



Social crisis in both countries lies behind Pakistan - India war talk

Sun, 15/02/2009 - 15:24

Mark Booth outlines how the increased tensions in the Indian sub continent is a dangerous development, one that must be fought by the organised working class

Since the terrorist attack last November in Mumbai, India's most populous city, the Indian ruling class has been using this tragedy to raise the temperature of threats and ultimatums aimed at Pakistan. The Indian minister of state for home affairs said intelligence services would be raised to a 'war level', while an Indian army spokesman was forced to issue a denial that India had actually mobilised troops on Pakistan's border in the aftermath of the attacks.

In response to the attacks and demands for action from India, the Pakistan government declared a manhunt for all those who may have aided the attackers, while at the same time issuing counter-threats against the Indian government's provocations. The rulers of both countries are using the attacks to distract attention from onrush of the world economic crisis that is already affecting the everyday lives of their workers and peasants. Both governments are terrified that waves of strikes and mass mobilisations will break out as a result. The Indian government's sabre rattling has the effect of encouraging even more virulent Hindu chauvinism from communalist parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), especially since an election is impending.

The attackers were Indian Muslims who claimed they carried out the assault in response to the Indian government's discriminatory and repressive policies targeting Muslims. For all the Congress party's claims to the secular, anti-communalist and pacifists mantle of Ghandi, India's ruling-class via all its political parties, has a long history of stirring up hatred against Muslims, Dalits and other religious and ethnic minorities, whenever a political or economic crisis demands it. These 'divide and rule' tactics they learned from the British Raj. In the months just before the attack, the Indian army was violently suppressing uprisings against their military occupation of the majority Muslim Kashmir.

While the attackers may have been supported by sections of Pakistan's secret service, the ISI, or by Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani jihadist organisation, it is equally true that the Muslim population in India and Kashmir has quite enough grievances of its own against the Indian government which might have generated and motivated the attacks. In the two-decade long Kashmir conflict Indian human rights organisations estimate some 70,000 people have been killed. Kashmir, with a population of only 10 million, is occupied by half a million India troops and other state security forces

Going back a bit further, in Gujarat February 2002, Hindu chauvinists initiated a full-scale pogrom against the Muslim community in which between over 800 and 2,000 perished after an outrage by jihadist terrorists, which killed dozens of innocent workers and shopkeepers. Thus the Islamist-Hindu chauvinist fanatics' actions create a vicious circle of killing.

The Indian government have described Mumbai '26/11' as 'our 9/11' obviously in the hope of launching their own version of the war against terrorism and locating its source as outside the country (i.e. in Pakistan). In fact as Arundhati Roy, the novelist and anticapitalist writer, has pointed out the terrorist attacks have been going on for some time.

'Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Delhi, Guwahati, Jaipur, and Malegaon have all seen serial bomb blasts in which hundreds of ordinary people have been killed and wounded. If the police are right about the people they have arrested as suspects in these previous attacks, both Hindu and Muslim, all Indian nationals, it obviously indicates that something's going very

badly wrong in this country.? And she correctly exposes the pro-capitalist propaganda of ?India Shining? a local version of the Chinamania, which ignores the growth of inequality and poverty in the rejoicings over the new prosperity globalization has brought to the ?new middle class.? Because Mumbai

In both countries, the ruling classes have no solution to the crises wracking the region, so instead they divert attention through creating an external threat. In both undemocratic n denial of national rights to minorities have led to guerrilla and terrorist organisations, in both countries either Islamist and Hindu nationalist organisations have resorted to terror attacks.

The Indian state is currently waging a civil war against Maoist Naxalite guerrillas in over 100 of its 600 states, where over 50% of the population is suffering from malnutrition. The trickle-down effect of ?India Shining? had not reached the vast majority of the population even before the crisis broke. The spread of insurrectionary outbreaks over such a large part of rural India is a sure sign that life has become intolerable fro small farmers and he landless, Dalits and indigenous peoples. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh shocked India when he said last year that the Naxalites were the number one security problem facing the country. Their activity is spreading so that now they are conduction operations in 30% of India, as against only 9% in 2002.

Meanwhile in Pakistan, the military occupation of the North-West frontier province in the name of the ?war on terror?, combined with the severe economic crisis, has deeply alienated the majority of the population. It is further exacerbated by the fact that under Obama, just as under Bush, US planes and pilot-less drones continue to attack targets in the North West Frontier provinces, often killing civilians. The subservience of the new ?democratic government? to the Americans further undermines its credibility in the eyes of most Pakistanis. At the same time, it is carrying out an IMF mandated austerity package of privatisations and cuts in social spending which is throwing thousands out of work and driving millions into extreme poverty.

The enormous contradictions in both countries point towards a coming social explosion as the mass of impoverished workers and peasants are propelled into struggle against the capitalists, landlords and the state. Unable to alleviate the suffering of the mass of their peoples, the ruling elite are reduced to whipping up communalist and nationalist hatred to distract the populace from their suffering and direct their anger at ethnic and religious minorities or the peoples of neighbouring countries. It is up to the working-class of both countries to direct the anger of the masses at their true enemies, the capitalists, landlords and the state.

A military conflict between the nations will benefit only the ruling-class as nationalist feelings are stoked up and the threat of war is used as an excuse to suppress dissent and struggles against the government and capitalists in the name of the war effort. Meanwhile, thousands of workers and peasants from both countries will be thrown to the military meat grinder while the prospect of a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan looms large.

In the wake of the attacks the Indian government has already passed two draconian anti-terror laws that were described by the head of the Delhi-based Human Rights Law Network as turning India into a ?virtual police state?. They will be used against progressive forces and to discriminate and repress minority ethnic, caste and religious communities across India.

As Arundhati Roy has pointed out it is the discrimination and persecution of India?s Muslims, including the occupation of Kashmir that creates a fertile ground for Islamism and its terrorist variants:

We have ?an impoverished minority of more than 150 million Muslims who are being targeted as a community and pushed to the wall, whose young see no justice on the horizon.?

She is equally harsh on the Indian government?s ?solution?

Anti-terrorism laws are not meant for terrorists; they're for people that governments don't like. That's why they have a conviction rate of less than 2%. They're just a means of putting inconvenient people away without bail for a long time and eventually letting them go.

The Indian working-class, its organisations and parties must mobilise to prevent attacks against Muslims, and reject and resist all attempts to scapegoat them for the attacks. The responsibility for these attacks rests with the Indian ruling class, the actions of the Indian state and army in Kashmir and its discriminatory policy against ethnic, caste and religious minorities across India, its collaboration with Hindu fundamentalists and its policy of stirring up communal hatred to divide the workers and poor in their opposition to capitalism and imperialism.

? Down with the National Investigation Agency and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Acts.

? Resist communalism; defend all Muslims from attacks by Hindu fundamentalists or state forces.

? End the occupation of Kashmir; national self-determination including the right to separation for the peoples of Kashmir.

A powerful working class movement in both countries fighting the effects of the crisis in terms of unemployment, price rises and inequality and determined not to be diverted by the war propaganda of the countries rulers can slow or reverse the drive to war and increasing militarism of the ruling elites of India and Pakistan. Both countries need revolutionary parties ? linked together in a new International ? capable of leading all the various struggles into one coherent strategy of permanent revolution Only workers? struggle and socialist revolution can resolve the problems faced by the masses of India and Pakistan. Their common goal should be a federation of workers states of the entire subcontinent and south Asia. Only then will the rivalries and war mongering of the ruling classes of the region be put an end to for good.

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/social-crisis-both-countries-lies-behind-pakistan-india-war-talk>