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Port and Pipeline Politics (Pakistan Observer)

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The new surge in the wave of terrorism has oddly coincided with the government’s reluctant willingness to negotiate peace with the insurgents/Taliban, government’s contract with the Chinese to develop the Gawadar port and the decision to go ahead with the Iranian gas pipeline despite the pressure from the US.

Further to this, targeted killings and law and order situation has almost pushed Karachi out of state control and the terrorists have repeatedly shown that they have an ability to strike at point and time of their own choosing. Worst of all, the brutal sectarian killings have now risen to an unprecedented level in such a brazen acts, never witnessed before in the country’s history. This sudden spate of violence raises more questions than answers but one might not be able to draw a direct link between these incidents and the Pakistan’s strategic re-alignments after repeated perceived US betrayals since 2011. It also remains an enigma that why a similar pattern of suicide bombings and sectarian terrorist acts was witnessed in Iraq after the US occupation. Is the US troops with drawl deadline has some connection or it is a mere coincidence?

There can be two plausible explanations to this raging violence. First, the foreign hostile intelligence agencies, which have so deeply penetrated within the rank and file of terrorists and militants, are aiming to deteriorate the situation to an extent where these foreign projects and peace negotiations becomes completely unfeasible an thus Pakistan remains entangled in this decade old war ultimately to declare economic bankruptcy. Such a bankruptcy could provide a rational justification to secure Pakistani nuclear weapons with a possible UN backing. The second explanation for this spate of violent tide could be that before actually sitting on the negotiating table, the terrorists really want to gain a stronger bargaining position vis-à-vis this corrupt and inefficient government.

Some media outlets and foreign funded NGOs might use these incidents as a pretext to derail the peace process while opposing the strategic initiatives terming them to be counterproductive
due to this deteriorating law and order situation. Whether they can succeed in their game plan or not, is yet to be seen and would largely depend on the government’s resolve to pursue with the strategic shift. Even if at this moment the state decides to scrap the ‘not yet started’ peace process and these vital projects, however in the longer run, the state would have no other option but to circumvent this costly war which has not only devastated the state economy but the Pakistani society as well. Pakistani society has now been polarized as never before and the economy is in doldrums. With the US withdrawal amid economic recession and budgetary cuts, government will have to fight this war at its own. With such a precarious economic situation, it won’t take long for the government to reach a dead end then. Missing the opportunity now and reaching for a settlement then, in a much weaker position, would therefore be an extremely unwise step. Most of these foreign funded anchors and NGOs would have packed up and got their tickets out of Pakistan but the society would be left to deal with the crisis at their own.

It therefore becomes imperative for the Pakistani state authorities not only to keep the course of strategic re-posturing but also to immediately bring the militant groups on the negotiating table to end this costly and long war. Extreme positions are mostly negotiated on the table and not before start of the actual negotiations, thus waiting for an appropriate time would be waste of time. There would be more diversions ahead but keeping steadfast with the direction is the key to reach the destination. Mere good intention with lost direction never leads to the end goal.

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