

# **TERRORISM & INDIA: A BRIEF OUTLINE**

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Terrorism is not a new phenomenon in human history but as a form of political violence, it has come to dominate contemporary discourse in our social and political life in the 21st century, particularly after the 9/11 incident. Actually though the concept of terrorism has been a category of political discourse since late eighteenth century, the connotation has been changing over the years with the developing political situations throughout the globe. The task of defining terrorism is not only very difficult, but also frustrating. Considering the different explanations of terrorism, Yevgeny M. Primakov, the former Russian Premier, said: "only two things are clear: "terrorism is a type of violence, and it is a bad thing, not something to be proud of or support. Nobody applies the word to one self and one's own actions, nor to those one has sympathy with or whose activities one supports."

Terrorism has often been considered as a method practiced by insurgents whereby through the use of coercive intimidation they try to achieve political ends. For insurgents, terrorism can be the only means or a part of a larger conventional war that they may use to attain their political goal. Yet, terrorism as a method of insurgency cannot be an adequate definition, for it has a much wider constituency of users than only insurgents. Post-9/11, at the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Countries in Kuala Lumpur in April, 2002 Malaysian Premier Mahathir Mohammad offered a definition: "all attacks targeting civilians by the September 11 attackers, or Israeli troops or suicide bombers be considered terrorism." It was a sloppy definition and expectedly it failed to be accepted by the Conference, which instead declared, "We reject any attempt to link terrorism to the struggle of the Palestinian people in the exercise of their inalienable right to establish their independent state."

Political philosopher Michael Walzer has offered another definition. He says, "Terrorism is the deliberate killing of innocent people at random in order to spread fear through a whole population." But Walzer immediately reminds us that this definition best fits for the terrorism of a national liberation movement or a revolutionary movement like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) or the Basque Separatist Movement (ETA) etc. And then he goes on to point out that there is also state terrorism which the governments use against their own people to spread



fear and to make opposition terrorised. State terrorism may indeed take another form not mentioned by Walzer, that is a state may sponsor terrorism vis-a vis another state. Further, Walzer says, there is "war terrorism," namely, the effort to kill civilians in the enemy state in such large numbers that its government is forced to surrender. Walzer gives the example of US dropping atom bombs on Japan at the end of World War II.

The word terrorism is derived from the word 'terror' a purported effect of an act on a particular person or on a group or on the entire system. J.B.S. Hardman defines terrorism as "a term used to describe the method or the theory behind the method where by an organized group or party seeks to achieve its avowed aims chiefly through the systematic use of violence." Terrorism, conceptually speaking, presents before us a whole genre of confused and fuzzy mind sets, some myopias view having enormous propaganda values and some parroting of foreign policy untruths as strategies of war, intrusion and expansion of spheres of influence. The discourses of terrorism are themselves quite terrorizing, not only intellectually but also in terms of their ideological political potentials. There is no denying the fact that the use of violence is constant feature of politics and political processes and the acts of terrorism have been employed by groups to gain political power and advantage from the ancient days. Alex Schmidt, a scholar of a detailed research guide to terrorism, listed 109 different definitions of terrorism between 1936 to 2004 and no two definitions were alike. We may round up this definitional exercise with the observation of Laqueur "Most experts agree that terrorism is the use of or the threat of use of violence, a method of combat or a strategy to achieve certain goals. Its aim is to induce a state of fear on the victims. It is ruthless in nature and does not conform to humanitarian norms, and publicity is an essential factor in terrorist strategy. Beyond this point definitions differ [Actually] it would be unrealistic to expect unanimity on a topic so close to us in time."

Achin vanaik, in his Article "Terrorism: Definition and Ethics" has analyzed four kinds of approaches to defining terrorism. Terrorism, as he says, has one or a number of the following characteristics: (i) it is organized intimidation (ii) it involves violence against civilians or non-combatants (iii) it involves indiscriminate use of violence and (iv) it is illegitimate use of violence. A terrorist act, in most cases, does not involve an indiscriminate use of violence but in most of the cases they are highly target specific involving meticulous planning, intelligence and the use of sophisticated technological skill. Taking into consideration the complexities involved in the concept of terrorism, vanaik has defined terrorism as a "calculated or premeditated use or threat of use of violence against an individual, group or larger collectivity in such a manner that



the target is rendered physically defenseless against that attack or against the effects of that violence ... (that) the act is harnessed to some political intent or purpose and carries a political meaning."

Use of violence is a constant feature of politics and political processes and the acts of terrorism have been employed by groups to gain political power and advantage from the ancient days. History is replete with frequent acts of assassinations and murders of political personalities and members of target groups only the manner of the acts changes with time with regard to methods and weapons employed leading to various degrees of impact. The ruling regimes have developed various mechanisms for protection against terrorist acts and under the circumstances the terrorist groups would like to make full use of technology accessible at a given point of time and very often the success of a terrorist act depends on innovative application of available means. Naturally, terrorist acts evolved through the use of daggers and knives to firearms, from kidnapping of individuals to hijacking of passenger aeroplanes, from planting bombs and lobbing grenades on the crowd to suicidal human bomb attacks, from driving truck full of explosives into the target to using hijacked passenger aeroplanes as missiles to destroy the target. Stern has argued that terrorism is not a static phenomenon and new modes of terrorism have emerged regularly. As a result, the terrorist groups need frequent innovation of novel measures as counter-measures. They therefore even using the weapons of mass destruction.

With time, terrorism has also become a useful tool in the hands of states willing to sponsor particular groups in a proxy war with the adversary. Groups are financed, provided with training, weapons and logistic supplies to challenge the adversary from within. Terrorism and Proxy War go hand in hand in an era when full-fledged armed conflicts between states employing professional uniformed soldiers in becoming quite irrelevant or passé as total war becomes too costly for the benefit it brings in return. Hoodboy observes that "the 'nuclear shield' logic is a de facto element of Pakistani policy towards India even though it has never been officially articulated which assumes that Pakistan can continue to provide support to Kashmiri militants struggling against Indian rule without fear of a retaliatory Indian invasion". The logic however is not so sound in itself, nevertheless low intensity sub-tactical warfare in veiled forms continues under the arch of nuclear deterrence. Ordinarily, terrorism is linked to specific regional situations. As Hafeez argues, 'inter state conflicts and in this connection the role of the state in sponsoring terrorism and networking of mind brought about by fundamentalist indoctrination are factors important to understand terrorism in South Asia.



If terrorism implies the deliberate use of violence, or threat of its use against innocent people, with the aim of intimidating some other people into a course of action they otherwise would not take, then, by definition, terrorism can be committed both by State and Non-state agencies. In ordinary parlance, terrorism is assumed to be an activity of Non-state agents. An act, if done by the army or security services is described as right but when done by a non-state agency may be described as terrorist. This is so because the State is supposed to have a certain degree of legitimacy as it is supposed to be the solo agent for the establishment of rule of law or the enforcement of Order. But this usage results in a double standard. When the United States or Great Britain terms another State as a Terrorist state or a 'rogue' State in order to justify its attack on the State, it denies legitimacy to the action of that State which it claims for itself. Similarly when a State implants insurgents and terrorists in another State in order to destabilize it, they are termed as freedom fighters and not terrorists.

Non-state terrorist activities have an apparent visibility and that is why there is a tendency to discuss terrorism exclusively in terms of Non-state terrorism. The 9/11 attack on the United States is a case in point. The number of victims of this barbaric non-state terrorist attack was a staggering 7000 and it has been highlighted as 'the worst case of terrorism ever'. Sulman Rushdie, have showed that in history there have been many instances of State terrorism where violence, cruelty and the casualty have been far more than this. On July 27, 1943, when the British Air Force raided Hamburg-known as the Firestorm Raid, the aftermath of this attack and the gigantic firestorm it had created, left a total of 40000 civilians dead. Or, the American incendiary bombing of Tokyo on March 9-10, 1945 which killed at least 80000 people, or the nuclear terrorism unleashed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, or the wanton destruction of civilian life and property in Afghanistan and Iraq by the American aggressors-all these show that State terrorism is no less dangerous than Non-state terrorism.

Another aspect of State terrorism is counter terrorism. Confronted with some determined hostility from another State, and unable to deal with the situation within the boundaries of law, a State may well be tempted to resort to terrorism itself, as has been done by Israel in response to Palestinian terrorism. Faced with terrorism in the Palestinian areas, Israel has consistently taken reprisal measures in which civilian targets in neighboring countries have been systematically attacked. The successive Serbian onslaughts on Croatia and Bosnia in the 1990 where the non-Serbs had a majority with an aim of doing 'ethnic cleansing' are another instance of the use of State terrorism.



Terrorism is characterized by the use of violence. Such violence includes hostage taking, hijacking, bombing and other indiscriminate attacks. Generally, terrorism is one type of warfare that lacks broader support of the common people, characterized by insurgencies and underground activities. Terrorists adopt unethical means to realize their objectives. Their goals for change are absolute and based on radical ideas that do not have wide spread appeal.

According to Audrey Kurth Cronin, there are four types of terrorist organizations currently operating around the world: (a) left wing terrorists, (b) religious or sacred terrorists (c) ethno-nationalist / separatist terrorists, and (d) religious or sacred terrorists. All four types have enjoyed periods of relative prominence in the modern era. Left wing terrorism is intertwined with communist movement; right wing terrorism drawing its inspiration from fascism. Ethno-nationalist / separatist terrorism accompanying the wave of de-Stalinization in the post war II years. Religious terrorism is becoming more significant currently. Although all types of terrorism continue to exist today, left wing & right wing terrorisms were more numerous in earlier decades. Of course, these categories are not perfect, as many groups have a mix of motivating ideologies. For example, some ethno-nationalist groups have religious characteristics or agendas, but usually one ideology or domination motivates them.

Politically, terrorism may be classified into several categories. Wilkinson has distinguished politically motivated terrorism into three categories - (i) repressive terrorism : it is used most commonly by states to suppress certain groups or individuals : (ii) sub-revolutionary terrorism : it is employed for a variety of purpose short of revolutionary seizure of power such as coercion or intimidation, vengeance or punishment : and (iii) revolutionary terrorism : it has long term objective of bringing about political revolution, i.e. a fundamental change in the power structure and in addition a fundamental change in the socio-economic order.

Muhammad Haniff Bin Hassan has classified terrorist activities from three angles : (a) the political strategist; (b) the radical theorist and (c) the militant activist. The political strategists strive for power to impose its will on society. A radical theorist is more interested in the ideas that terrorist believes in. He will not compromise his beliefs for the sake of power. The militant activists are those who are drawn to violence as an end in itself. The third types of terrorist activities are quite common at present.

The 8th report on terrorism in India published in 2008 defined terrorism as equivalent of war crime. An act of terrorism in India includes any act of violence that causes death, injury or property damage, induces fear, and is targeted against any group of people identified by their political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature. This description is similar to one provided by the United Nations' in 2000.



The Indian government has taken the following working definition of terrorism, same as has accepted by Western nations as well as the United Nations, proposed by Schmid and Jongman in 1988. "Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat and violence-based communication processes between terrorist organization, victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audiences(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought."

—Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman

India subdivides terrorism in four major groups:

1. Ethno-nationalist terrorism - This form of terror focuses either (a) on creating a separate State within India or independent of India or in a neighboring country, or (b) on emphasizing the views/response of one ethnic group against another. Violent Tamil Nationalist groups from India to address the condition of Tamils in Sri Lanka, as well as insurgent tribal groups in North East India are examples of ethno-nationalist terrorist activities.
  2. Religious terrorism - This form of terror focuses on religious imperatives, a presumed duty or in solidarity for a specific religious group, against one or more religious groups. Mumbai 26/11 terror attack in 2008 from an Islamic group in Pakistan is an example of religious terrorism in India.
  3. Left wing terrorism - This form of terror focuses on economic ideology, where all the existing socio-political structures are seen to be economically exploitative in character and a revolutionary change through violent means is essential. The ideology of Marx, Engel, Mao, Lenin and others are considered as the only valid economic path. Maoist violence in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are examples of left wing terrorism in India.
  4. Narco- terrorism - This form of terror focuses on creating illegal narcotics traffic zones. Drug violence in northwest India is an example of narco-terrorism in India.
- Broadly and generally, in India certain factors have recurrently come to be focused by scholars analyzing the causes of terrorism. These are : subjection to long-time and systematic deprivation of a particular group in relationship to other group(s) in a society, unequal treatment of a minority

or a majority population, discriminatory treatment based on racial, religious or ethnic considerations, a particular group of people living in humiliation and suffering from indignities, coupling of humiliation and discriminatory treatment on the one hand, and poverty and unemployment on the other. When the presence of such conditions in a society is met with insensitivity and neglect by that particular society and its government or by the international society and when reasonable, democratic and peaceful means to redress such grievances are exhausted or appear as irrelevant, we have a very favourable ground for the growth of terrorism. Once the seeds of terrorism are sown, there is no dearth of sources within or outside the state to fertilize them. That is to say, vested interests are grown to see that terrorism survives.

Before coming to consider what India can do to meet terrorism, attention can be drawn to the following. First, it is important to remember that terrorism is hardly successful in achieving its goals.

Secondly, terrorism imposes on the innocent and indefensible, people untold misery, and therefore, whatever message it wants to send, as far as the masses are concerned, it loses shine after a while. That is to say, in the long run, terrorism alienates the masses. This is a great disadvantage of terrorism compared with guerrilla warfare.

Thirdly, it is true indeed that terrorism is a big threat and that, it should not be tolerated by any government. But it is also true that the effect of terrorism should not be overblown, nor should there be an over-reaction to it.

Fourthly, to combat terrorism military action is necessary, but very often it is not the best way to do so. Armed forces create more problems than they solve. For controlling terrorism or for tightening the sources of terrorist support, the army has to do things in civil society and in relation to the civil population that soon leads to allegations of counter-terrorism and works negatively on the morale of the forces.

Finally, it is better to realize that given its long past, there is no reason to assume that terrorism will have a short future. Contrarily, we may take it for granted that terrorism will continue, only its intensity and spread and popularity can vary.

For India dealing with terrorism requires a lot of tightrope walking between softness and tolerance on the one hand and over-reaction on the other. While there should be absolute determination to defeat terrorism, it does not require that the toughest alternative available should always be seen as the best alternative.

Terrorism in India, according to the Home Ministry, poses a significant threat to the people of India. Terrorism found in India includes ethno-nationalist terrorism, religious terrorism, left wing terrorism and narco terrorism.



The regions with long term terrorist activities have been Jammu and Kashmir, east-central and south-central India (Naxalism and Seven Sister States). In August 2008, National Security Advisor M K Narayanan has said that there are as many as 800 terrorism cells operations in the country. As of 2013, 205 of the country's 608 districts were affected by terrorist activity. Terror attacks caused 231 civilian deaths in 2012 in India, compared to 11,098 terror-caused deaths worldwide, according to the State Department of the United States; or about 2% of global terror fatalities while it accounts for 17.5% of global population.

Media reports have alleged and implicated terrorism in India to be sponsored by Pakistan, particularly through its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). In 2012, the US accused Pakistan of enabling and ignoring anti-India terrorist cells working on its soil; however Pakistan has denied its involvement.

Terrorism thrives on spreading fear. If, under the threat of terrorism democracies become eager to abandon democratic practices, abjure openness and abandon rule of law, it helps the terrorist by contributing to fear: people come to see that normal life cannot be lived. Instead, the terrorist must be told that people refuse to be gripped by fear. Hence, there should be minimum deviation from democratic norms and practices and normal processes of living.

India, a long time victim of terrorism, has enacted anti-terrorist acts, foremost among them being the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) and the prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). The latter Act has been somewhat mellowed by the present government. In any case, such act affects, inter alia, the rights of a detainee issuing from habeas corpus. Time has come that we should come down and fight terror with anti-terror. Our job is to remain steadfast in the face of terror, as the surest defence against terrorism is to refuse to be terrorized.

### ***Notes and References:***

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