic and developmental problems of Kashmiris contributed to the process of the construction of Kashmiri Muslim identity, obstructed their integration into the Indian nation and deepening internal unrest, and consequent upon Pakistan's direct hand in sponsoring militancy in the Kashmir valley. In a state of multi-lingual and multiethnic needs wise policies of inclusion rather than exclusion. Pakistan has also been failed in devising such policies that develop we-feelings and promote the sense of inclusion among different ethnic groups living in its boundaries.

Panwar (2010) highlighted that Pakistan is a weak state which provides favorable environment that are conducive for terrorist organizations to recruit, train and command militants. In the process of state development the fear of being marginalized as a consequence of Punjabi's dominance reinforces the social cleavages and keep nationalistic and separatists feeling alive. Ethnic contradictions are not properly addressed rather leader took tough stance and exercise all possible means to hold power and consequently alienated the grievances of ethnic group other than their own. The demands of ethnic self-rule can be balanced with power sharing agreement. However, there was no demand on the part of East Pakistan rather the leaders of West Pakistan denied the wishes of electorates that resulted in civil war and at last resulted in the debacle of Dhaka. Further, it was the responsibility of the state to introduce institutions in tribal areas but due to one or the other reasons Pakistan did not do it.

Panwar (2010) further elaborated that political parties and elected governments have used Islamic causes for personal political gains allowing interest groups to take over state apparatus and let diminishing the state capacity. There were moderate forces which were raising their voices against such practices but they were marginalized and the radical ideologies were let to propagate throughout Sindh and Baluchistan. Zarmalwal (n.d) "To defend Pakistan from ethnic fragmentation, Governments in Pakistan have tried to neutralize Pakhtun and Balouch nationalism, in part by supporting Islamist militias among the Pakhtuns. Such militia

wage asymmetrical warfare on Afghanistan and Kashmir and counter the electoral majorities of opponents of military rule with their street power and violence.”

Ali (2001) discussed in his essay titled *Post Taliban Pakistan: A tentative recipe for change* that on strategic reasons Pakistan supported Afghanistan against Soviet invasion that could control spillage of ethnic Pashtun nationalism across the border and secure good relations with Afghanistan as it were strained in 1947. Zia established and maintained madrassas in different parts of Pakistan. The Pakistan state and military have cynically deployed these forces against internal opposition, and recruited them for the state's covert war in Kashmir. One consequence of such involvement is that a decade after Zia's death, Pakistan remains politically unstable, rife with growing ethnic and sectarian violence. Due to these policies and strategies Pakistani cultural life shifts towards embracing orthodox Islamic values.

According to Aadil (2010) in the era of Zia the emergence of the so called jihad is now emerged as an element of devastation for the people of Pakistan. The policies of Zia have introduced opium and Kalashank of culture and the policies of Musharaff have produced suicide attacks in our society. Kakarr (2010) outlined that in the history, Pakistan recognized only Taliban rule in Afghanistan from the core of her heart being considered as strategic depth, while the same government was not accepted by nationalist force on the view being not the representative of the people of Afghanistan, Pakistan is haven for the terrorist.

The main responsibility lies with the state in so far as it poses a monopoly of political power and the legitimate use of force. State policies should genuinely attempt to decentralize power while at the same time recognizing the right of being culturally distinctive even in matter relevant for political discourse. State nationalism should not be symbolically linked with the collective identity of only one of the populations. The culturally homogenizing tendencies of nationalism must in other words be counteracted through institutional arrangements which secure some form of ethnic autonomy and encourage cultural pluralism. The alternatives are violent suppression and the enforced assimilation of culturally distinctive groups as illustrated by Erikson (1991) which has proved in Pakistan.

In the case of Pakistan with respect to Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force, it was suppressed and declared as anti-Pakistan and traitors. Pakhtun identity has been ignored rather labeled as anti-Pakistan and even anti-Islam. In this struggle of suppressing Pakhtun nationalism, emotional and irrational picture of Islam and radicalism has been promoted in the region which resulted in the creation of identity crisis on the one hand and extremism and terrorism on the other. Islam, integrity of Pakistan and the Urdu language became the code words for national domination. In the name of Pakistan's unity and integrity, the very base of unity was grinding down (Ahmad, 1972).

Methodology

Secondary data is utilized in this review paper. By utilizing secondary data, different insights have been identified and correlated. In the light of these background research studies, the researchers then reach to a logical end for explaining the issue at hand i.e. suppression of Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force and its relation with terrorism in Pakistan.

Discussion/Argument

Post 9/11 US policies are confronting serious challenges; they view, unless terrorist organizations are rooted out from Pakistan soil, it is impossible to defeat Al-Qaeda, restore democracy and to build strong institutions in Afghanistan. Now, the recent wave of terrorism after 9/11 has raised numerous socio-political problems on global level. The spectacular terrorist attacks on United States and subsequent American attack on Afghanistan has resulted multifaceted problems in this region especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. The same extremist forces in the region are fighting against US on the one hand and targeting the Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force on the other.

Political, economic and social lives of the Pakhtuns on both sides of the border are ruined due to ongoing terrorist attacks and war against terrorism. A number of researchers and scholars have been explaining and analyzing, the causes of the recent way of extremism and terrorism especially with reference to Pakhtun ethnic group. How can we know the motives and goals of those who attacked the World Trade Centre in 2001? Surely, as Black notes in his essay, we never will know exactly how the terrorists viewed their own actions. What resides in the minds of actors lies beyond the reach of an outside observer. Most of the researchers are foreigners and they may not accurately understand the complex situation of this region. Therefore, till this time one of the main factors which contributed to the unwanted situation of extremism and terrorism is ignored by them. This major factor is the suppression of Pakhtun Nationalist Political Force by the establishment. This suppression created a vacuum in Pakhtun society. This vacuum provided a fertile ground to extremist and terrorist forces.

Conclusion

Since the inception of Pakistan, the course adopted by the establishment is in the direction that altogether ignores the ground realities of the country. As Pakistan is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-nation state (this fact should be acknowledged) it has to have a peaceful, well thought out, wise, and agreement based policies for keeping these different groups together and the whole country on the path of development and prosperity. Due to unwise and suppressive policies towards different minor or small nationalities/ethnic groups, the situation reached to the present uncontrollable and unwanted position. The strategies of the world for controlling and combating extremist and terrorist forces need to be revised and should include to identify and help the moderate forces in the Pakhtun belt. Besides, economic, social, educational, and political development of the Pakhtuns is the inevitable and unavoidable demand of the day.

Suggestions

The most important issue for the post 9/11 policy makers is to identify and promote moderate forces that were marginalized and kept aside in Pakhtun society since the creation of Pakistan. The establishment of Pakistan should be taught and even compelled to let the natural and real representatives of the people of Pakistan to come-up.

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