

Editorial: The 'failed state' syndrome again

An American journal has compiled a list of 177 states with a descending order of viability in the modern world; and Pakistan is in the top ten "failed states". There is only a marginal improvement in status as the last time the list appeared Pakistan was 9th on it. The other "top-notchers" are: Somalia, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic and Guinea. The journal ranks states on the basis of the following factors: demographic pressure, refugees/internally displaced persons (IDPs), group grievance, uneven development, economic decline, de-legitimisation of the state, public service, human rights, factionalised elites and external intervention.

To sprinkle salt on the Pakistani wounds, India is 87th on the list with its neighbours all doing badly: Sri Lanka is placed 12th, Bangladesh 19th and Nepal 25th. The rubrics under which states are given their marks tend to exclude any subjective feeling about the state. Therefore, the disorder in Nepal has come out looking less dangerous in 25th place. Sri Lanka must have improved its standing after the defeat of the LTTE uprising; and one imagines that the recent development of a national consensus against the forces of chaos in Pakistan must have pushed it down a notch from the more seriously endangered place it occupied last year.

There was a time when we all rejected the category of "failed state" when it began to be applied to Pakistan in the late 1990s, especially after the testing of the nuclear device which we thought should have given us the status of a non-failing state together with India. Today the new list puts off but also gives pause. We ourselves have been assessing our chances conservatively, saying things close to despair, until the country decided to take on the Taliban instead of kowtowing to them in an unprecedented collapse of collective will. Our economy is in a bad shape, which it wasn't in the first five years of the 2000s; and they don't give positive marks for being in the oxygen tent of the IMF.

Out of the ten "failed states" at the top, half are Muslim states. One wonders why Yemen is not the 6th country because the state is rapidly breaking down there with Al Qaeda support growing and a sectarian war gathering momentum by the day. It should be noted that in all the five states the presence of Al Qaeda is common: in Iraq, Al Qaeda is involved in the Sunni-Shia conflict that kills a large number of people every month. In Somalia and Sudan, Al Qaeda has a large footprint. Pakistani troops serving the UN in Somalia in 1993 were ambushed and killed by Al Qaeda terrorists then supporting the local warlord Farah Aidid. (A Somali militia today contains Pakistani fighters serving Al Qaeda.) It was located in Sudan before Osama bin Laden decided to return to Afghanistan in 1996.

Looking from Pakistan, Al Qaeda seems to be ensconced inside Afghanistan, most probably in the province of Khost. Looking from Afghanistan, it seems hiding somewhere in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) although its operatives have been arrested from all the major cities of Pakistan in the past. In the middle of these two observation points, it is safe to say that Al Qaeda is on the Pak-Afghan border even though the border is just a line and Al Qaeda can't stay perched on the line. What is meant is that it could be anywhere in Pakistan and/or Afghanistan. It is a kind of virus that makes "internal sovereignty" and territorial control vanish from the state. Joined at the hip with the Taliban, it extends the "ungoverned space" far into the non-tribal areas.

We attract lethal categories too: we have the world's largest refugee population; and there is "group conflict" in many parts, led by Karachi, where we don't know who is killing whom. The state lacks legitimacy because of the "incomplete" enforcement of sharia, especially *riba*, and the *marufaat* side of the sharia like not punishing people for not saying their *namaz* and not keeping beards, etc. Other factors of viability like population control and education — both achieved by Iran despite clerical domination — are also absent here. But if there is a hope quotient, Pakistan is more upbeat about survival than it was six months ago. That should count as something. *

Second Editorial: Another Jinnah scion emerges

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's great grandson, one Aslam Jinnah, and his family, have been given a warm welcome in Islamabad by the Baitul Maal Managing Director, Mr Zumurrad Khan. It is expected that Aslam Jinnah will get some help from the state in the shape of a stipend, a house and a family car, etc. Since the family was living as paupers in Karachi, this is the least that can be done.

Another scion of the Quaid, Mr Liaquat H Merchant, has however questioned the family credentials of Aslam Jinnah. He says the family never approached the trust he runs in the name of the Quaid for help. He doubts if he can be truly called the great grandson of Jinnah. For that he has to be the offspring of either Jinnah's son's grandson or his daughter's grandson. He is probably descended from Nathoo Poonja, an uncle of the Quaid.

Liaquat H Merchant, appointed by the Sindh High Court as Administrator of the Estate of Quaid-e-Azam, is a civil lawyer in Karachi and is the grandson of Jinnah's sister Maryam Bai. His mother Sher Bano, married to Habib Hoosain Merchant, was Maryam Bai's daughter. He should know. In his book *Jinnah: a judicial verdict* (East-West Publishing Company Karachi, 1990) it is revealed that one Jena Bai, wife of Jan Muhammad Nathoo, had also impleaded herself in the case relating to Jinnah's property in 1976.

Jan Muhammad Nathoo was the father of another Shirin Bai whose grandson, Sikandar Ali, was killed mysteriously in Karachi in police custody some years ago. If any help is provided to the Aslam Jinnah (or Aslam Nathoo) family by Baitul Maal, it is necessary that the true identity of the person be established and made public. Announcing him as the great grandson of the Quaid is not enough. *

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