

Fatwa against terrorism

By Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri

Pakistan's success against homegrown terrorism has been recognized globally. So compelling has been the impact of the military's engagement with terrorists of different hues and colours but converging on their unanimity to taken on the state of Pakistan that every visiting dignitary has made it a point to visit Swat and get the first hand information about what has come to be known as Swat Success Model. Contrast this with the failures of the US-led war on terror in Afghanistan despite having abundant military and economic resources and interest of Pakistan's so-called allies becomes even keener. Emboldened by the success in the Malakand Division, the Pakistan Army chose to extend the operation to South Waziristan to dismantle the control and command structure and training camps of the terrorists.

Any attempt to simplify the complex problem of terrorism and attribute the recent success against it to merely military means would be tantamount to losing the larger picture. Military action no doubt played the most important role in eliminating the danger to the state and society and re-established the government's writ. However, what enabled the military and government of Pakistan to initiate action was the visible swing in public opinion against terrorism. Media also played critical in changing perceptions and educating people about the dangers associated with onward march of terrorism.

Having said that, it is pertinent to mention that Pakistan has merely achieved tactical success against terrorism and the monster can raise its head again if comprehensive course of action is not chalked out. Resting on past laurels can engender complacency with grave implications for the state and society. It needs to be remembered that terrorism, which represents a climactic point of militancy, is a process that emanates from radicalization and extremism. It is more a matter of mindset than a physical phenomenon.

Therefore in order to comprehensively defeat terrorism and eradicate its roots, the state needs to invest its energies in changing mindsets and perceptions of the people. It is a battle of ideas and an idea can get cancelled at the hands of a superior idea. Terrorists invoke religion and its teachings to justify their actions. Through

their bigoted and misplaced interpretation of the Quranic text, they confuse the general people and win over the raw youth into their ranks by exploiting their emotions in the name of religion. It is in this area that the terrorists and their supporters need to be exposed.

This presents the context in which the importance of Fatwa issued by renowned scholar Shaykh ul Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri can be understood. The Fatwa, which consists of more than 600 pages, is significant in a number of ways. The following is instructive in that regard:

One, this scholarly contribution in the form of Fatwa (religious decree) is the first of its kind that a man of immense erudition both in classical and contemporary sciences has made. Shaykh ul Islam is one of Pakistan's top religious leaders with vast following not only in Pakistan but also in the rest of the world. No other scholar of his stature has come out so openly against terrorists.

Second, the Fatwa draws heavily on the Quranic text, hundreds of Hadith and exegesis of jurists of all schools of thoughts. It is a first scholarly attack on the terrorists' main contentions and exposes the fallacy of their understating of religion. It discusses all important and relevant issues such as Jihad and revolt in elaborate detail which the terrorists and their sympathizers have been harping upon to justify their otherwise reprehensible actions.

Third, the Fatwa is objective in its nature. It also discusses why the phenomenon of terrorism reached such alarming proportions besides offering ways and means to take care of the problem for good through corrective approach. It does not absolve the international powers and state agencies of their responsibility in promoting this scourge.

Fourth, the biggest service Shaykh ul Islam has rendered to Islam is that he has presented true message of Islam in the West and tried to show a mirror to the anti-Islam elements. In the absence of intellectually credible Islamic narrative on terrorism and other affiliated matters, certain vested interests in the Western world have been having free run aimed at demonising Islam and bringing its fair name into disrepute. They have been demonstrating extremism of the other kind. Instead of taking broad-based review of why and how the Frankenstein monster of terrorism became so

lethal, they have been prone to lay every blame at the door of Islam thereby implying that its teachings perhaps recommend coercion and use of violence against the non-Muslims. While quoting numerous original references, Shaykh ul Islam has vehemently negated such assertions and stated the position of Islam on these issues in very candid manner. Thus the Fatwa is the first scholarly defence of Islam against charges of extremism, conservatism and terrorism.

Fifth, by virtue of his outreach and highly organized educational networks, Shaykh ul Islam has reached out to the Muslim youth living in the western world. These youths are most susceptible to the calls of Jihad by terrorists and their patrons. Given their cultural, religious and identity crises, they are likelier to fall victim to the extremist organizations. This Fatwa, which is getting printed in a number of languages of the world including English, would help these otherwise intelligent Muslim youth to understand Islam in its entirety and reconsider the follies of their actions.

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