# MILITANCY: A SOCIETAL ISSUE WARRANTING SOCIETAL SOLUTION

By Gul Dad[1]

Introduction

The use of term terrorism has been intentionally avoided simply due to lack of universally acceptable definition of this term. Instead, the term militancy has been used which is more neutral and generic term that can even be more simplified, at least for the argument, to an extent of 'use of force to bring about a desired change in the society be it political, social or economic change'. However, there could be two levels of analysis: militancy carried and/or supported by non-state; and state-actors. Situation of broader SAARC region, not South Asia, has been selected for discussion. SAARC means Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri-Lanka and Maldives. More specifically, the analysis is limited only to first three countries in the above list that put together actually affect

Countries of SAARC
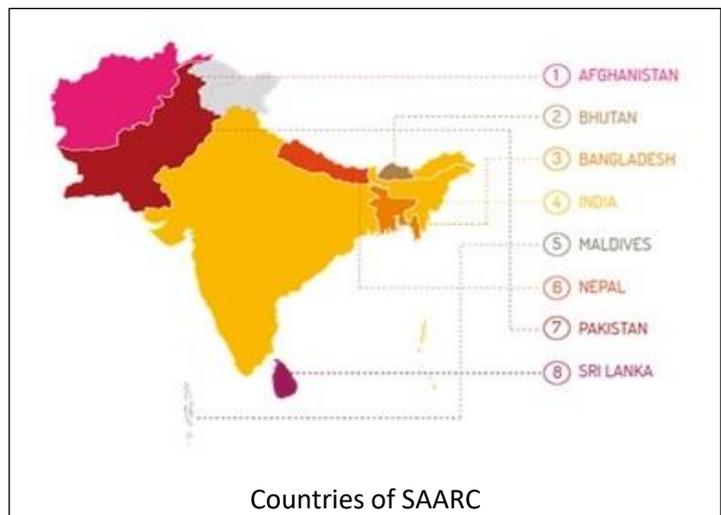
almost whole environment of the SAARC. Militancy undergoing in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India either allegedly by non-state or state actors is the focus of attention of this discussion.

Avoiding beating about the bushes and coming directly to the point, militancy is rampant in most of these three countries which is being blamed to be supported and financed by immediate neighbourhood: Pakistan blames India (for financial support) and Afghanistan for

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logistic support to anti-Pakistan non-state actors while Pakistan also blame India as a state actor (read its intelligence agency) fomenting trouble in Balochistan, Karachi, FATA by whipping up ethnic, sectarian and political faultiness and supporting ethnic Baloch low key insurgency in Balochistan, exploiting ethnic diversity in Karachi, facilitating religious-based groups like TTP, TTP Jamat ul Ahrar, etc. Pakistan also blames Afghanistan for allowing its soil being used against Pakistan. On the other hand, Afghanistan blames Pakistan for allowing its territory being used by non-state actors (read Afghan Taliban) operating in Afghanistan. There is also third angle of this triangle. India blames Pakistan as a state actor for supporting militancy in Kashmir through anti-India groups. Unfortunately, all these blames and allegations, with caveat of being more or less, are true. We need to simply admit that to proceed further on how to overcome this challenge of militancy in these three countries. First we are focusing on non-state actors.

With the view to understand militancy committed by non-state actors, we need to identify specific objectives these non-state actors want to achieve using militant means or opting for militant means when objectives of achieving desired change is not possible through non-violent means. One thing is abundantly clear that mostly it is the local element that is being used in most of the cases or in other words if an external state/ non-state actor is involved, it is primarily the local element that whose actions and objectives are supported/ exploited. So we need to deal with each issue primarily as an issue internal to the society. For example in case of Pakistan, religion-based militant groups are trying to achieve their political objective of thrusting on society their version of Islam and when they failed in doing so within society through non-violent means and thus they opted for militancy. Baloch ethnic groups have took weapons when their demands of more control of resources was not met and external forces tried to exploit those fault-lines. In Kashmir, people took arms against the state when their political issue of self-determination was not being met using non-violent means. In Afghanistan, however, the situation

is slightly different due to presence of foreign forces but if we could imagine an Afghanistan absent of foreign forces right now, there is only conflict that is still visible in Afghan polity. Thus conflict in Afghanistan is also more or less societal in nature.

Failure of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

A microscopic view of the all above-mentioned issues clearly suggest that it was basically the failure of dispute resolution mechanisms at intra-state and inter-state levels. In Pakistan, militancy was primarily due to failure of religion-based groups to bring about required change in society through social and political means due to difference of opinion and these forces being too rigid in their stance to accept any view other than theirs. Ethnic Baloch insurgents were unable to bring their required change through political means as they felt that their voice is not being heard being fewer in a democracy which is based on majority. Afghan Taliban have been trying the same in Afghanistan what is being tried by religion-based groups in Pakistan. In Kashmir, violent means are increasingly being adopted when their internationally recognized political objective of self-determination is not being achieved through political means. This is primarily a failure of dispute resolution mechanisms at intra-state and inter-state levels. Thus, we need to fix these dispute resolution mechanisms as a means to achieve the end of effectively fighting militancy. Fighting militancy through use of force is a policy that has much higher societal and financial cost and hence doomed to fail. Treating the symptoms instead of addressing the causes has neither worked in past probably during entire human history nor it will, surely, work in the future. Returning to addressing the causes is the only solution and that also through non-violent means is the only and the most viable as well as most cost-effective solution.

In Kashmir, it is the failure of inter-state dispute resolution mechanism that has lingered the dispute for the last 70 years. It was also the failure of international dispute resolution

mechanisms to resolve the issue despite the question being formally put to it. In bilateral context, India and Pakistan have signed an agreement in 1972 in the form of Shimla Agreement in which both the countries have agreed to resolve all their issues through peaceful bilateral means (read dialogue) but unfortunately no issue between these two countries was resolved in last more than four and half decades through dialogue – not even the smaller issues like Sir Creek and Siachen. In such a scenario situation when bilateral dispute resolution mechanisms are non-functional or even non-existing which is presently the case in India-Pakistan relations, international dispute resolution mechanisms become more relevant as only these mechanisms provide a peaceful means of resolving disputes. Here we have a fundamental assumption that violent means, including war between states, is the most costly policy option in terms of financial as well as social cost and hence extremely unviable. Irrespective of whether it is bilateral or international mechanisms in play, the issue of Kashmir will only be resolved when the people there are given a right to decide joining either India or Pakistan through free and impartial plebiscite as mandated by the United Nations Security Council resolutions. Thus the solution will have to be found within the society and external forces can only facilitate in such a way that neither India nor Pakistan interfere in their decision. Even if it is internationally driven solution, putting in place a functional India-Pakistan dispute resolution mechanism like dialogue will neverthelss be required.

Dialectical Process in Pakistan: Encouraging Signs

Pakistan had made notable strides in fighting militancy in the country while adopting various anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism approaches. While anti-terrorism measures could best be explained as hard measures like military operations, etc., the counter-terrorism strand was much beyond that as it was, and remains so, a society wide process. In this regard, Pakistan has made notable strides and is now on the path of going through this societal change. Pakistan

has covered a long distance from militancy having favourable opinion in masses to militancy losing credence among masses as a means to achieve larger objective. It was in fact a dialectical societal process that helped returning to the synthesis of moderation after pursuing two extremes of religious right (thesis) and liberal-left (anti-thesis). Solution seems to be lying somewhere in between and thus Pakistan is heading towards that. Thus, it was not merely anti-terrorism strategy in Pakistan's fight against militancy that provided dividend, it was counter-terrorism strategy that has actually turned the table. The counter-terrorism strategy could be nothing if it does not entail the society and societal processes. Pakistan is returning to giving legitimacy of use of force back to the state with a hope that state will use this right with due diligence and justice. The capacity of the state to apply due diligence and justice is questionable at the moment but it needs to be understood that the capacity of the state to apply due diligence and justice can only be enhanced through societal processes and not in absence of them. The relationship between state and its citizen is being redefined. Importantly, an iteration of dialectical process in Pakistani society has been completed and Pakistan is likely to enter into synthesis mode sooner than later.

Dialectical Process in Afghanistan: Need of a Beginning

While Pakistan is much lucky that it already has a formal state structure and only need to fine tune relationship of state with the individuals, Afghanistan is lagging much behind in terms of fighting militancy since social fabrics of the Afghan society is seriously damaged. In the presence or absence of foreign forces, Afghan society will have to develop internally before being able to address its societal issues. They need a dialogue defining relationship between individuals as a means to first establish structure of state and then defining relationship of individuals with the state. International community can at best facilitate an intra-Afghan dialogue

to establish political and social structures within Afghan society. Establishment of such political and social structures that has a build in mechanism of dispute resolution is mandatory for success and achieving the objective of ending militancy within Afghanistan.

Dialectical Process in India: Troubling Signs

In terms of dialectical process, Indian society is passing through its defining moment. From the very start of its inception, India claimed to be a secular country (not a Hindu state). Due to its closeness with communist bloc, a clear left acted as a force pleading for Marxian approach and India also adopted a form of social economy but after end of cold war it has transformed into capitalist economy in nineties. However, the societal dialectical process went the other way; from secular to Hindu nationalist right. While in Pakistan the extreme right has adopted the violent means to grab the power and hence lost its steam, extreme right in India opted the non-violent means to grab the power and now using state power to achieve her extreme right objectives. Hence situation in India is far more dangerous even to that of Afghanistan. While in Afghanistan there is possibility that a functional state may come into existence after dialectical process in the society, the dialectical process in India has stuck badly wherein extreme right managed to grab the power and using state's so-called legitimacy of even using force to achieve their limited objectives. The situation is alarming since under the given circumstances an anti-thesis within society is hard to come by. For positive change in society, thesis needs to be challenged by anti-thesis to bring the society back to the normal. This is missing in India at the movement and extreme right is in its full swing which can be visible from rising intolerance in India society against religious minorities and against politically opposing views like those of Kashmiris. At the moment, Indian societal anti-thesis process is completely

cornered and muted and it will definitely take time to activate. Thus Indian society, unfortunately, is bound to suffer for a longer period of time.

Conclusion

The crux of the whole discussions is that counter-terrorism is in fact a societal process, not merely governmental or its organ, therefore concerted efforts at societal level are required to address this menace. Secondly, failure of dispute resolution mechanisms at intra-societal and inter-societal level accentuate the problem and putting in place such mechanism is bound to provide desired dividend. Finally, it is the level, degree and stage of dialectical process that could determine type and nature of conflict that society. Thus clear understand of this dialectical process in society pivotal to devise effective measures at society and state levels.