

Pakistan: A Society in Perpetual Turmoil

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Abstract

Today Pakistan's image on the international scene is everything but positive. The country is known for Taliban, terrorists related to al-Qaeda, sectarian violence, an unstable democracy, corrupt and failing state institutions and an insecure nuclear capability—feared to be fallen in the terrorists' hands. Even the successive natural disasters in the form of floods Pakistan could not move the heart of the international community to extend a supporting hand.

Lurched in a perpetual turbulence since its birth in August 1947, the ordinary Pakistanis gained less and paid more. In terms of human development Pakistan has recently been placed at 141 out of 189 countries in the world. Poverty is on constant rise with the only variable in its intensity. Literacy rate, according to official sources is at 58%. Almost half of the population is illiterate—ones who even cannot read the Quran, the holy book of Muslims. During its short history of sixty-five years Pakistan has directly been ruled by the military for thirty years and indirectly for the remaining years.

Instead of moving forward, the Pakistani state and society are in retrogress. Every year brings more problems to Pakistan. A recent survey by an international organization called the Fund for Peace has put Pakistan at number 10 among the highly fragile states in the world. Why Pakistan slipped down the slope has a number of factors behind it. This paper tries to pinpoint those factors and the effects they are having on the Pakistani society and state.

Ideological Conundrum

Crisis gripped the country soon after its inception when the founding leader—Muhammad Ali Jinnah—died in September 1948. Since its very inception Pakistan has been facing a terrible crisis of identity, ideology and of a rationale for the separation from the united India in 1947. This confusion soon led to “painful paradoxes” as one of Pakistan's renowned physicists and one of Pakistan's public intellectuals Pervez Hoodbhoy asserts. The pressing question which haunts Pakistan even today is whether it be a state based on secularism for the Muslims as majority citizens of the subcontinent or an Islamic theocracy with the fruits of the still much cherished Islamic law system called Shari'a. The question divisive as it is in its nature, polarized the political leaders of Pakistan in the initial stages; and eventually obverted the country to dictatorship delaying the constitution making for the newborn country.

The upholders of the discourse that Pakistan was meant to be a secular Muslim state relied on the famous speech of Mr. Jinnah to the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan four days

before the formal partition of the united India. In that speech he expounded that Pakistan would be a free state wherein its inhabitants would be equal citizens first and then Muslims, Christians or Hindus; and religion would have no role in politics because it is a matter private to the individual. Whereas the opponents held a different view that stated: Pakistan would be an Islamic state where the main inspiration in all spheres of human life would be Islam. They would also find scores of speeches and poems by Mr. Jinnah and the poet-philosopher, Muhammad Iqbal respectively. The latter had always longed for a Muslim renaissance or Golden Period. The two groups were thus at loggerheads at the expense of crafting an early constitution and democracy.

As history tells us the unfortunate history of Muslims shows Islam has always been used for political power. Interestingly, the clerics whose parties opposed the making of Pakistan before 1947 gradually came to the stage and organized street power. Consequently, they succeeded to pass the Objectives Resolution in 1949, which resolved that Islam would be the objective of the future constitution, thus making ground for the adventures and experiments done in Pakistan in the name of Islam.

The delay in constitution making and the lust for power by the civil and military bureaucrats paved way to the military dictatorship of General Ayub Khan in 1958.

In search of a rationale and ideology, the Two Nation Theory i.e. Muslims and Hindus of united India are two distinct nations, being attributed to two different religions—advocated before the partition by men like Muhammad Iqbal and Jinnah himself—was reinvented. This gave leverage to the clergy and paved the way for later, even of today, malaises in Pakistan. The Mullahs brought the pre-partition sectarian strife to Pakistan. Riots against Ahmadiya sect, which was (is) considered infidels by many Muslims for their alleged negation of the end of prophethood in Islam after Muhammad (PBUP), broke out in all major cities of Pakistan with Lahore as the heartland.

The Debacle of East Pakistan and Jihad

In order to cohere a diverse newborn country Mr. Jinnah and companions applied the exclusive policy of one-religion-one-language theory to the whole country. Urdu, being a major bone of contention before partition, was made the only national language irrespective of the fact that only a fringe of population in Pakistan spoke it and consequently denied the due rights to the majority language, Bengali, spoken in former East Pakistan—today's Bangladesh. This, along with other factors aggrieved the Bengalis who used to be in the forefront of the movement for Pakistan. Ethnic riots were started in Bengal in the early fifties and these culminated in cessation of East Pakistan into a sovereign country in 1971 after a fierce civil war in East Pakistan which only ended with a direct involvement of India and a disgraceful defeat for Pakistan.

The debacle of East Pakistan in 1971 was a turning point in Pakistan which shaped the future events and the catastrophic consequences of which Pakistanis are still victims. A more intense India centric security policy took ground within the Pakistan national security arrangements. The disparity between the civil and military power players deepened further and conspiracy theories became common among ordinary Pakistanis. Hatred against India reached new heights and the minorities within Pakistani society were considered in complicity with India. Once again riots against the Ahmadiya sect became countrywide and at last forced the otherwise liberal posed populist leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to declare the Ahmadiya sect as non-Muslim through a constitutional amendment in 1974. Three years later Pakistan saw another martial law imposed by the fundamentalist General Zia Ul Haq. Though long before that indoctrination of the nation was started through course books in schools and state owned media, General Zia and cronies gave it a new dimension. To his rescue the Cold War was brought to South Asia by the United States which covertly armed Pakistan to fight the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The Afghan War was sold as jihad—holy war—in Pakistan and radical Islamic parties and jihadi outfits like the Jama'at-e-Islami and Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam were hired to fight the war in Afghanistan along with the Pakistan spy agency Inter Services Agency or ISI.

With this background we can understand the malaise Pakistani society is facing now; and unfortunately there is no bright side to it in the near future.

The Ethnic Unrest

Pakistan is a diverse society with more than sixty small ethno-linguistic communities apart from the known major four namely Punjabis, Pushtuns, Sindhis and Balochs; and all of them have been denied their ethnic identity by forcing them into a single entity based on religion only. The social identity in Pakistan is mainly based on three entities: religion, ethnicity and tribe or caste. As with every form of identity, religious identity has further divided into innumerable sects. However, the division based on religious identity in Pakistan is much more widespread and deepened. This division has given birth to the menace of sectarian violence and incessant persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan. As Mr. Irfan Hussain, the author of *Fatal Faultlines*, rightly writes, “faith is probably the most important in a Muslim’s identity—an idea quite alien to most Westerners, who usually define themselves in terms other than purely religious ideas. If asked who they are, most Muslim believers would reply ‘Muslim’ before naming their nationality or ethnic group.”

Economic Unrest

Economically the Pakistani society presents a dismal scenario. The middle class is shrinking while the bourgeois is expanding in wealth instead of number. Feudalism could not be curbed

here and the politics is still feudalistic and tribal. Since its inception, feudalism in Pakistan could not be rooted out because of a number of factors including the religious sanctity and the political elite majority of whom are feudal lords. Every time any move for reforms in feudalism was resisted by the religious leaders who thought land reform as un-Islamic. The nexus between feudalism and religion is one of the hardest obstacles in the way of social development in Pakistan. Feudal lords backed by religious “lords” are still having a greater say in the country affairs. Many of the feudal lords are “pirs”—spiritual leaders in their constituencies, too.

Sociology

Kinship goes after men and the society is overwhelmingly male-dominated. Most of the women lead their life in distress, misery and despondence. Religious minorities and poor are the least secure.

The woman in general is not regarded as an independent entity in her own right. She is controlled by the man—father, husband, brother and even son. Women are deemed the most significant part of family honor; and any violation by woman can cause her murder. She is not allowed to work freely; and men usually consider any job by women against the honor of the family and clan. Just a couple of years ago a local jirga—assembly of the local men—in Indus Kohistan, one of the least developed districts in Pakistan ordered the death of five women for dancing and clapping in a wedding ceremony. Hardly any week passes without the news of women killed for honor in Pakistan.

Many Pakistani Muslims believe that educating girls might lead them to an un-Islamic and immoral lifestyle. This is very common in parts of rural Pakistan where the influence of the tribo-religious nexus is strong. Most parents usually do not permit their daughters to get education and those who let them push them out of school after puberty when the child hardly attains the 8th grade education.

It is also very common in many parts of Pakistan to bar women from casting votes. This is often done well organized. In Shangla, Indus Kohistan and in some districts in southern belt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the northwest frontier province, women were barred by the local tribal jirgas from casting votes.

Pakistani society is still tribal or semi tribal. A tribal sense prevails in every Pakistani. Although the few urban centers as Lahore, Karachi or Islamabad we see well off men and women who may not possess the tribal attitude yet majority of Pakistanis irrespective of being either Punjabis, Sindhis, Balochs or Pashtuns still possess the primitive sense of tribalism. The unending hatred between these ethnicities owes much to the tribal sentiments.

Extreme Religiosity

When a state owes its making to religion; and successive carving of that ideology, one should hardly be surprised when that religion comes to dominate the public discourse and influence individual thinking and social behavior. Religion is among the most fundamental characteristics of Pakistani society which influences the society in all its contours from social development to human rights. Public opinion is immensely shaped by the mullahs—religious leaders who lead the prayers five times daily and deliver the Friday sermons. The mullah spread venom of hatred in the society and very often fans fire of sectarian strife in the society. Their main hobby seems to declare others kaafirs (infidels). A few days back a mullah came and asked me, “Do you regard Ahmadies Kaafirs (infidels)?” I was silent. Upon finding me silent the obscurantist asked another question, “What about Christians and Jews and Hindus? Aren't they Kaafirs?” A long silence from side again. I was silent and embarrassed but the cleric didn't stop. “Maulvi Sahib I am not entitled to declare them infidels or kaafirs. Allah has not given me the decree.” I replied firmly. At this the Maulvi addressed the other people there and declared that I was also an infidel as I did not regard the Ahmadies, Hindus, Christians or Jews as “Kuffar (infidels).” I found myself in an awkward situation. The Maulvi did not stop here; and his next Friday sermon was implicitly about me.

It is extremely difficult for the few people to publicly call themselves secular or liberal; and seculars also subscribe themselves to religion because of the wrath of the society in general. Secularism in Pakistan is equated with infidelity or Godlessness.

An average Pakistani takes religion seriously and wishes to see it in public matters. However, many of them do not subscribe to the version held by Taliban yet the Taliban are not condemned in the way India or United States of America is bashed. An average Pakistani wants progress without losing his religious conservatism and owing to that he poses a confused posture when asked about the Taliban. On the one hand, he cannot challenge the militant outfits because of his conservatism whereas on the other hand he aspires for progressiveness expounded by media, government and intelligentsia.

Almost all the mosques in Pakistan are equipped with loudspeakers used by the clerics for their public sermonizing. People learn religion from the very beginning of their lives, in mothers' laps, in schools, in religious seminaries; from religious teachers visiting homes, through television and print media. In everyday interactions individuals are keen to lecture others on matters pertaining to religious rituals such as five times prayers; and how to follow the injunctions ordained by God in the Koran. The overwhelming majority in Pakistan accepts the righteousness of the religious clerics, prayer leaders and preachers. Even a man with beard is usually deemed more pious than the one who does not have it.

Majority of the people wants their women to wear the Islamic purdha (veil). Many of them attribute Pakistan's ubiquitous problems as a result of the deviation from Islam. The majority does not think a person better of a Muslim who does not pray five times a day.

A visible phenomenon has recently been noticed. The emerging religious rigidity is increasing day by day. Violent interpretation of Islam is replacing the relatively peaceful observance of religion. Religion grows more rigid with each passing day.

Arabisation

Arabisation, often termed as Saudia-zation because of the increasing influence of Saudi Arabia both religiously and geopolitically, has captured the Pakistani mind effectively.

The Indian subcontinent was home to the rich Sufi tradition and that was the most important factor for the conversion of the indigenous people to Islam on the land. Sufis have historically been symbols of love, tolerance and pluralism, but in today's Pakistan a rigid puritanical version of Islam is rapidly spreading mainly due to the state patronage and money from Saudi Arabia. The Sufi's shrines are blown up by the militants and terrorists. Most of the popular Sufi shrines in Pakistan have been targeted by the extremists. The mausoleum of Pashto Sufi poet in Peshawar, the shrines of Bari Imam and Golra Sharif in Islamabad, the shrine of the Ali Hajeveri (Data Ganj Baksh) in Lahore and the mausoleum of Shah Abdullah Ghazi in Karachi are among the many that were targeted by the terrorists recently.

The spiritual spirit of Islam is now being replaced by the exhibitionist version which emphasizes on certain overt acts such as saying of prayers, observance of fast, dress code, growing a beard, abstention from drinking alcohol and the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. While values such as sanctity of human life, respecting rights of others, social honesty and truthfulness, and contribution towards humanity are not considered important by the followers of the religion. Sad but true!

Conspiracy Theories Galore

People are too prone to conspiracy theories. Many of the ills in Pakistan are interpreted with some specific mindset and are usually regarded the ill designs of United States, India or Israel. Natural calamities are described as wrath of God.

For every evil work in Pakistan, people take granted some covert design or conspiracy by the United States, Israel or India. Sections in the intelligentsia spread this narcissism by making the public believe that "Pakistan and its Muslims are the most significant, powerful and resilient people on the earth hence the enemies (India, Israel and the United States) are trying their best to disintegrate it." Many of them even believe that the Taliban are the agents of India or the United States.

Fatalism

The 2010 devastating floods and the 2005 earthquake are termed as wrath of God upon people because of their sins.

Like every calamity the recent floods in Pakistan have triggered a debate about the cause of the floods. The discussion is carried out by the clergy and the ordinary folk under the sway of the former; and by the scientific and rational minds of the society, but the clergy seems advantaged, as always in the case of an overwhelming conservative/primitive society of Pakistan where every natural phenomenon is interpreted on abstract speculation as the people in the primitive societies used to do. The majority of the people tread the way held by the clergy. For example, in Swat the overwhelming majority of the people believe that what they have been experiencing since 2007, either in the shape of the militancy or the floods and drought, is the wrath of God. Soon after the floods the loudspeakers on the minarets of the mosques were echoed with the exhortations by the Mullah in charge frightening the people of God's wrath for their "sins." They were even predicting other wraths in the months of August and September. I happened to indulge in such a discussion with such a Mullah. I countered him with some rational explanation but in vain. At the end I was declared as infidel and agent of Jews, as they usually stab their opponents with the dagger of religious edicts.

One of my friends tried to rationalize the Mullah in his own way by showing the mirror of conscience but the end result was no different from mine.

Our clergy is also very critical of the West, especially of America. But they see other way when reminded that they are usually the first ones to stand in a queue trying to get the ration sent by the United States. When I reminded this to a Mullah he came up with a convenient reply saying that the infidels are born to feed the Muslims. But what hurts us most is bitter fact that it is always the Muslims who have their hands raised for begging from the "infidel" west.

A similar debate is going on in the editorial pages of the national dailies and magazines. One such example is the debate over the remarks of Maulana Tariq Jameel of the Tablighi Jamaat. The Maulana declared that the recent floods in Pakistan are the effect of our "sins."

Our clergy has always been given a larger share by the state and the masses; the latter has out of ignorance. The state itself is in total agreement with what the clergy spews. Maulana Tariq belongs to the Tablighi Jamaat which has so far "purged" many heretics and sinners. Our cricket team is their worst victim which now believes to win every match with the help of prayers (dua).

Maulana Tariq Jameel rides the same bandwagon of the pious. They are always there to enjoy great respect of the masses. Our masses, being uneducated and credulous, have always been easy prey to the misuse of religion for worldly gains in politics or society. They are

sometimes led (misled) by slogans like Nizami Mustafa or Islamic Shari'a. The worst crimes in Pakistan have been committed by using such abstract slogans.

It is not only the calamities our clergy even attribute the acute poverty, as God's will, sometimes a blessing.

Unchanged Political Strata

With such stark polarization the society in Pakistan can be categorized into a number of strata in terms of how they see political powers and how they indulge in it.

First, those who are entangled in the power game within the state. They are both civilian and military. The political power mainly seems a tug of war between the elites—feudal lords, religio-politico leaders, and the military generals. And now to this bandwagon the judges and lawyers have also stepped in. Amidst this situation the majority of ordinary Pakistanis are desperately waiting for a messiah. They are the largest in population whose only concern in life left now is the daily bread and the observance of daily religious rituals. They usually do not have any interest in what happens in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. Politics is competition and the ordinary people still struggle for mere survival. This majority is conservative in their outlook but abstains from going with the Islamists. They are disinterested in politics and public discourse. Mainly uneducated or less educated mostly do not subscribe to the mainstream political discourse. Most of them lack access to either the sources of information and education. Mullah reigns here but socially only as these people are too entangled with their woes afflicted by poverty and a dysfunctional state. These people mostly live in rural Pakistan; and are mostly loyal to the landlords in their respective villages. They are less interested in vote casting and are mostly motivated by the village feudal lords to cast votes in the time of election because the competing lords contest elections from the platform of the various political parties.

The second largest class is of the ones who are educated at the state owned educational facilities. They are usually more active in public life and political discourse. Mainly driven by the biased education and a robust but uncontrolled mass media they usually do not deem the democratic governments efficient. They are too prone to the Pakistan's Urdu electronic media. A considerable number of them also use social media, especially the facebook. Mullah reigns here, too, and perhaps more effectively. These people are usually made the key drivers for political Islam and pan Islamism. They are divided on line of ideology with an overwhelming majority with religious orthodoxy.

Third, the urban civil society and business class is Westernized in lifestyle. Most of them have their education from institutions abroad. The business class has nothing to do with the powers in Islamabad. However, they exercise considerable influence in the power game in the center. They fund the election of certain political forces for their vested interest and have inroads

in the country's powerful military and other institutions as well. The real estate tycoon, Malik Riaz is just an example who recently surfaced in a scandal involving the son of the most powerful chief justice of Pakistan, Justice Ifikhar Muhammad Chodhary, in Pakistan's 65 years chequered history.

The Westernized civil society mostly based in the country's urban centers, Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi; and has too limited a direct contact with the ordinary people mainly owing to their looking alien to the people and speaking English or a mix of it which the ordinary people do not understand. Of course, many of them do have good intentions and concerns of human rights; and have remarkably contributed to the society in large, yet in Pakistan they still have to go miles to get a firm ground among the general masses. Most of them do not exercise their right to vote because of their distrust in the existing political parties in Pakistan. Nonetheless, they do have genuine people among them who have been fighting for the rights of the people constantly sabotaged by the country's various institutions.

In these circumstances there is less room for hope left. One gets frightened and meets bitter challenges working alongside the people for their wellbeing and social uplift. May be an ascent from these tumultuous times lies in the consistency of democracy with a strong support from the civil society and media.

New Government, New Hopes

Hopes are always there but each time they are brutally curtailed in Pakistan. With the democratic transition in May 2014 many Pakistanis like us hoped for positive changes in the lives of the people of Pakistan. After decades an elected government handed powers to another elected government peacefully. This was rare in Pakistani context.

Soon after the Mian Nawaz Sharif government has stepped in an unending crisis gripped it. Many of the problems the new government has inherited from the past could not be resolved but the people of Pakistan didn't accept this logic because they had new hopes.

The energy crisis—Pakistan faces an acute problem of shortage of electricity; and the decades old issue of terrorism were the two major challenges before the new government. To solve the former, the government apparently launched a number of projects while resolving the latter is not that easy a task that the civilian government can settle alone.

In the light of the consensus in the parliament and among the political parties including Pakistan's former cricket hero, Imran Khan's Tehrik-e-Insaaf (Movement for Justice), Mr. Nawaz government initiated a dialogue process with the Pakistan's Taliban early this year. Apparently all the stakeholders including the army had their support for the dialogues with the militants.

While the dialogues were thus going on the Taliban and affiliates, however, did not abandon attacking the security forces and general public. Opponents to the talk process with the militants would warn the government that the Taliban would never accept the talks. They would rather get emboldened by the procrastination on the part of the government. The two committees for talk known as Government Committee and Taliban Committee would meet again and again but none seemed serious. The religious representatives on the Taliban Committee were trying to use the dialogues for their own political ends while the government committee had virtually no power to lead the process ahead. It was evident that the military didn't like the talk option with the Taliban.

Operation Zarb-e-Azb (Operation Sharp and Cutting Strike)

In the aftermath of the “failure” of the peace talks the government has decided to seek a military solution to the problem of terrorism. To this end the Pakistan Armed Forces launched a military offensive against the militants based in North Waziristan, one of the tribal agencies in the Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Area of Fata on June 15, 2014. The military action named Zarb-e-Azb after the sword of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The military has first launched airstrikes reportedly on the hideouts of the militants. Later it grounded forces and launched a ground offensive against the militants. Although the Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif has categorically said that the military would follow each terrorist irrespective of his affiliation, many in Pakistan still think that the military will never eliminate its “strategic assets” in the shape of Jihadi militants especially under the cover of the Haqqani Network, a militant group said to be closer to Pakistan's army. This is the group United States has been time and again pressuring Pakistan to eliminate as, according to Washington, the Haqqani Network has been carrying attacks on the NATO and ISAF forces in Afghanistan.

More than a month lapsed since the Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan but there is no news of either killing or capturing a high value target. The military public relation office ISPR says the military have so far killed about 500 terrorists but a number of newspaper reports suggest, quoting the internally displaced persons from North Waziristan, that civilian casualties are more than the killing of militants.

Since media coverage of the military offensive in the battleground is not allowed therefore no independent information is coming out from the area.

Moreover, since its start the Operation Zarb-e-Azb has so far failed to target high profile terrorists unlike the drone predators by the United States that had eliminated some of the top leadership of TTP and al-Qaeda affiliated terrorists in Fata.

Hopes Curtailed

Long before the military offensive the troubled civil military relationship once again became tense. The apparent reason most analysts give was the process of a procrastinating peace process with the terrorists through the so called dialogue based on the doctrine “give peace a chance” most exponentially expounded by Imran Khan and the religious right. It maybe but the actual bone of contention was; and still is, the treason trial of the former army chief and military dictator—who ruled Pakistan for 11 years as its president—General retired Pervez Musharraf.

PM Nawaz government filed a treason case against Musharraf last year for sabotaging the country's constitution in 2007 by declaring emergency. It is interesting that Nawaz didn't try the dictator for the coup d'état in October 1999 when he dethroned Nawaz government and imprisoned him.

The tension between the army and the government was thus going on that the Pakistan's premier spy agency, the Directorate of Inter-services Intelligence, had a tussle with the most popular private media network, the Jang Group. Apparently the cause of the tussle was the showing of footage of ISI chief General Zahir-ul-Islam by Geo News in the wake of an attack on one of the popular TV host, Hamid Mir, April 19 this year in the biggest city of Pakistan, Karachi.

Reportedly the spy agency officials pressurized the cable operators in Pakistan to halt the Geo News. The channel was later fined and stopped for 15 days by PEMRA—Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority. The channel was charged with treason charges by ISI; and it is still not completely open in Pakistan.

Soon religious groups and the political parties like Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI) launched a campaign against the TV channel. Long before that PTI's chief Imran Khan was agitating against the government for alleged rigging in the general election in May 2013. Imran Khan began to allege the media group for complicity with PM Nawaz's party, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) in the rigging.

Imran Khan's PTI took to the streets and began protests against the government. He has given a call for a Long march on 14th August, Pakistan's Independence Day, in Islamabad. He used to demand the forensic audit of four constituencies but lately he demanded to have the audit for the entire election.

Observers say Imran Khan has got some signal from the military to destabilize the government. Being an over ambitious aging leader, Imtan Khan is 60+, he, the analysts assert, is in a hurry to become the prime minister of Pakistan.

While Imran Khan was thus engaged against the present government a dual national of Pakistan and Canada; and a cleric with fair following in Pakistan, Maulana Tahir-ul-Qadri started a campaign not only against the government but against the whole system in Pakistan. Mr. Qadri runs a chain of religious schools with the name of Minhaj-ul-Quran; and adheres to the Braivi

school of thought in Sunni Islam. He used to be a parliamentarian during the Musharraf era but soon resigned after being deceived by the dictator by not giving him some important position with that government.

Mr. Qadri's Minhaj-ul-Quran has started agitation against the government. In retaliation to that the government, particularly the PML (N) provincial government in the biggest province, Punjab, attacked the headquarters of Minhaj-ul-Quran in Lahore killing 8 innocent people. This clearly indicates the chaos inside the ranks of the government.

Rewinding the Reel

Both Imran Khan's PTI and Mr. Qadri's Pakistan Awami Tehrik (PAT) or Pakistan Peoples Movement have once again rewound the reel again to the politics of 1977 when the religious and then political parties made an alliance against the then prime minister Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and paved the way for the martial law of dictator General Zia-ul-Haq who is responsible for many woes Pakistan is facing even today. General Zia had extremely Islamised and militarized the society by allying with the United States against the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Since General Zia the military has established a policy of "strategic depth" in Afghanistan which means to install a pro-Pakistan, even a puppet, government in Afghanistan; and for that the best option is the use of religion based terrorism in Afghanistan. Later the military establishment began to use the religious militants whom many in Pakistan call Mujahideen, in Kashmir against India.

The agitation by Imran Khan and Mr. Qadri; the tension between the incumbent civilian government and the military; and the obvious chaos in the files and ranks of the government curtail all the hopes once again putting Pakistan once again on the back track.

Pakistan Is Not All Taliban

When during my seminar at the International House of Japan I asked the audience what they knew about Pakistan I was told by the majority in the hall, "Bomb blasts, drones attacks and Taliban."

At another seminar when I introduced myself as a social activist and writer from Swat in Pakistan my Indian colleague exclaimed, "Oh! Taliban."

Having these setbacks, in my session at the International House of Japan I made my presentation on the 16 year old Malala Yousafzai, who was shot at the head by the Taliban for her campaign for education, and fortunately she is from my home town Swat. She is now an acclaimed champion of education round the world. In between my presentation of the *New York Times'* video wherein the girl was delivering her speech standing in the UN Assembly Hall I was

bombarded with questions that “majority” of Pakistanis hated her as indicated from the posts in the social media.

Pakistan’s image in the world today is everything but positive. It is now known for Taliban, sectarian violence, poverty, political instability and an imbalanced civil military relationship.

One cannot deny the reality of such events in Pakistan but at the same time one cannot pondering at the question how a population of 180 million lives in Pakistan if it all means Taliban, bomb blasts and violence. True, that Pakistan has been in the grip of many problems for the last three decades but what we forget is the hard reality that despite all this turbulence, majority of Pakistanis is managing life and has not stopped hoping in Pakistan yet.