Violence and Islamic Fundamentalism to Jihad

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Abstract

Islamic fundamental realistic factions have conducted acts of violence against the Government Institutions using terrorizing means such as bombing, kidnapping, assassinations and mass ethnic killings. They not only target government institutions or military installations, but also kidnap foreign tourists, diplomats, members of foreign delegations, journalists, any individual with a media value which they can utilize to spread their message. Today Islamic fundamentalism has emerged as a global threat. The traditional ideological war between the west and radical Islamic fundamentalists. In the middle of this extreme violence another term security experts prominently use is "Jihad" commonly used by militant factions as a defence, justifying their actions while giving a touch of freedom. Jihad is usually employed by militant rebel factions to throw off a government established with foreign help, a symbol of self determination as stated in the International law. According to the militant factions, terrorism is a way to attain true freedom and can be successful only when the non-believers are eliminated as it is the will of Allah. In the light of some violent events, many nations did try to justify these acts, in the eyes of International law, it is a criminal offence alone. Recently Islamic Fundamentalism has risen as an alternative political phenomenon not only in Pakistan but also in the entire Muslim world. Islamic Fundamentalism in Pakistan is partly a link of this international and partly caused by specific local reasons. Fundamentalism finds its roots in the backwardness of society, social deprivation, a low level of consciousness, poverty and ignorance.

KEY WORDS: Constitutional, Madrassa, Diplomatic, Security, Fundamentalism

Introduction

Ever since 9/11, people in United States and other parts of Western world have been afraid of what is known as religious and Islamic fundamentalism. It has become synonymous with modern terrorism, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and with militant muslim groups in Europe, East Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia. A great deal has been written about religious fundamentalists, most of whom we feel either want to convert us or kill us. But what really is religious fundamentalism and who is a religious fundamentalist? How did it begin? How strong is religious fundamentalism and in what direction is it going? What can we do or the world does about it?

Some feel that the Cold War, which lasted 45 years, was World War three, and that America's War on Terrorism which now extends from Iraq to Afghanistan, From Africa to Southeast Asia, is world war four. Most American especially those who are interested in foreign affairs are focused on the war in Iraq and the Middle East. Religious and Islamic fundamentalism is the key issue. However, religious and Islamic fundamentalism in south Asia is the most populated region in the world and home to the largest concentration of Muslims on Earth. There are over 1.72 billion people in South Asia, which includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. If we include China, then there are 3 billion people in this region, nearly one half of the world's population. South Asia is home to nearly one half of the world's 1.7 billion Muslims.

The origin of religious and Islamic fundamentalism can be traced to the tendency among the Muslims to scrutinize the early origins and scriptures for clues to return to the golden era. The setting up of an Islamic state and Jihad are the two objectives of every religious and Islamic fundamentalism movement. However, there can be no uniform definition of religious and Islamic fundamentalism since the Quran does not prescribe any particular system of government. The term has hence come to be applied to a wide variety of disparate religious and political movements. It is also called Resurgent Islam, Radical Islam, and Political Islam. Religious and Islamic Fundamentalism is commonly used synonymously with Communalism and Religious Revivalism. Fundamentalism is only one of a number of strands of politics and thought in Muslim countries. Islamic fundamentalism is also defined as a religious – political movement, which essentially seeks to return to the original sources and roots of Islam. It advocates adherence to the original beliefs of religion in their literal interpretations as a fundamental and basic principle, thus transcending all social, economic, political, and cultural transformations that span a period of 14 centuries. The philosophical roots of religious and Islamic fundamentalism are largely result of a conscious attempt to revive and restate theoretical relevance of Islam in the modern world.

Religious and Islamic fundamentalism is not a new phenomenon. In recent times, it has acquired a militant and Jihad form. It has grown because of the failure of the ruling elite in South Asian countries in nation building and in constructing democratic politics, successive regimes both civilian and military. Some of the countries in the region have used Islam as a means to legitimize their rule. Religious and Islamic Fundamentalism has been well entrenched in Pakistan's power structure for the last two decades or so, ever since the military rule of General Zia-ul-Ha. In fact, Pakistan's military alliance with the Mullahs was formed during this period.

These developments in Pakistan were bound to have repercussions in other countries of the region. The major Islamic Party – the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan, and the Tablighi jama'at and their militant offshoots have a strong presence in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. There is a wide network of Madrassas in almost each South Asian Country and many and many of them are being funded by Saudi and Pakistani sources. Pakistan has been sponsoring a militant terrorist campaign in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir for the last two decades. Pakistan official agencies have been active in promoting militants groups in all countries of the region. In India, there has also been a visible increase in the activities of Pakistani sponsored militant groups, like Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad, besides others.

Understanding the Ideology

Pakistan has a unique constitutional experience, as it has witnessed frequent and drastic constitutional changes in the form of three permanent constitutions, several provisional constitutions and a series of major amendments to the 1973 constitution. All of this has forced the system to oscillate between presidential and parliamentary forms of government. These recurrent and regular changes have also created political instability and unreliability in the relationship between democratic institutions and the powerful civil-military bureaucracy. Moreover, the various regimes in power used the constitutions as instruments to pursue vested interests.

Despite attaining independence through a constitutional struggle, Pakistan has yet to establish a stable political system based on a broadly accepted constitutional consensus. Selected patronage, financial dishonesty and feudalism continue to devastate its political culture. Consequently, the country has passed through four distinct phases of martial law: 1958-69, 1969-71, 1977-88 and 1999-2008. Even though each military dictator was eventually forced out through public pressure (except for General Zia, who was assassinated in the plane crash at a time when his popularity was at its lowest), the influence and power of the military remains. As a result, even after 63 years, Pakistani democracy has yet to stabilize strongly.

Pakistan is moving up in the chart of failing states index in the world with every passing year. In 2010, it was moved up to 10th place. Is Pakistan failing under the weight of religious and Islamic extremism? Is the obsession of promoting extremism and now terrorism for political gains puling it down under its own weight? Is Islamabad the next target of Taliban and Al-Qaeda after reclaiming Afghanistan from USA? Can Al-Qaeda after reclaiming Afghanistan from USA. Can Al-Qaeda, grab the country's nuclear weapons? These are type of questions, which are creating anxiety in India and the world today. The failing infrastructure and absence of good governance, as exposed through law and order break downs, declining economic and social indicators further portray an overall dismal scenario.

The Islamic fundamentalist in Pakistan always had their own agenda against India. They have employed Jihadi groups for Liberating not only Jammu and Kashmir, but also the Muslims in other parts of India. "The ISI encouraged them in their jihadi adventure against India. The motivated and trained cadres of these organizations infiltered in increasing numbers into Jammu & Kashmir and other parts of India and ultimately took over the leadership of the terrorist movements in Jammu & Kashmir."

Further radicalization of Pakistani army had most distinctly resulted in enhanced impetus to the proxy war in Kashmir. The New radical dispensation is likely to pursue this effort with more vigor and ideological motivation. As the restrains if any imposed by US will now not be applicable, also such regime would push for more aggressive agenda on the belief that their more nuclear rattling would prevent India from employing the conventional or punitive action options. The active support in terms of money, training and logistics would manifest in quantum increase in the level of violence in the valley.

The religious and Islamic fundamentalists, by quoting select pieces of religious texts out of context, succeed in brainwashing, especially young students who come to study theology at the Madrassas. Many pan-Islamic organizations provide funds to these Madrassas to spread the Jihad mindset among the youth. Since the students are given no vocational training at the Madrassas, they cannot be engaged in meaningful employment. This unemployed, indoctrinated group is just the kind of material the ISI needs. The mind blunting curriculum in most of the Madrassas in Pakistan neglects all branches of practical and secular instructions, and comprises 16 long years of purely theological education, recitation of Quran fiqah (Interpretation of the Sharia) and indoctrination for Jihad.

Indian Secularism and Islamic Fundamentalism

The origin of Islamic fundamentalism in the Indian subcontinent has been discussed in the earlier part of this study. There were two main fundamentalist parties in the country, apart from some minor outfits when India became independent. They were the Jamiat-al Ulema-i-Hind and the Jama'at-t-Islami. The Jamiat-al Ulema, which had opposed the creation of Pakistan till the end, withdrew from active politics after the achievement of freedom and the framing of the Indian Constitution, which provided a secular and democratic political system with equal rights to all religious communities. The Jama'at-i-Islami was divided after the emergence of Pakistan in 1947 and some members of the Jama'at, including its founder, Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, migrated to Pakistan. Maududi had declared after the partition plan had been announced that he would try to build Pakistan as an Islamic state. He believed that India would be a secular state, which he equated with an atheistic or anti-religious state. After independence, the members of the Jama'at, who were left in India, formed a separate Jama'at in April 1948. The leaders of the Indian Jama'at declared secularism as abhorrent since it was no longer a theory or a principle confined to a few aspects of life, but had become an operative principle in all walks of life. They decided that since the secular system was against Islam, they would not participate in elections, in short they decided to opt out of the Indian political system. The Jama'at's opposition to secularism and election did not endure for long. In the 1960s, the Jama'at accepted secularism and the Indian democratic system though with some reservations. The Jama'at's political position promoted Indian Muslim's alienation by detracting from their stake in secularism, democracy and pluralism. The Jama'at members from Jammu & Kashmir have not been part of the Indian Jama'at and formed a separate party in the state. This was done mainly to avoid the legal consequences of its refusal to accept the state of Jammu & Kashmir as a part of India. The Jama'at-i-Islami and its philosophy, however, could never get the acceptance of most Indian Muslims. That is why the efforts of Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-eMuhammad during the last many years to recruit terrorists in India have mostly not succeeded. However, the December 2005 terrorist attacks in Bangalore prove that radical Islam's presence is no longer located in any particular country. The Indian security establishment has recently accused Pakistan of breeding a new form of jihadi terror aimed at fanning communal tension in India as indicated by the recent bomb attacks in Varanasi. There is a possibility that some Indians are becoming part of the jihadi movement. The Lashkar and other groups are a part of a global web. India clearly has become a target of jihad in the age of globalisation. Islamic fundamentalism is against democracy and equal rights for all citizens, irrespective of caste, creed, or gender. Its further growth will disrupt peace and stability in the country and in the entire region

Conclusion

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan is not only responsible for the present situation in Afghanistan and Islamic militancy, terrorism and the shaping of the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, it also has far reaching consequences for all countries of the South Asian region. All South Asian countries are pluralistic and face at different levels, internal tensions and conflicts based on caste, religion, ethnicity, language

and community, and these distort their national integrity and unity. Religious nationalism has made a great headway not only in Pakistan but also in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. It has made Pakistan a haven for Islamic terrorists, including Al Qaida, and it inspires terrorist activity in Kashmir. Some of the features of Islamic extremism in South Asia are: religiously defined national identity, undermining of democracy by promoting majoritarian theory and practice of non-liberal democracy and accentuation of international conflicts on ethno-religious lines, for example, between 'Hindu India' and 'Muslim Pakistan' and 'Hindu India' and 'Muslim Bangladesh'. The fundamentalists aim to turn the Muslim majority states of the region into Islamic states and start jihad in those countries where Muslims are in a minority. There is no accurate information about the exact number of madrassas in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and India. Many of these madrassas disseminate the militant ideology of Islamic fundamentalism and turn out militants. These contribute to the ongoing destabilisation not only in Pakistan but also in other countries of the region. The potential radicalization of Indian Muslims is also a cause of concern.

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