

Taliban and Pakistan

By Bashir Ahmed

On December 16th 2014, Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacked the public school in Peshawar killing 150 people including 132 school children. The TTP spokesmen claimed the responsibility and announced that the Peshawar attack was in retaliation to the Pakistani army's military action against militants in North Waziristan.

The young jihadists killed the children while shouting Islamic slogan. One wonders how they justified the revenge with a strong faith in Islam when the religion states "He who kills a soul (except for murder or for causing disorder on the earth) will be as if he had killed all humankind" (5:32).

Unfortunately in their mindset the jihadis firmly believe that their actions are righteous and they are obligated to engage in jihad to implement Islamic shariah and Islamic government. Their narrow definition of Islam makes most believers fall outside the faith. These young men who committed murder in the name of religion are indoctrinated to commit such a heinous crime with the promise of going to Jannah (paradise). The country's Islamic schools (madrassas), promote ideas of Islamic militancy and martyrdom.

Operation Zarb-e-Azb, a counterinsurgency operation was launched by the Pakistani Army in June 2014 to control Taliban who are committing atrocities in various cities of Pakistan. The Taliban attacked Jinnah International Airport in Karachi in June 2014. 36 people were killed and the airport operation was disrupted for over 24 hours. They attacked the Sri Lankan cricketers in Lahore and the Ashura procession in Karachi. They attacked the naval Air base and near Wagah border. It is also said that TTP was involved in attacking President Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto. Taliban stopped girls from going to school and shot the students who were traveling in the minibus. Malala Yusuf Zai's incident is well known throughout the world. Shia pilgrims in Baluchistan were dragged off buses and killed. Christians are accused of blasphemous acts and killed. Scores of their houses were burned and hundreds were displaced. The Ahmadi community's places of worship were destroyed. Polio vaccination volunteers were targeted and killed leading to over 200 new cases of polio occurring in Pakistan in the previous year resulting in devastating physical disabilities.

History of Taliban

The movement of modern jihadism came with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The mujahedeen fighters backed by United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan expelled the Soviet invaders from Afghanistan. The whole movement was financed by United States and Saudis to stop

the expansion of Soviet communism. President Reagan honored the Afghan Mujahedeen who later became Afghan Talibans. Unfortunately, the Mujahedeen were abandoned by the US after the achievement of its objectives in 1980's.

During President Zia's regime the state of Pakistan also used Islam as an instrument of state policy, prayers in the government departments became compulsory, people were punished for not fasting and Hudood law was established. It was also required that the candidates demonstrate the knowledge of Islamic teachings for obtaining government and academic positions. Jihad was declared essential for all the Muslims.

Iran and Saudi Arabia started fueling sectarianism in 1990's and several new organizations were developed resulting in religious extremism and intolerance and a large Sunni-Shia divide. Blasphemy laws were misused and people abuse the law to punish perceived insults to Islam and Prophet for personal gains. Once the accusation of blasphemy is made it is extremely difficult to get it reversed. Two prominent officials, the governor of Punjab and a judge, were assassinated in 2011 for urging to reform the blasphemy law. The killer of the governor of Punjab was hailed as hero and his release was petitioned by hundreds of Muslim ulamah in Pakistan.

It needs to be pointed out that US and Saudis are primarily responsible for promoting Jihadi movement in Pakistan and supporting Madresas to prepare future jihadis with a strong religious fervor.

What is the solution

The military operations are not the solution. The problem has to be dealt with more insightful non-military listening and understanding, dialogue, mutual compromise and reconciliation, rehabilitation and peace building.

Deweaponization of the population should be an immediate priority of the government. Pakistan must abolish the private militias and ban the possession of weapons by individuals and groups. Unless the feudalism is abolished there is a little chance that these goals can be accomplished.

The time must be devoted in each Friday sermon to condemn terrorism and remind people that suicide and killing innocent people are against the Islamic Shariah and regarded as forbidden.

The current sets of leaders do not show competence to handle this serious situation and they do not show a capacity for bringing a meaningful change. The new leaders should be elected to govern Pakistan with a clear mandate to take strong measures against criminal behavior of terrorist and implement peace and justice.

Tolerance and Deradicalization

Any time a terrorist attack occurs in which Muslims are involved, many people blame foreign involvement. People who say such things shift attention to outsiders so that people do not blame the Muslim terrorist. By blaming others the focus is shifted from the real problem.

We really need an education system which is geared towards instilling diversity, tolerance and nonviolence as positive values in the minds of our children. The question is why to disrespect our non-Muslim countrymen in the name of a religion. The very fact that Islam considers Christians and

Jews endearingly as “People of the Book” clearly indicates the tolerant ecumenical attitude of Islam. Let us commit to remain tolerant to all human beings regardless of their faith.

Murder is a crime; a major sin in Islam, and is strictly forbidden. Under no circumstance is it permissible for any Muslim to take the life of another human being, unless in self-defence or if they are soldiers fighting in open war on the battle field or as corporal punishment for murder that was reached as the verdict after a fair judicial trial (and of course there is a long legal process for that). Islamic law does not allow Muslims to take up arms and go shoot people who have insulted their religion.

Despite rapid radicalization, many Muslims who consider Islam a spiritual path to salvation and an ethical, moral standard to follow still remain moderate. They believe in modernity, inclusiveness, pluralism, gender equality and democracy. Prophet Mohammad called his community ummatan wasata, the median community, centered and balanced. Extremists have existed among Muslims throughout Islamic history. But ultimately, the peaceful majority has always defeated them. Hopefully, we will defeat the powerful Petrodollar Islam and its offshoot Jihadism too.

We all follow one Holy Prophet (PBUH) who was conferred on whole universe as a blessings for the whole universe: “And, “We have not sent you but as a mercy for all the worlds” (Holy Qura’n: 21:07). He practiced, preached and taught a global message of love, peace, harmony, tolerance, consideration, understanding, justice, equality, freedom, and of course civic, social and religious duties, obligations and responsibilities without regard to religion, faith, race, color or ethnicity. But do we stand with him in our actions, deeds and conduct?

“Allah says... He will forgive me if I don’t perform my duties towards Him, but He will not forgive me if I don’t perform my duties towards my fellow living creatures, duties of kindness and compassion.”
traditional Islam a creation that promotes and believes in peaceful coexistence between all people.