

Countering Terrorism

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Introduction

Terrorism has been spreading like bushfire despite Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and measures by individual countries. Take terrorism at sea where Somali pirates have increased their sphere of operations from 165 nautical miles off the Somali coast in 2006 to 1300 nautical miles.¹ The global terrorist map categorises the region Af-Pak, Iran, Iraq and Syria in 'severe' probability and South Asia and practically whole of South East Asia in 'high' probability.

Terrorism / Violent Terrorism

No universal definition exists for terrorism.² The US Patriot Act defines domestic terrorism as an act of violence intended to "intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government through intimidation or coercion or to affect conduct of government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping." The recent shooting at the Wisconsin Gurudwara killing six people was publicly described by the US Attorney General as an act of terrorism motivated by hate. Conversely, the Fort Hood massacre in the US in 2009 killing 13 and injuring 30 has never been described as an act of terrorism despite the shooter shouting "Allahu Akbar" while opening fire. Violent terrorism is a term coined by the West but without definition. The gas attack on Tokyo Subway in 1995 was termed an act of "violent extremism" killing 13, severely injuring 50 and causing temporary loss of vision to some 1000 people. The cult had two remote controlled helicopters and a Mi-8 helicopter smuggled in parts. Had they used aerial spraying, they had enough Sarin to kill one million people. Could you classify this cult non-violent 'before' the gas attack?³ Thousands of *madrasas* in Pakistan are indoctrinating little children. Is this non-violent terrorism? What about cyber attacks that can bust dams or strike at nuclear plants?

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Main Causes of Terrorism

There are two basic causes of terrorism. First is perceived political, social and economic injustice, lack of access to law and political participation. Second is a belief that violent means will usher in change because there is no other choice; other choices being considered ineffective. Terrorism does not always reflect objective social or economic deprivation. The cocktail of youth, illiteracy, unemployment, drugs and weapons are ready made prescription for terrorism with terrorist organisations luring youth on promise of employment. The term non-state actor is a misnomer since he resides in a state and requires funding, arming, administrative and other support. Therefore, the state can really not abrogate total responsibility. At the Afghanistan-India-Pakistan Trialogue (2010), Afghan Lieutenant General Abdul Khalid told Pakistani participants that they ought to discuss where terrorism was emanating from and who is supporting it.⁴ On 5th October 2011, Afghanistan confirmed Pakistani complicity in plotting assassination of President Karzai. Even in the case of cyber attacks, technology can fairly give out (99 per cent in case of China) the origin of attack.

Religious fundamentalism and radicalisation are major drivers of terrorism, so is sectarian strife. China has used terror for spreading communist ideology - spawning and supporting Maoists movements in Nepal and Myanmar, New People's Army in Philippines, Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, Japanese Red Army and Shining Path in Peru. States like Pakistan sponsor terrorism as a policy option in addition to supporting and instigating indigenous terrorist outfits to undertake terror tasks at their behest. In recent years, hate crimes have proliferated, neo-Nazis and white racists hitting headlines periodically. A dangerous phase of terrorist infiltrating security forces has begun - Pakistani media mentions this in terrorist attacks on Karachi and Kamra airbases. Indian Maoists talk of plans to infiltrate security forces for killing political leaders. Acquisition of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD's) by terrorist organisations will usher in a critical phase. Success of banning terrorist organisations is questionable as these organisations have numerous affiliates, infinite ways to finance and periodically switch names. A disturbing phenomenon also is low level political support to terrorists because of vote bank politics and passivity in countermeasures (physical action, appropriate laws, prosecution etc) again fearing erosion of vote bank.

India's Volatile Neighbourhood

Admiral Mike Mullen had confirmed Pakistan's state policy of terror before the US Senate Armed Services Committee on Afghanistan and Iraq.⁵ Pakistan apparently adopted it on advice given by Chinese Premier in 1960's that Pakistan should prepare for prolonged conflict with India instead of short-term wars, advising raising a militia force to act behind enemy lines.⁶ MK Dhar, former Joint Director IB says, "Way back in 1992-93transplanting armed modules in the heartland of India had started taking cognisable shape.....cells were identified in Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Kota/Ajmer region of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala. SIMI had already started deputing 'volunteers' to Pakistan for training along with the Mujahedeen, Taliban and Al Qaeda cadres. They established firm linkages with organisations in Bangladesh." Ajmal Qasab admits to training by Pakistani Marines; creation of Indian Mujahedeen by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence stands established and more damaging evidence has come from Abu Jundal, all of which Pakistan denies.

ISI is linked with Al Qaeda, Taliban, Haqqani network, LeT, HUJI, HuM, LeJ, Dawood Ibrahim, in Bangladesh with AHAB, Huji BD, JMB, JMJB, and in India with SIMI, IM, Maoists, PFI either directly or through LeT (covert arm of ISI). At the same time, LeT is indoctrinating, training and arming Maldivian youth in Pakistan.⁷ Ashley J Tellis recently stated, "The only reasonable objective for the US is the permanent evisceration of LeT and other vicious South Asian terrorist groups—with Pakistani cooperation if possible, but without it, if necessary."⁸ Bruce Riedel adds, "With Al Qaeda on the ropes, LeT, with the help of Pakistani backers, is now probably the most dangerous terror group in the world."⁹ As for Taliban, Murtaza Ali Shah says, "Taliban commanders acknowledge in BBC documentary titled 'Secret Pakistan' that Pakistan is still running training camps to support and arm the Taliban across the border in Afghanistan." Why Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacks the Pakistani establishments sometimes is reflected in the October 2011 statement of Maulvi Fazlullah of TTP: "Pakistani leaders approach us when their relations sour with the US and later forget their promises.... We know these tricks and do not trust their promises". Understandably Pakistan doesn't have 'total' control but links are maintained and used.¹⁰ An editorial in Express

Tribune stated, “.....this time too Pakistan could infiltrate its non-state actors to achieve ‘strategic depth’..... What is scarieris the perception that Pakistan doesn’t control its non-state actors hundred per cent, as demonstrated by the Punjabi Taliban fighting the Pakistan Army in parts of Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA).” Concerns about safety of Pakistan’s nukes must also be viewed concurrent with increasing radicalisation in Pakistan that affects the military too.

Terrorist infrastructure is intact in Pakistan and POK.¹¹ Jeff M Smith categorically wrote in Washington Times that Pakistan is playing a double game and Pakistan is using Islamist militants as an extension of its foreign policy. Deliberate violation of ceasefire and their latest hand in inciting communal tensions in our North East indicates their resolve for continuing mischief. The ISI-military combine has taken the polity and bureaucracy hostage in Pakistan.¹² Huma Yusuf writes, “In the absence of the activism of democracy, you are left with the fatalism of patronage.....patronage also nullifies future possibility of democracy....” Is India countering Pakistani propaganda adequately? Talk to foreigners / think tanks and their response is “very poorly” especially when results of first ever poll on both sides of the Line of Control in J&K conducted by Chatam House, UK¹³ conclusively proved 98 per cent of people in J&K do not wish to be part of Pakistan and 50 per cent of people in POK do not wish to remain with Pakistan.

China was reportedly running a training camp for Taliban in Xinjiang before the US invaded Afghanistan. It is providing sanctuary and support to ULFA, tacit support to Pakistan’s anti-India *jihadi* policy and support to insurgents in Northeast India. Sophisticated weapons and communication equipment are being smuggled in. China has recently gifted an AK 47 manufacturing facility to Kachen rebels in northern Myanmar and these rifles are being supplied to the PLA in Manipur and Indian Maoists.

Countering Violent Terrorism

Delivering the Madhav Rao Scindia Memorial Lecture in 2011, The Dalai Lama had said, “It is difficult to deal with terrorism through non-violence.....They (terrorists) are very brilliant and educated...but a strong ill feeling is bred in them. Their minds are closed.....The only way to tackle terrorism is through

prevention.”¹⁴ There is tremendous merit in these words though fully radicalised hardcore terrorists are beyond the ambit of prevention. Therefore, an effective strategy for countering violent terrorism should comprise:

- (a) Treating ‘community’ as centre of gravity negating their support to terrorism, providing security both physical and moral including thorough systematic education, development and psychological programmes.
- (b) Continuous de-radicalisation of communities; varied focus may be needed for select communities/ regions, teachers / religious teachers, youth, girls / mothers, apprehended terrorists plus population at large that is liable to support terrorism.
- (c) Use force to strike the hardcore / terrorist infrastructure through special operations, preferably by proxy.
- (d) Security Sector (indigenous) operates simultaneously at moral and physical levels; provide security and assistance to population while destroying terrorists and blending development and education with combat operations.
- (e) Choke state support to terrorism, including states in which so called ‘non-state actors are located.
- (f) Establish efficient intelligence system with intelligence acquisition and psychological operations road maps.
- (g) International strategy must accommodate individual national interests to maximum extent.
- (h) Effective periodic re-evaluation of measures affected versus changes required. At the strategic level, a doctrine is required to attack radicalisation and recruitment for making the environment more permissive despite this being a very tall order.

Dialogue with the population must be continuous. Genuine efforts are required to resolve local disputes and grievances. Locals must be integrated into making communities safe, assigning roles and responsibilities for threat mitigation and sharing accurate threat related information. Locals must be involved both in executing development plans and generating them. Community policing is a

good concept over which can be superimposed community based monitoring groups / ombudsmen. Education should be integrated into the national mainstream with adequate mix of ethics and true nationalism. Alternatives need to be introduced to expend youth energies including employment avenues. Psychological treatment is required including exposing terrorist abuses. Communities need to be informed and empowered to challenge radical ideology. Finally, an effective monitoring system needs to be instituted to measure the effects of de-radicalisation versus ongoing radicalisation – to gauge what is succeeding and corrective measures needed. Police forces must differentiate between law and order and countering terrorists. They must avoid / minimise collateral damage. They will require training for engaging communities. They must respect religion, culture, women and customs of the population. Genuinely assisting in education and development will help win the population. Training is also essential for private security organisations, educators, religious teachers, community leaders, and other relevant government officials and NGOs, however, this should not be forced upon the population. It is better to first coax them into willingness. Overall effort should be to provide a sense of 'belonging' to locals.

Considering the expanse of terrorism, a collective approach at global level is essential; building global consensus against terrorism. More focus will be required on terrorist breeding / terrorism prone regions / states / communities.¹⁵ A 2009 study by the 'Centre For A New American Security' said, "Some countries require particular attention. Pakistan, for example, represents the most difficult problem because it has become the host of the global jihadist movement and terrorists can increasingly operate with impunity there because of the weakening of the state.... challenges must be addressed with a range of different tools and approaches."

Special Forces and Special Operations

Special Forces are ideally suited in countering violent terrorism since they are adept in covert operations. They should be central to asymmetric response in countering threats like terrorism. Their application should be at low and precisely calculated levels without signatures or with ambiguous signatures. The objective should be to achieve strategic objectives through application of modest resources with the essential psychological element. They should

preferably operate by proxy and / or in conjunction indigenous special forces. They may also operate incognito as force multipliers to indigenous security sector, as required. The roles for which special operation may be launched could cover:

- (a) Information support operations.
- (b) Neutralising terrorist leaders, organisations, support groups, infrastructure including by infiltrating terrorist organisations through proactive, sustained and disruption operations.
- (c) Intelligence, surveillance, psychological operations.
- (d) Incident response operations; building partner capacity in countries under terrorist threat.
- (e) Employing unconventional warfare against state sponsored terrorism and trans-national terrorist groups.
- (f) Assisting existing resistance movements where populations are subject to genocide.

Faced with asymmetric wars by China and Pakistan who have no compunctions about using terror to de-stabilise, the ostrich like approach of barricading one's own house cannot suffice. There is urgent need to create a deterrent against irregular and unconventional forces. India must go for pro-active employment of Special Forces to create such deterrence.

International Cooperation

Establishing and linking Regional / National Counter Terrorism Centers is required. Intelligence must be speedily shared through real time communications. An overall preventive strategy is essential. International cooperation should include better coordination and resource optimisation, sharing of technology, data, tools, models and visualisation, R&D for counter terrorism including in cyberspace and electromagnetic domains. Joint training for special operations, periodic dialogues and forums will help build collective capabilities. It should also be noted that while hackles get usually raised in some sections whenever an 'alliance' is mentioned, it is possible to achieve the same through strategic partnerships that can be both at bilateral and multilateral levels.

Conclusion

Terrorism is a self-perpetuating virus that threatens to consume entire mankind. Manifestations like hate crimes have added in recent years. Sole focus on eliminating terrorist organisations rather than treating community / population as centre of gravity has increased radicalisation, especially in Pakistan. GWOT has not made much headway with patchwork operations serving individual national interests. India must take note that the China – Pakistan asymmetric wars aim to destabilise and balkanise India. Their support to Maoists and other terrorist organisations in India is proof enough. Simultaneous with Pakistani parliamentarians on peace mission to India this August, Pakistan resorted to deliberate breaches of ceasefire and incited communal violence in our northeast through misinformation on social media. The ISI – military in Pakistan hold democracy to ransom and their confrontationist approach towards India is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. We must develop adequate deterrence through pro-active covert special operations. Globally, a holistic pro-active preventive approach to tackle radicalisation suitably integrating special forces operations to destroy the core need to be adopted.

Endnotes

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