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# Soldiers as Terrorists

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The sun had not risen. In the dark, a man walked into homes of people and killed nine children, four women, three men. This is what criminals do, what terrorists do. But the western mainstream media has found a nice term: "rogue US soldier".

Think about a rakish guy in a Western, disguised as an ornery chap, to expose the evil and get rid of those who eye the holy land he represents. The great white hopes that make the world aware, send their reporters to 'war-torn areas' at much risk – a risk that is created by their countries' overlords – portray what often suits the administration. They are the PR men.

The man who killed 16 people without provocation has not been named. No journalist has tried to find out, despite the varying versions of whether he was arrested or gave himself in. They will be on first-name basis with members of the Taliban and even the victims of the atrocities of the jihadis. They will give you the despicable faces, the helpless faces. If they can do this to their own people, they suggest, can you imagine what they will do when they land up at our door?

The killings of civilians in Afghanistan, shocking as it is, only embolden the viewpoint that the US administration has used self-righteousness to attack the country and it is using a similar superior attitude to exit. Such an attitude affects the forces that have been indoctrinated. It makes every drone strike into a crusade.

The murders by a terrorist soldier are being explained against the background of the burning of the Quran by the US forces. The violence had resulted in protests; six US servicemen were killed. In a theory that serves to prop up political opportunism, this makes it look like the Sunday, March 11 killings were a reaction. That 'rogue' was also a moralist.

The two villages of southern Kandahar where he struck are about 500 yards away from a US base. Did no honourable officer of the US armed forces hear any sounds? Weren't they alerted? Don't they jumpstart their defence strategies the moment such threat perceptions hover anywhere close to them?

Did he act alone? The question is irrelevant. The West arrests lone people who bomb places, but hold organisation accountable and in their search for them occupy territories they assume they will be hiding in.

It is despicable to read that "NATO officials apologized for the shootings but did not confirm that anyone was killed, referring instead to reports of deaths".

Does the NATO function on its own? Will this be a convenient front for the US administration to keep its political and military wings separate, making the Barack Obama administration invincible and yet stain-proof? What respect has been shown to the Afghan people?

Some reports have mentioned earlier instances of “kill team”. Recently we saw US soldiers urinating on corpses. That these villagers were shot at and their bodies are charred is a tactic to make it seem that one man could not have done it. He moved to three houses. No one expected it. This is not the Taliban way of doing things – they shoot in the open.

Lt Gen Adrian Bradshaw of NATO's International Security Assistance Force said: “I cannot explain the motivation behind such callous acts, but they were in no way part of authorized ISAF military activity.”

These are the people who appear to have ready theories for all kinds of motivations, and now they are dumbstruck. Besides, the very fact that a ‘motivation’ is being imputed suggests some rationale. Even when people use the jihadi idea as motivation they are reasoning about it. The soldier had walked off his base, heavily armed. The reaction, besides the few words of condolences, is paranoid to say the least. The US embassy in Kabul has sent out an alert to its citizens in Afghanistan warning that as a result of the shooting “there is a risk of anti-American feelings and protests in coming days”.

It makes one wonder whether one man did it. It makes one wonder whether the administration is covertly drumming up the negative sentiment. Under regular circumstances it would have been one form of terror against another, two enemies fighting each other. But anti-Americanism, a reality in those parts, gets enshrined as an ideology that will wreak havoc upon those who serve the nation, the world. The killers become the martyrs.

The American administration has been on its own jihad.

It is important to note that two days prior to this rampage, the United States and Afghanistan signed a memorandum of understanding which would facilitate the transfer of Afghans captured by US forces to the local government. This would be a fitting preamble to the return of control of the nation to the people to whom it belongs. The date has been set for end of 2014, but it seems that the US is not going to end the 10 years without squabbling over the spoils of ‘Samaritanism’.

From the consistently flawed behaviour of its troops and its lack of diplomatic initiatives, it appears that rather than transform the Taliban the American forces have learned how to behave like them.

Those who have consistently damned the tribesmen and their repressiveness do not possess the courage and insight to question not just the killings but the attitude of the occupiers. Only because the Taliban are the bad ones does not make anyone opposing them good. There are different kinds of brutality and merely reporting one as an expected paradigm and the other as ‘motivational’ gives the latter the subterfuge and sanctity it seeks.

Prince Ali Seraj, head of the National Coalition for Dialogue with the Tribes of Afghanistan, has said this incident will play into the hands of the Taliban. “They are really going to milk this for all it's worth. This is playing right into their program of psychological warfare against the Afghan people.”

The psychological warfare is being enacted by the outsiders and those who imagine they can hold a dialogue with “friends” of the Afghans are easily taken in by such notions of false peace. While Mr. Seraj does say, “We cannot whitewash this and get this young man out of Afghanistan and send him back to the United States. That is the worst thing we can do at this time”, he seems to want to bail out the US or else the implications for the saviours and the saved would come to naught.

It is Afghan president Hamid Karzai who has been more forthright: “When Afghan people are killed deliberately by US

forces this action is murder and terror and an unforgivable action. The government and the people of Afghanistan demand an explanation from the US government of this incident.”

He knows that when there is a power shift, he will need to appeal to the civilians, not the Taliban.

It is indeed a pity that the liberal media in those parts too falls for the westernised idea of taming of the shrew. After all, they say, these mullah types are murdering our own, they are targeting mosques, they have entered our cities.

Indeed, they do and they have. Has anyone considered when this started? Why has it snowballed into a state where Pakistan too is now terrorised by Afghanistan? Why would the hill tribes want to visit the plains? Capture power? How is it, then, that Afghanistan has a government that is not dictated to by the Taliban but the Americans?

It is quite fantastical to read stories of how Mullah Omar was born in the village and ran an Islamic school in the area, and this is where the Taliban movement was born. It is wonderful to see such a wide-eyed look at history. Does anyone remember the Russians? The CIA?

Do not be surprised if someone comes up with the theory that this shoot-out was done to stop some militants who were planning to hit at a US base.

This counter-tragic machinery will be at full steam. It has already brought in a villager who said that Karzai should punish the killer, “Otherwise we will make a decision. He should be handed over to us.”

This will be enough to make the US establishment concerned. This is how the poor Afghans will be treated when we leave, they will imply. The Afghan tribals have been living with the ‘jirga’ form of justice for years. It lacks the finesse of democracy, and follows rudimentary laws of honour. But it is restricted to the tribes; such is the extent of its importance that the mujahideen that had crossed over to Pakistan during the war with Russia would return only to take revenge for a slight suffered by their own even if the perpetrator was one among them.

It worked as a federal structure within the democratic Afghan system, which itself frittered away its wealth and rights to outsiders in the best feudal manner of the elite.

This gives ballast to the men at the helm of the US army to state: “As tragic as this incident is, it would be a larger tragedy to affect the mission at large and what we’re trying to do for the country. We’re going to continue to be out there among the populace. We’re going to continue to try to beat back this insurgency.”

The man who went on a killing mission was an American. Sure, you are right there, the first among the insurgents.

*Post-scriptum :*

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