

**Opinion**

**Combating International Terrorism**

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The ruthless deeds of highly skilled terrorists who crashed planes into the World Trade Centre and Pentagon recently have cast a long shadow over the security network across the globe. These attacks have not only exposed the pitfalls of the American Security and intelligence network but also robbed its confidence about its economic and military prowess. The increasing role of car bombs around the world has also demonstrated the ability of the terrorists attack with accuracy at the time and place of their choice. Next could be triggering of biological warfare or different nuclear devices, which could throw up biological and chemical Toxins in the atmosphere, resulting in large-scale destruction and deaths. The devastating potentiality of the modern terrorism has created a situation where even the most powerful nations have increasingly become dependent upon international Cooperation for combating international terrorism.

Although violence in itself is condemnable, very rarely, terrorist violence is a nihilistic act bereft of any deeper undercurrents. And the structure of violence is more often than not, located in society and social conditions which not only create them but also nourish and reinforce them. Recurrence of violence is symptomatic of a society's body politic, torn as under by varied threats and tensions. Very often, the social conditions that generate conflict (and the cause for violence) have external coordinates. In a globalised world, the matrices of power turn on the highly visible, inegalitarian structure of international economy and as such inter-relations between socio-economic conditions in different parts of the world are becoming more and more obvious day by day. At another level the post-cold-war international political-economic order is till a victim of the power game that was thrust on the world by the then Big Powers. The power-network woven by the US and its allies in the entire West Asian region has provoked the ire of the opposition forces in almost every state where US has had an interest-based relationship. Thus, as the societies globalise and the curtains of opacity are raised through increased inter-societal inter-action at the international level, people in the underdeveloped and the developing countries are holding the Big Powers responsible for their inferior socio-economic positions.

The major powers of the world need to realise that to a great extent they are gradually becoming victims of their own game. The post second world war ideological rivalries between the capitalist countries and Socialist block have created many problems. Years of interference in crucial areas such as Afghanistan, south-East Asia, Iran, Gulf Countries and Latin American countries has resulted in the development of peculiar trends which provided breeding grounds for terrorist activities. It goes without saying that Talibanisation of Afghanistan would never have taken place had the powerful nations handled the situation in the beginning. Consequences of the failure to diagnose this social disease (terrorism) at the early stage can be pernicious for various countries.

The strategies of imposing arms and economic sanctions on the so-called rogue nations during the last few years have been counter productive, and rather helped these nations to gain international sympathy. Although the hope of a permanent solution of the problem of terrorism is still far away, one hopes that the powerful nations will develop a more mature understanding of the phenomenon of terrorism that has assumed alarming proportions.

The rapid international transportation and use of sophisticated weapons like AK 47 assault rifles and plastic explosives (RDX) have helped to facilitate the expansion of terrorist networks around the world. Besides, the new suicide squads of terrorist have left the entire security apparatus of the affected states in a state of shock. The recent incidents cannot be viewed in isolation. History bears testimony to various such tragic events. Few years ago gruesome bombing against innocent civilians in Oklahoma city (which left more than 200 people dead or missing) sent shock waves around the world. In a mysterious gas attack at the main train station in Yokohama, Tokyo Subway that killed 12 people and left nearly 5,000 hospitalised also sent dangerous signals. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's terrorist activities has already caused Sri Lankan Government huge loss of life and property. The suicide terrorist attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly closely on the heels of the September 11 blasts revealed the sinister face of terrorism in India. The series of post Agra summit bombing in Jammu Kashmir and hijacking case of IC 814 from Kathmandu have exposed Pakistani machinations in the terrorist acts in India. All such acts are violent culmination of terrorist plans that were carefully executed.

The recent news of the merger of Laskar-e-Toiba and Harkat-ul-Mujahidden into new suicide squads (designated as Fidayeen) and the international terrorist, Osama Bin Laden's recent threat to launch a Holy war (Jihad) has raised the possibility of an outbreak of the deadliest form of terrorism. Similarly, most countries of the world including Russia, Spain, U.K. Italy, Israel, and China are suffering due to terrorist activities in one way or another. Experience has taught that complacency and lack of immediate reaction to terrorist threat has paralysed the security systems of the various affected countries on the face of trouble.

A leading anti terrorism expert Mr. Brian Jenkin believes that though more articulate and multiplied effort by police and intelligence can tell us about a possible terrorist attack, there is still confusion over whether such a mechanism is successful in dealing with terrorists driven by fundamentalism. Gradually, religion is becoming the main motivating force for terrorism across the globe. During the mid 90s in the nerve gas attack on Tokyo subway, police suspected the hand of apocalyptic sect Aum Shinrikyo. Few years earlier, Moscow intensified its efforts to set up "Troika" alliance to drive away the specter of Islamic militants. The problem of Refugees who have fled due to disturbances in Afghanistan, Khyrgistan and Uzbekistan has added a new dimension to the existing problem. Whether terrorism is unleashed at local, regional national or international level it cannot survive for long without international support and collaboration. There is a growing nexus between terrorists and internationally organised crime networks. Mr. Alison Jamieson, a British analyst on organised crime and political violence commented that a distinction between terrorism and organised crime has become very blurred recently." Italian organised crime expert Professor Ernesto says "the goal is different. The terrorist's goal is an ideological one, while organised crime's goal is financial, but the instrument is same. They both need money and arms." In Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers engage in drug trafficking to finance their struggle, in north-eastern

India guerrillas kidnap tea planters and hold them to ransom to help fund their fight for independence. In Chechnya, the secessionists were heavily involved in drug distribution.

These days terrorists are more confident than ever before of their access to the vulnerable points before carrying out any of their attacks and they plan their attack in a heroic manner for the justification and fulfilment of a cause which they think is just. Thus, they attempt, by their acts, to inspire and manipulate fear to achieve a variety of purposes. Therefore, jostling crowds, busy hotels, crowded trains, highways, country side and rural area are increasingly becoming targets of terrorism.

There is a smooth international network of collaboration among the various terrorist groups supported by a few countries throughout the world. For example, Pakistan's involvement in orchestrating terrorism in Kashmir and the Japanese Red Army's collaboration with Italy's Red Brigade. It is sometimes the wide converge by the media which provides the rationale for terrorism and increases the problem by stimulating it. This is a classic example of how astute media management can reduce the level of moral opposition to counter terrorism.

European nations alone have witnessed more than 7,500 terrorist incidents since 1969, representing about 27 per cent of the total incidents. The rise of modern terrorism with frightening ramifications has resulted in a demand for strengthening the national law and order machinery. Of late, the pressure on the police and security agencies has been mounting. But the existing laws still pose many problems. The use of police and paramilitary forces for combating terrorism has created an apprehension that it might lead to the oppression of the general populace. Surprisingly, a proper legal definition of terrorism has yet to be found.

The widening gap between the various governments regarding evolving a common strategy for suppression of terrorism needs to be viewed in the context of the potential for threat that it holds. Even the European convention on suppression of terrorism is restricted by Article 5 and Article 13, which refuse the extradition of a terrorist on many grounds. In an environment where terrorist violence is endemic and the world stands hopelessly divided on various laws, all countries should shun their national prerogatives for dealing with terrorism. Many efforts have been made by a number of nations to control state-sponsored terrorism, such as through economic sanctions but so far they have not reached a consensus either on a national or international level. During the last two decades, the increasing drug smuggling and obnoxious nexus between drug smugglers and terrorists have posed a serious problem to the internal state-security networks and compelled various nations to organise themselves and wage a relentless war against such a nexus. But merely implementation of vigorous drug laws cannot become effective unless the judicial procedure is modified for ensuring speedy trials.

The continuing uncertainties with regard to terrorism have encouraged various countries to launch psychological warfare against terrorism. In 1984, an international conference was organised in Washington by the Jonathan Institute. Some consensus began to emerge among the various scholars, politicians and decision-makers the world over in the conference. Some of the important suggestions were: the concept that one man's terrorist can be another man's freedom fighter must be done away with: local populace should cooperate with law enforcement machinery even at the cost of personal misery: prompt and strict decisions should be undertaken by various nations for controlling terrorist psychologically.

The London Economic Summit Conference organised by NATO States and Japan in 1984 proved to be another landmark for the eradication of terrorism which decided that unless we attack the roots of terrorism, only superficial relief could be seen but terrorism would increase in the total quantum of its impact. Creation of general awareness and organisation of public support against terrorist acts could be of immense use. While it is desirable to allow police and the armed forces to employ better informed judgement about the local problems, there is of course a danger that this attempt of the government could dilute the benefits to those deemed deserving and, thus, any possibility of peace and negotiation.

Many governments across the world have formulated reform measures to improve the situation. But terrorists interpret these steps as a surrender by the state to international criticism. In such a situation, the role of the military and the security forces has become crucial because most of their operations in terrorist-affected areas require a multi-layered approach. Although military actions have normally been accorded the highest priority for the maintenance of security, sometimes such action damages the deep layers of social and individual interest. For example, the role of the security forces in tackling the problem of terrorism in Punjab, Kashmir and the North-East has opened a controversial debate.

Recently, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah's Government criticised the alleged role of the security forces in keeping militancy alive in the state. This is a dilemma. Is this merely a work of simple Police and paramilitary network or that of a special force trained for counter-terrorist activities? The deployment of special forces in countering terrorist activities has become a reality in many countries. In this regard, the experience of different countries could be of immense use. For example, the way the West German police defeated terrorist faction, the way the French Army took measures to improve their anti-terrorist capabilities. The Italian Police too had to combat large-scale terrorist violence from neo-fascist groups and the left wing challenges of the Red Brigades.

A more up-to-date intelligence network through collaboration among the security forces can be very important in providing information about the terrorist targets and sites in advance. But the Government alone cannot do much to check this menace. Individuals and groups can make significant contribution towards improving general security environment. There is need for a positive response from all individuals who can bring about general awareness.

No civilised political system can progress until terrorism is wiped out, but terrorism cannot be eliminated unless there is a political solution. The need of the hour is the political will to solve the problems that generate terrorism. The states affected by terrorism should open the avenues for negotiated settlement of disputes and exhibit genuine willingness to resolve long festering problems. The efforts of the state to maintain security on the face of terrorist threats should go hand in hand with increased devolution of power to the people and greater democratisation of the system of power and administration.

