

NOTE

DANGER OF DISINTEGRATION

Lalkar writes :

In the face of rising Afghan resistance, and in a futile effort to extricate itself from the quagmire of its own making, US has maniacally extended the war to neighbouring Pakistan, in the belief that the Afghan resistance only exists because of cross-border attacks by Afghan resistance groups with bases and safe havens on the Pakistani side of the long border between the two countries, and that the elimination of their presence in Pakistan, as well as the defeat of Pakistani groups who support them, is a necessary precondition for the victory of US-led forces in Afghanistan.

Following this line of thinking, in July 2008, and without seeking prior Pakistani permission, the former US president, George W Bush, authorised cross-border attacks by US forces on Pakistan from Afghanistan. On 3 September 2008, US troops crossed into Pakistan and killed 20 civilians in the Pakistani village of Angoor Adda. A few days previously, on 25 August 2008, Pakistani soldiers exchanged fire with US troops when two US helicopters crossed into Pakistan. These incidents inflamed the feelings of the Pakistani people as well as sections of the armed forces.

Since those days, the Pakistani government and armed forces have been goaded into waging war against their own people in the name of fighting terrorism - a good part of which is being created through the US war in Afghanistan, and its extension into Pakistan, with the consequent loss of hundreds of innocent lives for every alleged Jihadi killed by the US or the Pakistani army. First the Pakistani army conducted military operations in the Swat Valley. It has now sent 30,000 soldiers to take on an estimated 10,000 Jihadis in south Waziristan. The Pakistani army's collaboration with the US-led so-called war on terror, and its resultant war on its own people, have spawned a number of armed groups who are increasingly co-ordinating and co-operating with each other and waging a veritable guerrilla struggle against the Pakistani state.

The Pakistani army, numbering 619,000, with approximately 528,000 reserves, is the strongest institution in Pakistan, deriving much of its clout from the fact that it has ruled the country for more than half of its 62-year existence. The most recent attacks are a source of major embarrassment to the army, coming as they do in the wake of its claims of success in the northern Swat Valley. They will set alarm bells ringing in US and Nato circles, for the Pakistani military's ability to fight the Jihadis is a matter of crucial concern to them, as it has great bearing on their predatory war against the Afghan people.

In the opening paragraph of its leading article of 19 October, this is how the *Financial Times* evaluated the situation in Pakistan in the wake of the string of attacks by the Jihadis in Pakistan:

"The sustained wave of attacks on Pakistan's cities and markets, police and army over the past two weeks is a lethal display of jihadi power that looks chillingly like the beginnings of a war for the future of the country, which is in real danger of failing as a state" ('Pakistan's struggle').

It is thus clear that the extension of the war to Pakistan, far from improving Nato's military fortunes in Afghanistan, is merely serving to destabilise Pakistan and the wider south Asian region. America has learned nothing from its experience in the Vietnam war, where, suffering heavy defeats at the hands of the Vietnamese people, it began the wholesale bombing of Cambodia, in the mistaken belief that by doing so it would defeat the national liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people by choking off supplies reaching the NLF fighters in the southern part of Vietnam. The result was the widening of the front against US through the inclusion of the Cambodian people into its ranks. US-led western forces in Afghanistan are vying for the laurels of the Pentagon authors of the Cambodian fiasco - and succeeding.

Normally the Jihadi groups would be no match for the Pakistani army. What makes them a formidable force is that the Pakistani masses, while not being enamoured of the Jihadis, harbour sympathy for the latter's opposition both to America's war against Afghanistan as well as to the extension of that war to Pakistan. They resent bitterly the present role of the Pakistani army as a hired gun of US. According to a Pew Global Attitude Survey released in August, 64% of Pakistanis regard the US as an enemy. Unless the Pakistani government and army reverse their present policy and course of action, there is a serious danger that Pakistan may disintegrate as a state. Besides, without such a change of the present course, the Pakistani military may prove ineffectual in controlling the Jihadi menace. There is even the likelihood that, in the face of continued violation of Pakistan's sovereignty by the US-led forces in Afghanistan, the Pakistani army may break into two warring factions, with one faction fighting on the side of US and the other on the side of the Jihadis resisting the US and its stooges. No wonder, then, that, alarmed by the turn of events in Pakistan, Stephen Cohen of the Brookings Institution, a US think tank, has come to conclude that Pakistan is a bigger and far more serious problem than Afghanistan and has suggested that, to reflect his reality, the coinage should be changed from the present AfPak to PakAf or even PakPak.□