

Essay on A Global War against Terrorism

"Millions of innocent people and thousands of cops have lost their lives, fighting terrorism but the thirst for human blood of the creators and fumigators of terrorists has not been quenched so far."

Terrorism has now become a worldwide phenomenon. Since independence, India has been facing the problem of terrorism in different parts of the country. Terrorism means an armed violent movement directed against government as well as non-government targets, involving pre-meditated attacks with arms, ammunition, and explosives against civilians, and resorting to intimidation tactics such as hostage-taking and hijacking, but not seeking territorial control. Terrorism can also be defined as an organized way of intimidation and violence, especially for political purposes. Political frustration, political necessities, Religious and Racial Fanaticism, and personal political interests are some of the main causes of Terrorism. Terrorists are encouraged by the vested interest of some countries, external powers, to create instability in other countries. Terrorists indulge in looting, kidnapping, murder shooting, arson, and other unlawful activities to serve their very purpose of creating instabilities or deter the innocents so that either they support them or don't support the legal Government machinery.

India has faced exclusively terrorist movements in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, bordering Pakistan, terrorist movements in the northeast, bordering Myanmar and Bangladesh; in Bihar, bordering Nepal; and in certain interior states like Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa that do not have international borders.

India has also faced terrorism of an ephemeral nature, which sprang

suddenly due to religious anger against either the government or the majority Hindu community or both and petered out subsequently. For example the explosions in Mumbai on March 12, 1993, which killed about 250 civilians, and the simultaneous explosions in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, in February 1998. Tamil Nadu has also faced the fallout of terrorism promoted by LTTE elements on its political rivals living in the State and the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991.

India had also faced, for some years, Hindu sectarian terrorism in the form of the Anand Marg, which, in its motivation and irrationality, resembled some extent the Aum Shinrikyo of Japan. The Marg, with its emphasis on meditation, special religious and spiritual practices, and use of violence against its detractors, had as many followers in foreign countries as it had in India. Its over-ground activities have petered out since 1995.

Political Causes :

In Assam and Tripura, the political factors that led to insurgency-cum-terrorism included the failure of the government to control large-scale illegal immigration of Muslims from Bangladesh.

Economic Causes :

In Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Bihar, there are economic factors that include the absence of land reforms, rural unemployment, exploitation of landless laborers by landlords, etc. These economic grievances and perceptions of gross social injustice have given rise to ideological terrorist groups such as the various Marxist/Maoist groups operating under different names.

Ethnic Causes: Mainly seen in Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur due to

feelings of ethnic separateness.

Religious Causes: In Punjab, some Sikh elements belonging to different organizations took to terrorism to demand the creation of an independent state called Khalistan for the Sikhs. In J & K, Muslims belonging to different organizations took to terrorism for conflicting objectives. Some terrorist groups such as the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front, want independence for the state, including all the territory presently part of India, Pakistan, and China. Others, such as the Hizbul Mujahideen, want India's J & K State to be merged with Pakistan. While those who want independence, project their struggle as a separatist one, those who want a merger with Pakistan project it as a religious struggle.

There have also been sporadic acts of religious terrorism in other parts of India. These are either due to feelings of anger amongst sections of the Muslim youth over the government's perceived failure to safeguard their lives and interests or due to Pakistan's attempts to cause religious polarisation.

The maximum number of terrorist incidents and deaths of innocent civilians have occurred due to religious terrorism. While the intensity of the violence caused by terrorism of a non-religious nature can be rated as low or medium, that of religious terrorism has been high or very high. It has involved the indiscriminate use of sophisticated Improvised Explosive Devices, suicide bombers, the killing of civilians belonging to the majority community with small weapons, and resorting to methods such as hijacking, hostage-taking, blowing up of aircraft through IEDs, etc.

All terrorist groups, religious as well as non-religious have resorted to kidnapping hostages for ransom and for achieving other demands. The non-religious terrorist groups have targeted only

Indians, whereas the religious terrorist groups target Indians as well as foreigners. The Khalistan Commando Force, a Sikh terrorist group, kidnapped a Romanian diplomat in New Delhi in 1991. The JKLF kidnapped some Israeli tourists in J&K in 1992. HUM, under the name Al Faran, kidnapped five Western tourists in 1995 and is believed to have killed four of them. An American managed to escape. Sheikh Omar, under trial for the kidnap and murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi in January last year, had earlier kidnapped some Western tourists near Delhi. They were subsequently freed by the Police.

Non-religious terrorist groups in India have not carried out an act of terrorism outside Indian territory. Of the religious terrorist groups, a Sikh organization blew up an Air India plane off the Irish coast and unsuccessfully tried to blow up another plane in Tokyo the same day, plotted to kill then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi during his visit to the US in June 1985 (the plot was foiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation), attacked the Indian ambassador in Bucharest, Romania, in October 1991 and carried out a number of attacks on pro-government members of the Sikh diaspora abroad. The JKLF kidnapped and killed an Indian diplomat in Birmingham, England, in 1984. In the 1970s, the Anand Marg had indulged in acts of terrorism in foreign countries.

The Sikh and the indigenous Kashmiri groups projected their objectives as confined to their respective State, but the Pakistani pan-Islamic terrorist groups project their aim as extending to the whole of South Asia – namely the ‘liberation’ of Muslims in India and the ultimate formation of an Islamic Caliphate consisting of the ‘Muslim homelands’ of India and Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The Sikh terrorist groups demanded an independent nation on the ground that Sikhs constituted a separate community and could not

progress as fast as they wanted to in a Hindu-dominated country. They did not deride Hinduism and other non-Sikh religions. Nor did they call for the eradication of Hindu influences from their religion. The indigenous Kashmiri organizations, too, follow a similar policy. But the Pakistani pan-Islamic jihadi organizations ridicule and condemn Hinduism and other religions and call for the eradication of what they describe as the corrupting influence of Hinduism on Islam as practiced in South Asia.

Religious as well as non-religious terrorist groups have external links with like-minded terrorist groups in other countries. The link between the Marxist groups of India with Maoist groups of Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh; the link between the indigenous Kashmiri organizations with the religious, fundamentalist, and jihadi organizations of Pakistan; the link between organizations such as the Students Islamic Movement of India with jihadi elements in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia; and the link between the Pakistani pan-Islamic jihadi organizations operating in India with Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are well known.

Religious as well as non-religious terrorist groups draw moral support and material sustenance from the overseas diaspora. The Khalistan movement was initially born in the overseas Sikh community in the UK and Canada and spread to Punjab in India. The indigenous Kashmiri organizations get material assistance from a large number of migrants from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, called the Mirpuris, who have settled in Western countries. The Marxist groups get support from the Marxist elements in the overseas Indian community.

Terrorism in India is mainly nurtured by external agencies especially Pakistan, in the bordering states of Kashmir and Punjab. In the North-Eastern States, ULFA and NSCN are also indulged in terrorist activities. Pakistan has been the main source of arms, ammunition,

and training for religious terrorist groups operated in Punjab in the past and operating presently in J&K and other parts of India. The training is given by the ISI, either directly or through religious fundamentalist and pan-Islamic jihadi organizations, in various makeshift camps located in PoK, the Northern Areas (Gilgit and Baltistan), and the North-West Frontier Province.

Under US pressure, President Musharraf has banned the activities of LET, JEM, and LEJ in Sindh, Punjab, the NWFP, and Baluchistan, but not in PoK, the Northern Areas, and the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas. The activities of HUM and HUJI which are closest to Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment, have not been banned anywhere.

In a recent judgment against some Pakistani doctors accused of providing sanctuaries and medical assistance to Al-Qaeda members, the Pakistani Supreme Court pointed out that the Pakistan government has not, till now, declared AI-Qaeda-a terrorist organization and banned its activities in Pakistan as required under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Between 1989 and 1993, terrorism in J&K was mainly due to the activities of indigenous Kashmiri organizations. Since 1999, the Pakistani jihadi organizations have taken over the leadership of the anti-India movement and have been operating in Indian territory under the guise of Kashmiris. Out of the 46 suicide terrorist attacks reported since 1999, 44 have been made by Pakistanis belonging to these jihadi organizations. The principal leaders of these organizations are Pakistani Punjabis and the majority of their cadres are Pakistani nationals. These Pakistani jihadi organizations project J & K as the gateway to India and say that after 'liberating' J & K from the control of the Hindus, they will liberate' the Muslims in other parts of India and set up two more independent 'homelands ' for Muslims— one in north India and the other in South India. As part of this long-term aim, they have been setting up clandestine cells in

other parts of India and have launched some major operations such as the attack inside the Red Fort in New Delhi in January 2001, the attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001, and the attack on Hindu worshippers in Akshar Dham Temple in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, in September 2002.

There have been a number of terrorist incidents in other parts of India such as 'the attack on the security guards outside the US consulate in Kolkata in January 2002, the four explosions in Mumbai in 2002-03, the latest on March 13, 2003, killed 12 innocent train passengers and the explosion in a Hindu religious place in Hyderabad last year.

Till now, Al-Qaeda's Arab members have not operated in Indian territory. Some Arabs were arrested in J&K during counter-terrorism operations, but they were members of Pakistani pan-Islamic jihadi organizations and not of al-Qaeda. However, HUM, HUJI, LET, and JEM, the Pakistani jihadi organizations which are members of Bin Laden's ITF along with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, have been responsible for most of the religious terrorist incidents in J & K and other places in India.

India has more than 140 million Muslims, the second-largest Muslim community in the world after Indonesia. Only a very small section of the community has taken to terrorism due to various grievances and instigation by the ISI and Pakistan's religious, fundamentalist, and jihadi organizations. The overwhelming majority of Indian Muslims are loyal, law-abiding citizens. They have not allowed their anger against the Indian government or the Hindus for any reason to drive them into the arms of terrorist organizations. India has the most modern, peaceful, and forward-looking Muslim community in the world. It is important to note that when the US started its airstrikes on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban training camps in Afghan territory on

October 7, 2001, there were demonstrations by Muslims in many parts of the world but there was hardly any demonstration in India. Even after the US-led coalition started its war on terrorism in Afghanistan, hundreds of Muslims from many countries went to Pakistan and Afghanistan to join the Taliban and Al Qaeda in their fight against the coalition troops. There were no Indian Muslims among them.

These factors show that Bin Laden and his Al Qaeda have had little impact on the Muslim community in India. The Indian Muslims, including the aggrieved sections of the Kashmiris, have kept away from them.

The government of India believes that a genuine and well-functioning democracy, good governance, responsiveness to public grievances, effective policies, and economic development are the best antidotes to terrorism. India has not allowed the intimidatory violence of terrorism to come in the way of the electoral process. In the 1990s, elections were held in Punjab at the height of terrorist violence. Elections were held in J & K in September last year despite instructions from the ISI to the Pakistani jihadis to disrupt the process. Foreign diplomatic missions in New Delhi were encouraged to send their observers to the State to satisfy themselves that the elections were free and fair. All of them have certified this. Elections to the Nagaland assembly were held recently.

The government has not allowed terrorists to disrupt the economic development of the affected areas. Even at the height of terrorism, Punjab continued to be the granary of India, producing a record wheat crop year after year. In J&K, the fall in revenue due to a decline in foreign tourists' arrival is being sought by encouraging greater domestic 1990s, when terrorists prevented the holding of examinations in Srinagar, the government flew the students to Jammu at its cost to

take the examination. The government has announced many packages for the economic development of the affected areas and trying to implement them despite the terrorist violence.

The government has refused any kind of concessions to terrorists resorting to intimidation tactics such as hijacking, hostage-taking, etc. The government has refused to hold talks with terrorists until they give up violence but began to search for a political solution through talks once the terrorists give up violence.

The government is maintaining an open mind to suggestions coming from all sections of J&K for improving the political and administrative setup. It has recently appointed former home secretary N.N. Vohra to enter into a dialogue with all the elected representatives of the State on their demand for greater autonomy.

India has been the victim of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism since the 1950s. In those years, Pakistan's ISI had supported the insurgent/terrorist groups in India's northeast region and provided them sanctuaries, training, arms, and ammunition in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of the then East Pakistan. India's anxiety to stop this, played an important role in its assistance to the people of East Pakistan to liberate themselves. Since 1980, the ISI has been providing sanctuaries, training, arms, and ammunition in Pakistan to religious terrorist groups operating in Punjab, J&K, and other parts of India. It is also infiltrating the mercenaries of the Pakistani pan-Islamic jihadi organizations into India to promote cross-border terrorism. India has taken up this issue with the US since 1992 and wants Pakistan declared a State sponsor of international terrorism under US laws and have punitive action taken against it. In 1993, the Clinton administration placed Pakistan on a watch list of suspected State sponsors of international terrorism for six months and forced Nawaz Sharif who was then in power to sack Lieutenant General Javed

Nasir, then ISI's director-general, and other senior officers. This did not have any effect on the use of terrorism by the ISI. Since Nov. 9, 1993, Pakistan's military intelligence establishment has been collaborating with the US in taking action against Al-Qaeda elements posing a threat to US nationals and interests. But it has not taken any action against cross-border terrorism directed against India and to destroy terrorist infrastructure in PoK and the Northern Areas.

After the attack by LET and JEM on the Indian Parliament in December 2001, India mobilized and deployed its Army on the border in response to public pressure for action against the terrorist infrastructure in Pakistani territory. In response to appeals from the US, UK, and other friendly governments, India refrained from action against Pakistan. Under US pressure, Pakistan banned LET and JEM, but not HUJI and HUM, and arrested some of their leaders and cadres. They have since been released. US officials themselves admit Pakistan has not implemented its assurances that it would put a stop to cross-border terrorism in J.K. Despite this, the US is reluctant to act against Pakistan because of its cooperation in assisting the US in neutralizing Al-Qaeda elements who have taken shelter in Pakistan.

India has made it clear that there will be no question of any talks with Pakistan on the normalization of bilateral relations till it stops cross-border terrorism, winds up the terrorist infrastructure in its territory, and gives up the use of terrorism as a weapon against India. India has also been greatly concerned over the use of Bangladesh territory by religious and non-religious terrorists operating against India. The non-religious terrorist groups continue to enjoy sanctuaries in the CHT. Of the religious terrorist organizations, HUJI has an active branch in Bangladesh. Some Al Qaeda elements who escaped into Pakistan from Afghanistan have found their way into Bangladesh where they have been given shelter by HUJI. There is active complicity between the ISI and its counterpart in Dhaka in

this matter. The Bangladesh authorities have not been cooperating with India in taking effective action against the large-scale illegal immigration into India. However, keeping in view the otherwise good relations with Bangladesh, India has been trying to have these problems sorted out bilaterally at the political and diplomatic levels. But the progress so far has been disappointing.

Global War against Terrorism:

The much talked about "Global War against Terrorism" is one of the cruelest jokes of the present time. It is ironic that Pakistan, the epicenter of Global Terrorism, is the greatest ally of the USA fighting Global Terrorism. India has regularly been drawing the attention of the US and other countries to the atrocities committed by the terrorists, trained and funded by Pakistan but to no avail. Rightly said by someone 'Only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches. The USA realized the danger of terrorism only when terrorists struck at its heart on Sept. 2001 when the twin towers of 'World Trade Centre' New York were reduced to debris by suicide squads of terrorists. The USA, which boasted of its Super Power status, Military might, and Intelligence, suddenly forced to realize its vulnerability. The USA feared that its fortress was also not impregnable and therefore, wanted to eliminate the kingpin, the notorious dreaded Osama bin Laden and its Al-Queda. But President Bush couldn't identify the Godfather of all the mischief in the terrorist world, Gen. Pervez Mushnuf, instead joined hand with Mr. Musharraaf to fight terrorism globally. The removal of Osama bin Laden from Afganistan has not eliminated the threat of terrorist attacks on the USA. The American people even today are living under the long shadow of fear. The military might and the world's most powerful intelligence agency CIA could no longer eliminate the fear from the general American's mind. The tape of Osama bin Laden released by Al Zazira in Sept. 2003 has again threatened the USA Government of his

determination to teach a lesson to the US Government.

Every person entering the USA is being frisked by the authorities thoroughly. There have been thousands of instances when passengers are downloaded on strength of suspicion. Once bitten, twice shy, they don't want to leave anything to chance. But is that all cover the insecurity that prevailed among the minds of Americans? The US ambassador to India has time and again asserted that Global Terrorism will not end until the problem of Transborder Terrorism across India's borders is tackled. The crux of the story is that the USA is having double standards in dealing with terrorism and formulating its foreign policy to suit its interest. In the name of the destruction of WMD (Weapons of Mass Destructions), the US destroyed Iraq, ousted Saddam, and to date, not even a trace of Biological, Chemical, or Nuclear weapons has found. The Indian government, again and again, drew attention to the US' appeasement policy towards Pakistan. Appeasement of devilish elements can result in more unforeseen catastrophes.

India has to fight its own with the terrorism being funded and encouraged by the neighboring countries. How can we expect that the USA or Britain will feel the pinch of terrorist attacks in India? To look for support from either of them would be a folly. Just like any other country, we have to empower ourselves, we have to tackle our problems in our own ways. Terrorism has to be dealt with firmly with determined efforts and indomitable political will with the full and all-out support of all political parties and every citizen.