

# **CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES**

## **SEMINAR REPORT**

### **PAKISTAN: IS THERE HOPE?**

#### **General**

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies organised a seminar on “Pakistan: Is there Hope?” on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2013. The seminar was chaired by Lt Gen Ravi K Sawhney, PVSM , AVSM (Retd), Distinguished Fellow, VIF. The panellists were Mr. Sushant Sareen, Senior Fellow, VIF, Capt (IN) Alok Bansal, Senior Fellow, CLAWS and Dr. Ashok K Behuria, Research Fellow, IDSA. The seminar focussed on the security situation in Pakistan and the possible impact on the security of India.

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#### **Opening Remarks: Maj Gen Dhruv C Katoch, SM, VSM, (Retd), Director CLAWS**

The radicalisation of Pakistani society and the growth of sectarianism started soon after the creation of the state. In the last 66 years, society has been radicalised to a large extent and violence levels have grown to endemic proportions. The Islamic revolution of Iran, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the American War on Terror subsequent to the attack on the US homeland in 9/11 have also added to the growth of insurgency and terrorism in the state. Today, there is an all pervasive conflict affecting three out of Pakistan’s four provinces. The situation in Karachi is explosive, Gilgit-Baltistan is now facing severe sectarian violence and even Punjab is not free of terrorism. When viewed in terms of the Pakistani economy, the picture remains gloomy. With even academicians and prominent thinkers of Pakistan, off late, have been bemoaning its state, we need to determine whether there is still hope for Pakistan, or whether the state has reached its tipping point.

#### **Chairperson’s Remarks: Lt Gen Ravi K Sawhney, PVSM , AVSM (Retd), Distinguished Fellow, VIF**

Pakistan was born out of dreams which lacked a foundation of its own. Hope of building a separate State and identity was based on false premises due to which the country has now turned on itself. The army has been the only institution which had kept it stable; today cracks within this institution has led to chaos in the country. The State has failed to create harmony. When Pakistan was formed it had almost 20 per cent non-Muslims, today it has been reduced to only 1.5 per cent. If left at the mercy of Jihadi elements, all non-Muslims will be wiped out from Pakistan. India in the past 66 years has done comparatively better in establishing a composite identity and come to play as a regional power of sorts.

#### **Talibanisation of Pakistan - Can the State withstand the Onslaught?: Mr. Sushant Sareen, Senior Fellow, VIF**

The following points were highlighted: -

- After the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, radicalisation of the Pakistani society sped up. In 1994, Taliban emerged as a group in Afghanistan and not just an ideology. After 9/11, these groups and their ideologies spilled into FATA, where they came to seek refuge.
- Pakistan Army is exhausted, fearful and unsure of public support. They are not sure as to how to differentiate between what they refer to as the good and the bad Taliban, the former being those Taliban groups which the Pakistani establishment treats as its strategic assets.
- Taliban's intelligence network remains potent and active in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Karachi, large areas have become no go areas for Pakistan's security forces.
- The ideological structure is making inroads in Sindh and Baluchistan. The Taliban movement is romanticised in Punjab. In Baluchistan, the Taliban is being used to counter Baloch nationalist movement.
- South Punjab remains a worry for Pakistan as it feeds the Taliban network. Its politics have been controlled by descendants of Sufi saints who are dependent on Sipah-e-Sahaba, a Sunni Deobandi Pakistani organisation established in the early 1980s to primarily deter major Shiite influence in Pakistan in the wake of the Iranian Revolution. Taliban as an ideology has seeped in deeply has touched Punjab.
- Taliban has no idea of State and follows no rule of law. In Punjab the violence has been under control but its influence continues to grow.
- Taliban is taking advantage of the economic situation in Pakistan to propagate its ideology. There are no investments or foreign loans pouring into the country except from US.
- There have been no reforms in the education curriculum and madrasas which feeds Islam- fascist ideas into people's minds.

**The Dynamics of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan: Capt (IN) Alok Bansal, Senior Fellow, CLAWS**

- The dynamics of sectarian violence emanates from two nation theory which was premised on the belief that Muslims are entitled to a separate State. This theory was based on hate for the minorities. Most of the ills in the initial phases were blamed on the Hindu minority and they were regarded as a corrupting influence. Talibanisation is a natural manifestation of a State premised on religion. Post 1971, there were hardly any minorities left in Pakistan. As sectarian violence increased, targets of hate were created within folds of Islam.
- In 1974, Ahmadiyya were declared non-Muslim by an act of parliament. The irony of this declaration was that it was the Ahmadiyya who were in the forefront of the movement for creating a separate state for Muslims. Later, in 1980, when Zia ul Haq directed that Zakaat will be deducted from bank accounts, the Shia community rose up in revolt and Zia was forced to retract. This appeasement led to identity formation and Sunni reaction. The

differences and hostility between the Shia and Sunni have now become more pronounced. As Shia were relatively prosperous and largely located in Punjab Province, Sunni organisations like the Sipah-e-Sahaba fuelled anti Shia sentiment.

- Since one cannot differentiate a Shia or a Sunni by name, Sunni militias have targeted those who due to their eminence are known to be Shias. Shias too have targeted the Sunni sectarian outfits like Lashkar-e -Janghvi and religious clerics who have been espousing venom against Shia.
- In Quetta, Hazaras (who are Shia) have been indiscriminately killed. In Baluchistan the security forces feel that by playing the sectarian card they are taking the focus away from the Baloch nationalist movement. In Gilgit Baltistan which has a Shia majority, Sunnis have at times blocked the highway to disable food supplies to the region.
- Today, about 85 per cent of Pakistan is affected by sectarian violence which includes Quetta, Karachi and Gilgit Baltistan. Taliban has transcended into heartland of Punjab. They are siding with the have-nots and are climbing onto the sectarian bandwagon. There have been distinct cases where the Taliban has claimed attacks on Shia people.
- The competition in religion has now also led to a divide within the Sunni with friction developing between Deobandi and Barelvi groups. Taliban continues to target Barelvi shrines and in retaliation, Barelvi's who were known to be relatively moderate, are radicalising to counter violence against them.

**Ethnic Faultlines: Baloch and Sindhi Challenge to Pakistani State: Dr. Ashok K Behuria, Research Fellow, IDSA**

- Markers of Pakistan Nationalism like Kashmir, Islam and anti-Indian sentiments are not shared by all. Pashtuns do not identify with the central idea of Pakistan hailing from a Mughal empire. The Baloch people since 1957 have been constant in their rejection of Pakistani State. When West Pakistan was brought into one unit in 1958, there were violent protests in Baluchistan. From 1970s the Baloch rebellion was suppressed but conflict reappeared in 1990s and 2000. This period saw a resurgence of educated middle class and student organizations. Baloch student organisation and Baloch liberation front has launched militant attacks against the state and is moving on with sheer commitment. They are averse to any kind of negotiation.
- Pakistan tried to curb ethnic identity by emphasising the primacy of Islam. Mosques have mushroomed in the area, but most Baloch people do not attend mosques. As of now, the Pakistan army continues to search for an opportunity to launch offensive action against the Baloch. Middle class youth in Baluchistan are looking for Indian support for their national movement.

- Sindhi nationalism has a desire to break away from Pakistan .Sindhi folklore has never forgiven the Mughals for plundering their land. They feel that Islamic ideas are being forced upon them. It will be difficult for Pakistan to wipe it out. Pakistan has tried to use Sindhi groups against one another but there is still no sense of unity amongst them with the rest of Pakistan. Sindhis too are looking for Indian support. They remain under represented in military and prominent administrative services because trust deficit remains.\_

### **Discussion**

- Talibanisation of Pakistan will not affect the issue of Durand line. Artificial borders will still not be recognised.
- There is an immediate need for India and the rest of the world to focus on the threat emanating from the withdrawal of the American forces post 2014.
- India and Pakistan should not be lumped together when it comes to internal conflict in their respective countries. Pakistan has a raging insurgency in three out of its four provinces.
- Pakistan had started funding Islamists a decade before the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan to destabilise its Government. Post the Soviet invasion it continued to have the operation control of Taliban which was funded by America and Saudi Arabia.
- Sectarian violence has permeated all structures in Pakistan including the Pakistani army. Taliban has tried to further aggravate it by selective killing of Shias and Sunnis.
- Pakistan has reinforced its nuclear doctrine unlike India. Its possession of Tactical Nuclear Weapons has taken this debate to a new dimension. It is using this new arsenal against India. The Cold start doctrine as a psychological tool has been very effective. Therefore India needs to re-establish its nuclear doctrine of deterrence.
- Saudi Arabia has discontinued funding Pakistan. Economic assistance from China too remains meagre. Money however is being pumped in by the US which has kept the Pakistani economy afloat.
- Despite Iran being a Shia country, it continues to support largely Sunni Pakistan as part of its sanction bursting exercise.
- Education curriculum in Pakistan remains skewed. This would require a major overhaul.

### **Remarks by the Chairperson**

Pakistan, today, is a difficult and complex country. The idea to break away from India and establish a different identity in accordance with the Arabs did not materialise in the way they had fashioned. Pakistanis in Saudi Arabia are amongst the lowest paid. The Education system in Pakistan needs a massive overhaul to repair its fissures. It cannot be said if Pakistan will disintegrate in the near future but one needs to continue to study its aspects since it poses a threat on India.

### **Concluding remarks by the Director, CLAWS**

In the current scenario, literature emanating from Pakistan speaks volumes about the lack of hope, given its law and order situation. The Pakistan army does not have either the will or capability to defeat Taliban. Therefore, the bigger threat that Talibanisation of Pakistan might pose to India is that millions of Pakistanis may seek refuge across the border. India needs to be prepared for the worst and keep its fences strong on the western border and train its Border Security to use non-lethal means to keep those people out.