

Identifying the Enemy Within!

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Chinese sage Sun Tzu laid great emphasis on knowing the enemy well so that it can be easily countered and defeated. Sun Tzu's pronouncements reiterate that it is incumbent upon the state to correctly recognise its enemies, and give the right emphasis on preparing the response in a prioritised order. Pakistan also needs to correctly recognise the "enemy within and without." This phrase is inspired by our Great Quaid's quote "peace within and peace without." This article is aimed at highlighting the need to understand the importance of recognising the enemy within because outside enemies are generally more visible, and usually tackled by professional armed forces. Whereas, the enemy within is difficult to recognise. It weakens the very fabric of the society, thereby weakening the foundations of the state by penetrating the minds of common people. Here, it is necessary to reiterate the core values of Islam: equality, justice, fairness, honesty, truthfulness, tolerance and freedom to practice religion. Pakistan is plagued with all these ills, primarily due to the non-implementation of these values.

The situation has had serious implications, because people became accustomed to societal ills, and adjusted their lifestyles in line with prevalent inequalities and injustices, without questioning the state. Perhaps, we forgot the golden quote of Hazrat Ali, "Society can survive with kufr (infidelity), but not with injustice." Unfortunately, the state failed to correctly recognise the enemy within our ranks— injustice, inequality, and intolerance.

However, Pakistan's external enemies identified these particular fault-lines and exploited them successfully by employing the elements of hybrid warfare. In fact, it is relatively easy to brainwash an uneducated, unemployed and dissatisfied youth to employ as an attacker against important but vulnerable points, which can become instant headlines in the international media. Pakistan's outside enemies have been doing so successfully for the last several decades, at least since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. In my opinion, Pakistan's enemy within is the prevalent and rising, inequality, injustice, intolerance towards each other's beliefs, lack of equal opportunities for all citizens, and lack of nationalistic sentiments among the populace. Societal ills that have been prevalent for decades were not considered as the enemy of the state.

Therefore, no coherent and synergetic response was ever prepared or discussed at the national level. Looking back at our history, Pakistani society was not so intolerant, unequal, unjust, or corrupt, as it stands today. Things started to go wrong during the early 1980s when the leadership decided to shoulder the responsibility to evict the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. The Zia government opened Pakistani cities to welcome Afghan refugees and allowed them to move freely to places of their choosing. On the other hand, Iran kept them inside refugee camps. Here, the culture of guns and drugs was allowed to flourish.

The government of the time even accepted Afghan Mujahedeen brandishing automatic weapons in our capital. Appeasement, though a failed strategy, continued unabated, and

every successive government had to follow its predecessor's policy in this regard. The outlook of Pakistani cities, particularly Peshawar and Quetta, has changed into least developed urban centres. Guns and drugs were easily, and cheaply available in open markets and educational institutions.

No government ever tried to bring in the societal reforms, and the degeneration continued without any visible effort by the state institutions or the civil society. With the advent of social media, suddenly people of Pakistan found that our children are not safe, and must be looked after. There is a lot of discrimination in society while the perception about our justice system only serving the elite continues to grow. The level of intolerance has hit such heights that people would kill each other on petty differences. Minorities are slaughtered on false accusations, and people are victimised on ethnic and sectarian grounds. The killings of Christians in Gojra and Hazaras in Quetta are just a few examples.

While we must review the past to learn the right lessons, it is important to recognise our enemies within so that we move forward to eradicate the root cause. Societies have been decimated due to unequal treatment of their people. It is never too late to correct the wrongs. Perhaps, the introduction of a common curriculum, starting from the primary level may be a good beginning, if implemented in its true spirit across the country. Efforts must be made to ensure timely justice to people without any discrimination of caste, creed, colour, and religious affinities. Society must follow a belief based on tolerance and equal opportunities for every Pakistani, and learn to accommodate all viewpoints. Equality, tolerance and justice for all are the values that would provide a way forward for societal security, essentially required for human security in Pakistan.

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