Asian Resonance

Challenges and Demensions of Terrorism: An Indian Context

Abstract

One of the daunting challenges in the 21st Century which has severely haunted not a particular individual, not a specific group or community, nor even a particular state but the whole world and the entire human civilization is perhaps the problem of "Terrorism". In common parlance, by terrorism, we understand, "the systematic use of terror especially as a means of coercion." With the advent of globalization and rapid development of Information & Communication Technology, terrorism has become global in its nature shattering the basic and fundamental values of human beings. Now-a-days terrorism has acted as an antithetic as well as a big challenge not only in violating the human rights but also posing serious threat to unity, integrity and sovereignty of every nation-state.

Keywords: Terrorism, Globalization, Information & Communication Technology, Unity & Integrity

Nirmal Kumar Sahoo
Assistant Professor,
Deptt.of Political Science,
S.F.S. Mahavidyalaya,
Khayrasole, Birbhum,
West Bengal

Introduction

The twentieth century ended as a century of democracy and human rights but twenty first century started as a century of international terrorism. It is evident from the simple fact that this time the terrorist groups targeted the international body, i.e. World Trade Centre (W.T.C.) in the United States of America on 11th September, 2001 leading to huge losses of lives & property. Among all the contemporary global issues that the present world is being confronted, terrorism is perhaps the most crucial one which has ever haunted mankind. Today, both the world at large and India in particular face daunting challenges in protecting and promoting the rights, freedom and interests of the common people. No country in the world can be said to be free from the deadly scourge of terrorism. With the grim spectre of terrorism counting to target innocent and defenseless people, the task has ever been challenging the socio-cultural, religious and even educational institutions around the globe. The paramount interests of the nation-states have been inter-linked to such an extent that the action of one state has invariably affected the other. The human cost of terrorism has been largely felt in every corner of the society. The United Nations has itself suffered tragic human losses by the terrorist groups on 19th August, 2003 in Baghdad. In addition to these human costs, terrorism can even destabilize Government, threaten civil society, jeopardize peace & security and affect the socio-economic development of a country. It is now the most pervasive, pernicious and ruthless threat to human lives, their freedom and property as well as to world peace & security.

Aim of the Study

The main objective of this paper, being a theoretical one, is to describe the dimensions & challenges of terrorism, its causes & sources as well as the combating methods in a global perspective and to discuss the stand- point or legal measures that have been undertaken by India in this context.

Review of Literature

There is an antiquity of literature available on terrorism. But here the gist of a few books will be pointed out since there is space limit. The book "Inside Terrorism" (2006) written by Bruce Hoffman provides fundamental meaning of terrorism, bringing all the theories in a coherent narrative. He describes the difference between an insurgency during a conventional war and a terror attack. He talks about the difference between religious and political terrorism and says religious terrorism is far more dangerous. He argues that al Qaeda is a coherent terrorist group, a group with politics and an ideology, willing to commit acts of terror to achieve its goals. Ajay Darshan Behera in his book "Violence, Terrorism and Human

Rights" (2008) has tried to carve out the violence of terrorism that creates apprehension and terror in the minds of the human beings in the world in general and South Asian Countries in particular. He has cited out the causes and problems of terrorism in South Asian region and also affects the peace process of other regions of the world. He points out that terrorism is the most vicious and pernicious issue in violating human rights largely. In the book "ISIS: The State of Terror" (2015) the authors Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger dissect the new model for violent extremism that ISIS has leveraged into an empire of death in Iraq and Syria, and international network that is rapidly expanding in the Middle East, North Africa and around the world. The book traces the ideological innovations that the group deploys to recruit unprecedented numbers of Westerners and the composition infamous videos and the technological tools it exploits on social media to broadcast its atrocities. The authors also examine ISIS's predatory abuse of women and children and offer a much-needed perspective on how world leaders should prioritize and respond to ISIS's deliberate and insidious provocations.

Meaning and History of Terrorism

The end of the Second World War marked the beginning of a new era in World Politics. While on one hand the United Nations came into existence to safeguard global peace and security, on the other it was the beginning of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The power rivalry and the bloc politics between these two Super Powers brought landmark changes in the field of International Relations, and the rise of 'Terrorism' was one among them.

In common parlance, by terrorism we understand, "the systematic use of terror especially as a means of coercion". In a strict sense, it is defined as a symbolic act intended to influence the political behaviour of a country by extra normal means, entailing the use of threat or violence. Some of the eminent writers are of the opinion that the term terrorism comes from the Latin root 'terrer' which means to frighten. Though the history of terrorism may be traced back to antiquity, it is surprising that the term "terrorism" still evades a universal definition. It is because of the simple fact that "one man's terrorist is sometimes another man's freedom fighter".

The Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary (1923, P.1001) defines terrorism as "an organized system of intimidation". The Oxford English Dictionary (1986, P.805) defines a terrorist as a "member of a clandestine or expatriate organization aiming to coerce an established government by acts of violence against it or its subjects". The United Nations Security Council Report of 2004 described terrorism as any act "intended to cause death or seriously bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an International Organization to do or abstain from doing any act".

Though terrorism as an ideology appears to be relatively a recent phenomenon yet it is as old as the ancient civilization of Greece and Rome existing in the form of violence or crime. Its origin can be traced back even to the assassination of the Roman emperor Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. The term "terrorism" was originally used to describe the actions of the Jacobin Club during the "Reign of Terror" in the French Revolution. The Jacobin leader Maximilien Robespierre said "terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible". In 1795 Edmund Burke denounced the Jacobins for letting "thousands of those hell hounds called terrorists" loose upon the people of France. However, its application in the field of World Politics goes back to the political developments in the Middle East after the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel in 1948. Again the politico-ideological divide between the United States and the Soviet Union used violence and terror tactics to achieve their respective foreign policy goals which gave alarming growth of terrorism during the period 1960's and 1970's. It was in the year 1972 that the United Nations for the first time realized hidden threats from the terrorist groups.

Causes and Sources of Terrorism

It is becoming quite clear that the area of operation of twenty first century terrorism has spread very wide. The heinous attacks on World Trade Centre (W.T.C.) and Pentagon in the United States on 11th September, 2001 have proved beyond any doubt that terrorism at present is global in its reach. The ruthless deeds of the highly skilled operative terrorists have not only exposed pitfalls of American security and intelligence network but also robbed its confidence about its military and economic powers. Similarly, the terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore, Pakistan on 3rd March, 2009 near the Gaddafi Stadium has proved beyond any doubt that no section of population or community or nation of the world is free from the nuisance of terrorism. However, the causes of terrorism are more or less the same, viz. unredressed grievances by the government, denial of legitimate political, economic and civil rights, misery, frustration, fundamentalism, racism, political injustice and religion-motivated crusades. Although terrorists belong to different nationalities, religious ideologies, societies & ethnic groups yet they have certain things in common like dissatisfaction with the political set up, the use of unacceptable and illegal means to achieve certain goals which they consider legitimate. Sections of Quebecords in Canada, Basques in Spain, Croatians in Yugoslavia, Armenians in Turkey, Tamils in Sri Lanka, Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Forces in India and Maroas in Philippines are a few among such secessionist groups resorting to political violence as a method for the realization of their aims. Although there are various factors responsible for terrorism but many acts of terrorism are the outcome of a deeply ideological or brutal suppression, physical torture and cultural dehumanization which is used by the Colonial Powers in a foreign country. The problem of infiltration and refugees has once again added new dimensions to the existing challenges. The rapid international transportation and use of sophisticated weapons have also facilitated the expansion of terrorism.

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Problems of Terrorism in South-Asia

There is perhaps no state in South Asia with the exception of Maldives which is free from such violent conflicts. In India the 'Kashmir Dispute'; in Pakistan the 'Sectarian Violence' between the Shias and the Sunnis; in Sri Lanka the 'Ethnic Conflict' between the LTTE and the Government; in Nepal the 'Maoist Insurgency'; in Bangladesh the 'Sectarian Conflict' between the Islamic Fundamentalists and Secular Forces and lastly, in Bhutan the Nepali origin 'Southern Bhutanese Fight' for their political and economic rights are some of the crucial internal challenges to the security of the region. The question of external dimension to internal conflicts in South Asia assumes even greater importance in bilateral and regional context. No South Asian internal conflict is confined internally. Each one of them has an external neighbourhood spill-over. The worst examples are India's pre-1987 support to Tamil Militancy in Sri Lanka and the continuing Pakistan support to insurgency in Kashmir. There are reports of the ISI's connections with LTTE in Sri Lanka, the LTTE's linkages with the PWG & ULFA's in India and these Indian groups with the Maoist insurgents in Nepal. These in turn not only affect the security scenario of the South Asian region but also other regions in the world.

The sources of terrorism from drugs-trafficking, arms-dealing and money-laundering are inexhaustible; its weapons are not conventional types but include even chemical and biological that human ingenuity is throwing for mass destruction of life and property. The dynamics of globalization and free market economy have further challenged the co-operative structure of the world widening the economic cleavages among the states.

Combating Methods and Strategies

The devastating potentiality of modern terrorism has thus created a situation where even the most powerful nations have increasingly become dependent upon international co-operation in search for combating international terrorism. There are two types of methods to combat terrorism: anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism. Anti terrorism involves those defensive measures taken to prevent the attacks and minimize the effects if an attack occurs. Counter-terrorism involves those offensive measures used to prevent, deter and respond to terrorism. Since the present day terrorists are very well- organized and more professional, a concerted action is required to combat terrorism. There is a need to promote open institutions to absorb the ethnic, religious and political pressure and allow them to vent their feelings in a proper manner. This might change their mind-set and thus encourage them to settle their differences in some way or other. The sophisticated security procedures which can go all the way from airport screening to the border area are essentially needed. Patience and perseverance are other hallmarks of successful programmes to combat terrorism. In combating terrorism intelligence is also extra-ordinarily important.

The United Nations took the first significant step in its fight against terrorism with its 1994 Declaration on measures to eliminate international terrorism. It unequivocally condemned terrorism and stipulated that all the states must recognize the acts of terrorism as criminal and cannot be justified under any circumstance. The United Nations does not recognize terrorists as oppressed people fighting for their real freedom. Instead it considers them as a threat to a nation's unity and integrity. The 1970 General Assembly Resolution proclaims, "It shall be the duty of every state to refrain from organizing or encouraging the organization of irregular forces or armed bands, including mercenaries, for incursion into the territory of another states". Similarly, the United Nations Resolution of 1973 asks "all member-states to deny finance, support or harbour to terrorists".

India and Terrorism

India since its independence in 1947 has been facing the problem of insurgency and terrorism in different parts of the country. Although terrorism has shot into limelight only recently yet India has been witnessing terrorist violence since 1980, initially in Punjab and since 1989 in Jammu-Kashmir and other parts of the country. India has been a victim of this menace constantly from Bombay blast on 12th March, 1993 to Kandahar Airbus hijacking on 24th December, 2000; a disastrous Parliament attack on 13th December, 2001 and once again a Mumbai blast on top two luxurious hotels such as Oberai & Taj and a building named as Nariman House on 26th November, 2008. The problem of constant and continuous infiltration on the border of Kashmir and frequent terrorist violence in the region during the period of October-November, 2016 has really become a serious security headache on the part of the country. India is thus now in favour of a collective international policy to combat the nuisance of international terrorism. It has raised its voice at the United Nations and other international forums to draw world community's attention towards this burning issue. India strongly advocates that international terrorism should be seen along with other international crimes like drugs-trafficking, arms-dealing and money-laundering, and should be accorded top priority during the next few years. Like the United States similar measures have been taken by India too. Following the United States policies, India also enacted similar acts on terrorism, i.e. Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) in 1985, being modified in the form of Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act (POTA) in 2002. It was further modified and appeared in the form of National Investigation Agency (NIA) in 2008 just after the Mumbai Blast to combat terrorism. Apart from this, India also started a massive campaign on a diplomatic level against Pakistan which is perhaps providing all sorts of outfits to different terrorist groups operating in Jammu-Kashmir and other parts of the world. The world in general and the United States in particular now slowly begin to realize that Pakistan may actively be involved in the Islamic Jihad in Kashmir.

Conclusion

Terrorism is in fact a crime & curse against humanity. It is the most vicious among the international crimes, the most pervasive, pernicious and ruthless threat to the lives of men and women in open societies as well as to the international peace and security. Its tentacles have spread across the world. The challenge lies in maintaining our openness, safeguarding individual rights and at the same time giving no quarter to the terrorists. Terrorism can only be defeated by organized international action and it should be the primary task of all open and plural societies to develop collective means for tackling this challenge. Stern action must be taken against the states and organizations which initiate, aid and abet terrorism.

Today, terrorism largely runs on the wheels of narcotics trade, religious fundamentalism, ideological extremism, arms-trafficking and money-laundering. The terrorists have operated 'check by bowl' with transnational criminal groups. Thus it has to be fought on several fronts with different tools, postures and strategies. We have to make an end to substantial patronage and financial, logistical and moral support of the states from which the terrorist groups get their strength to sustain. As a hydra-headed monster, terrorism needs a multi-prolonged action for its eradication in order to make a free flow of human rights & values and to establish a healthy, peaceful and prosperous humanity.

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