Unit IV
INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Rajendra Kumar Pandey

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The phenomenal rise of the menace of terrorism, primarily through the network of the Al-Qaeda, on the centre-stage of international politics, cutting across the boundaries of nation-states and defying the perceived immunities of certain socio-economic and cultural systems, may arguably be reckoned as one of the most formidable factors underpinning the contemporary phase of international politics. Traversing a long course and powered by the rapid advancements in the scientific and technological domains, and in conjunction with the ideological intoxications rooted in the discourses on the clash of civilizations, the contemporary incarnation of the cult of terrorism, often branded as 'super terrorism,' has so spectacularly showed its prowess in the form of the 9/11 attacks in 2001 that even the mightier and seemingly invincible nations of the world are finding themselves in precarious and vulnerable situations. The transformations brought about by the spectre of terrorism have been so perplexing to the policy makers in various countries that in the age of Globalization when most, if not all, leverages in the conduct of foreign policy are supposed to be revolving around economic considerations, huge efforts are required to be concentrated in the hitherto marginal states in order to help them not only save themselves from the scourge of terrorist violence within their countries but also become a frontal state in the collective endeavour of the international community to take the menace of terrorism head on.

As a variant of the violent methods of pursuing ones goals in the face of a legitimately established order in a country, terrorism has been in vogue for a fairly long period in the history of modern civilisation. What

have, however, given new orientations to the idea of terrorism in the new millennium are probably the religion based pan-ideological as well as the spatial dimensions which are in manifestation in almost all major terrorist incidents across the world. The ideological perspective of the terrorist activities, perpetrated mainly by the Al-Qaeda network in recent times, may partly be explained by the conceptualizations of Samuel Huntington in terms of the clash of civilizations. Ideology, indeed, has been an important driving force behind the conduct of violent activities by terrorists in many countries of the world, as is seen in the cases of the Communist and Maoist inspired blood bath. Yet, the scale and reach of such ideologically motivated violent activities are very limited compared to the scale and reach of the mayhem carried out by the present-day terrorist groups, thereby making them a distinct category in themselves. Quite evidently, therefore, the human force and the financial resources available at the disposal of the religion-based and ideology-driven terrorist groups far outweigh the logistical resources of the communist ideology inspired groups, which in turn provide them a sweeping international presence as against the pocketed influence of the latter. Above all, amongst contemporary terrorism, the ideological influences have been so much blinding and overbearing that it has attained the form of the genie that is out to destroy its creator itself as is happening in the case of the countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan. These countries had earlier been the bastions of the terrorist groups, providing them shelter and logistical support and are in present times bearing the burnt of the activities of these terrorist groups. The brutal assassination of Mrs Benazir Bhutto on 27 December 2007, allegedly by the al-Qaeda operatives in Rawalpindi, is a stark reminder of fatalities which international terrorism can wrought on its erstwhile supporting nations.

Born, apparently, out of the ideological moorings of the contemporary terrorism, is the spatial dimension of terrorism which is reflected in the world-wide expansion in the network of the terrorist groups. As a matter of fact, previously, the professed cause of the terrorist groups remained confined to the articulation of one or the other grievance of a section of the people whose redressal they sought to achieve through the means of terrorist activities. Consequently, the operational spatial domain of the terrorist groups was, by and large, centered around a particular region of a country, with sporadic terrorist strikes being carried out at selective strategic locations of the nation. For instance, the terrorists groups operating in Kashmir, Chechnya, Palestine, Northern Ireland, etc,. were supposedly fighting for their isolated causes without any obvious design to carry forward their strikes to other parts of the world. However, in the current phase of terrorism, such isolated and restrained terrorist operations are increasingly getting integrated with the global network of terrorist organisations, resulting in some sort of concerted and coordinated method of functioning of these organisations and expansion of their spatial

functional domain to hitherto unnoticed places like Copenhagen, Bali, London, Karachi, Bangalore, etc. Thus, what the twenty-first century is experiencing by way of terrorist strikes is much more lethal and concerted owing presumably to the transformation of localised terrorism of the past into what may be termed as international terrorism of the present times.

Keeping in view the changing nature, spatial domain and functional dynamics of the terrorism, this section attempts at articulating the basic issues involved in understanding the phenomenon including the contested domain of defining the concept, tracing its historical roots and exposition of the plausible intellectual perspectives and causal factors giving birth to terrorism. The globalisation of the terror of terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 and the multilateral, bilateral as well as the national efforts required in combating the menace also form the critical part of the section.

DEFINING TERRORISM: THE CONTESTED DOMAIN

Very few concepts in Social Sciences are so fiercely contested and contrastingly defined as the concept of terrorism ostensibly for the reason that a moral judgment is predominantly involved in most, if not all, of the definitions. In other words, the classical dictum 'one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter' goes a long way in clarifying the dilemma of a neutral observer to intellectually categorise the activities of such people. Consequently, some scholars, instead of defining terrorism, enumerate the elements which may go to term an act of violence as terrorist, irrespective of its ideological predilections.

Keith Shimko, for instance, talks of three elements of terrorism. First, it involves the threat or use of violence. Secondly, such violence is perpetrated in order to achieve some broader social or political aim. Thirdly, the use of violence is indiscriminate as the basic purpose is to induce far-reaching psychological effects in the minds of the masses. (Shimko, 2005: 295) Echoing the elements put forward by Shimko, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the United States (US) defined terrorism as 'the use of serious violence against persons or property, or the threat to use such violence, to intimidate or coerce a government, the public or any section of the public, or any section of the public in order to promote political, social or ideological objectives.' (Quoted in Freedman, 2002: 9) However, such a definition seems inconclusive owing to the fact that it does not talk about the nature of the actors involved in the perpetration of violence. Looked at from two different vantage points, the issue pertains to not only the critical element that the act of violence must be conducted by sub-national or sub-state groups but also goes deep into the question of assessing the legitimacy of the use of violence by the states themselves. Hence, as the US State Department contends, terrorism is 'premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-

combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.' (Quoted in Freedman, 2002: 9)

Regarding the issue of the legitimacy and monopoly of states to use physical force, the long standing view of the realist school of thought has been that the states not only have the monopoly of using physical force as and when the need arises, their use of force is also legitimate in almost all circumstances. However, as one analyst argues, the realist argument has been denounced by the critical theorists as 'subjective rhetoric.' By classifying any political violence, including acts of terrorism, as illegitimate in international forums they control, Western states preserve the monopoly on the legitimacy of violence in the international system. Using relativist arguments, critical theorists suggest that Western states cannot claim moral superiority, and its associated legitimacy, on the basis of their willingness to contravene international norms as it suits them.' (Baylis and Smith, 2005: 481) Thus, the idea of state terrorism or state sponsored terrorism does not remain confined only to the sphere of the Developing countries and definitely may be extended to activities of the Western countries as well if they appear to be perpetrating violence either on their own people or on the people of some other countries. Yet, a number of scholars have argued for the exclusion of state actors from the rubric of terrorism even if their methods of governance are utterly terrifying precisely for the reason of meaningful analysis of the phenomenon because not doing so 'would broaden the meaning of terrorism to unmanageable and useless levels.'

Finally, the conceptualisation of terrorism as a meaningful notion in international relations may take place at two levels. At the first level, going by the Gandhian formulations on violence and the idea of non-violence – a value whose universality and timelessness even in international body of politics has been recognised by the United Nations by declaring October 2 as International Day for Non-Violence – all forms of violence, whether perpetrated for valid political reasons or otherwise might be branded as terrorism without any rationale in any society. Yet, at the second level, it is argued that 'when political violence is used in conditions in which no other form of protest is permissible, then it would be wrong to call it violence' and in turn terrorism. (Hoffman and Graham, 2007: 490) For instance, in India, in the pre-independence days when under the brute force of the British colonial government, legitimate and democratic means of protest were almost absent, the political violence of the Indian revolutionaries would defy the categorization of terrorism. But in contemporary Indian polity, when the democratic political space has been wide enough to afford legitimate constitutional means of protest to various sections of society, it might not be wrong to label the conduct of mindless and across-border induced violence by a section of people in Jammu and Kashmir and parts of North-East as terrorism.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF TERRORISM

The advent and growth of the phenomenon of terrorism over the years, attaining the form of international terrorism in contemporary times, reveal the ominous pursuit of human beings to utilise in an organised and more lethal ways the age old methods of violence for general political purposes. To put it differently, though the violent method of conducting ones affairs vis-à-vis others was known to the human beings from time immemorial, its application as a method of seeking the redressal of public grievances point out to the birth of terrorism in human civilisations, though the exact term 'terrorism' might not have been used for all such activities. Thus, the earliest of such terrorist activities, without the term terrorism being used for them, appeared as early as AD 66-73, when the Sicarii, an offshoot of the religious sect of Zealots in Palestine attacked the Jewish 'collaborators' with short swords in daylight in crowded public places to demonstrate the state's impotence and to strike fear beyond their immediate targets, provoking conflict. (Freedman, 2002: 14) Subsequently, during 1090-1275, another outfit called Assassins, a Shia sect of Ismailis and Nizari, probably introduced the element of suicide attacks by striking only with the dagger at close range which not only accentuated the terror inflicted but also carried the propensity of the attackers getting killed in pursuit of their mission. These early rudiments of modern terrorism were, however, bereft of any ideological moorings on the one hand and any alternative system of life or things they were fighting against, on the other.

The modern period saw the use of the term terrorism in the aftermath of the French Revolution when it was used to denote the policies and programmes carried out by the regime of Maximilien Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety in France. Moreover, as has been argued, 'systematic terrorism in its modern form received great impetus in the late 18th and 19th centuries with the propagation of secular ideologies and nationalism in the wake of French revolution.' (Narang and Srivastava, 2001: 2-3) Some form of terrorism was also perpetrated by the Ku Klux Klan in the US, following the defeat of the confederacy in the American civil war, to terrorise the coloured population and fight the representatives and policies of the reconstruction administration set up by the federal government in the Southern United States. In Japan, terrorism showed its tentacles in 1868 when the pro-imperial nationalists, aspiring for the Meiji restoration indulged in terrorist attacks on Tokugawa Shogunate. During the 1870s, Irish terrorism also became formidable with the Dynamiters and the Phoenix Park murders of high dignitaries by the Irish National Invincibles. This was the time when the anarchists also gained proactive edge in terrorist strikes through the shadowy conglomerate of anarchists acting in various countries known as Anarchist International. Russians also experienced the menace of terrorism during the time when the revolutionary group Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) carried out selective

targeting and were able to assassinate Tsar Alexander II in 1881. The fragments of national terrorism, thus, were in vogue in almost all parts of the world in one form or other taking recourse to the common terrorist methods for the attainment of seemingly diverse objectives.

The dawn of the twentieth century was marked by the existence of a number of state sponsored nationalist streams of terrorism who were targeting their opponents to gain, among other things, propaganda by deed. One such notable terrorist strike was by the group Mlada Bosna (Young Bosnians) on the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in broad daylight resulting in the death of the Prince which in turn precipitated the First World War in 1914. In the aftermath of the war, the rise of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany entrenched the roots of state terrorism in these countries whose manifestations witnessed the massacre of a large number of people opposed to these regimes, showing that state or enforcement terrorism would be far more destructive and full of vengeance than agitational terrorism. The outbreak of the Second World War heralded the end these enforcement terrorism and the post war years saw a paradigm shift in the whole concept of terrorism as is evident in international relations. As one observer has put it succinctly, 'following the Second World War, terrorism seemed to be the preserve of indigenous nationalist groups which emerged out of various anticolonial campaigns in, among other countries, Israel, Cyprus, Kenya and Algeria. The idea of "freedom fighters" emerged at this time, along with the debate over the terminology and definition of terrorism. Thus, political legitimacy was attached to a number of "wars of national liberation", which many developing countries saw not as terrorist campaigns, but as wholly legitimate armed struggles.'(Freedman, 2002:15)

With the majority of national liberation movements getting fruition by end of 1960s, the sphere of terrorism during the succeeding decade got transformed from nationalist terrorist movements to ideologically motivated groups of terror-minded people with the objective of attaining the left-leaning systems of reforms in various countries. For instance, the surfacing of the terrorism in the form of Red Army Faction in Germany, Red Brigades in Italy in the West, the Naxalite and Maoist terrorism in India and the Maoist movement in Nepal marked reiteration of their commitment to carry on their struggle in the mould of ideologies professed by Marxism and Maoism in the times to come. Subsequently, this period also witnessed the inception of certain ethno-separatists groups contextualizing themselves beyond the conventional colonial contexts to espouse their ethnic and identity related causes. Prominent groups such as the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the Basque separatists in northern Spain, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in India, the Liberation of Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, etc., emerged as the most dreaded face of

terrorism fighting for their separate identities rooted in their ethno-linguistic-cultural traits. The remarkable feature of all such forces of terrorism had however been their limited areas of influence and activities without much, if any, synchronization of their activities amongst themselves. Consequently, the character of these terrorist activities remained predominantly national without any sizeable spill over of such activities on other surrounding parts of the country or on other countries of the region. Hence, the potentiality for damage and predictability of attacks by these groups remained within manageable limits with the national endeavour proving sufficient enough to tackle the menace of terrorism, which in turn did not allow these movements take any sort of transnational form so as to expand their span of operations in other countries of the region.

Explaining the transformation in the nature of terrorism during the decade of 1970s, an observer notes that 'three factors led to the birth of transnational terrorism: the expansion of air travel; the wider availability of televised news coverage; and broad common political and ideological interests. These changes allowed terrorism to grow from a local and regional phenomenon into an international threat.' (Baylis and Smith, 2005: 482) Afterwards, 'international terrorism came to be identified through the activities of various groups associated with the struggle against Israel, and a spate of aircraft hijackings and hostage-takings and the alleged use of terrorist organisations by certain state sponsors as tools of foreign policy.' (Freedman, 2002: 16) In the closing years of the 1970s, two significant events added new dimensions to the menace of international terrorism. Firstly, the Iranian revolution in 1978-79 resulted in the revival of Shiite terrorism with intense antipathy for everything American and Israeli whose manifestation was witnessed in the advent of suicide attacks on the enemy targets. Secondly, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 emboldened the American policy of containment of Communism and in the furtherance of this policy the US gave birth to a new terrorist movement, called the Taliban, in the country which in the final analysis became the nemesis of the Americans themselves in the present times. Quite evidently, by the end of the twentieth century, America emerged to be the prime target of the international Islamic terrorism whose prime mover undoubtedly happens to be the Al-Qaeda.

The demise of the Cold War, while on the one hand led to conventional military dominance of the United States in international affairs, also put a number of countries like Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, etc., variously dubbed as rogue states, face to face with the US as it charged many, if not all of them, of supporting or sponsoring terrorism which made them a threat to the international order. As many of these so-called rogue states are accused of engaging in the development of weapons of mass destruction, it is assumed that these states, unable to bear