

# Major Issues in Contemporary Politics

## 8. The Challenges of Terrorism

For BA Part-III (Pol.sc.) Hons. Students

G.K. Jha

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science

Marwari College, Darbhanga

### Introduction

International terrorism can be described as a major menace being faced by the international community in contemporary times. It can be simply understood as 'the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or sub national groups against non combatants in order to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims'.<sup>1</sup> Terrorism must also be distinguished from some related concepts such as war, Guerrilla warfare, and insurgencies. War has been abided by certain conventions with respect to the treatment of prisoners and the observance of diplomatic immunity.

The damage done to the humanity by the terror groups all over the world has been of huge proportion. Our own country has witness several such incidents and many parts of the country including Jammu and Kashmir has been badly affected.

It has been adversely affecting the resources and power of the states which are directly suffering due to the activities of the foreign based terrorist groups, **cross border terrorism** i.e. terrorism which has its roots and bases in a particular states but which is indulging in terrorist activities in a neighboring states or **narco-terrorism** under which smuggling of narcotics is undertaken to finance the organization and operation of terrorist groups in various parts of the world and international terrorism which uses kidnapping or hijacking for highlighting its professed views and demands as well for

---

<sup>1</sup> Sandler Todd, Arce Daniel G. & Enders, Walter, "The Challenge of Terrorism", Copenhagen Consensus 2008, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

putting pressure for securing the release of terrorists being detained by some states. Intense rivalry, arms race, nuclear arms race, alliance politics and unhealthy competition between USA and USSR in international relations came to be developed during the era of cold war. All this made the international system stressful and conflict in which local wars, proxy wars, ethnic wars and terrorism came to be the order of the day.

The spread of arms trade and transfer of arms provided a good ground for the birth of international terrorism as these arms easily found their way into the hands of the terrorists. It was also observed that one of the causes behind the emergence of terrorism was the continued suppression being faced by those people of Asia and Africa who were reeling under the after effects of colonial regime and suffering exploitation at the hands of the alien masters.

The terrorism can originate from various causes such as ethno-nationalism, separatism, social injustice, nihilism, fundamental belief, religious freedoms etc.

The birth of international terrorism can be traced back to as early as 1948 when Israel was created through a partition of Palestine and Palestinian leaders refused to accept the creation of the two states. During 1960's terrorist groups surfaced in Europe – Red Brigades in Italy and Red Army Faction in West Germany. In Northern Ireland, Roman Catholic and Protestant Catholics started using violence to secure their desired objectives. In 1980's a new dimension came to be added to international terrorism with the emergence of Islamic Jihadis. They adopted the goal of liberating regions which were once ruled by Muslims and of securing the rights of Muslims living in several secular non-Muslims states. The Afghan Jihadis organized, trained, armed, funded and supported by the USA, some Western Christian countries and Pakistan for fighting the evil forces of the Soviets.

They became the force behind the emergence of military and fundamentalism in the Indian states of Punjab and J&K. during 1990's the world witnessed with grave concern the spread of terrorism to various parts of the world. Kyrgyzstan, Russia, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, India and other regions of the world became victims of international terrorism. Terrorist outfits like Harkat ul-Ansar, Lashkar-i-Toiba and the Taliban of Afghanistan has emerged as highly motivated and highly organized terrorist groups and Osama Bin Laden has emerged as the most wanted patron of terrorism in the world.

All over the world nearly 50 terrorist groups are currently engaged in using terrorism, killing of innocents, indulging in proxy wars, overthrowing of govt. gaining of strategic influence and control of certain areas, cross-border terrorism, ethnic wars, religious wars for achieving their objectives and goals. The main target of terrorists has been civilians but the real victim has been the state which is to provide security to its citizens.

The danger of international terrorism can be listed as under –

- Terrorism being a translational enterprise is much prone to spreading the bacillus of conflict and violence into other countries.
- Terrorist's incidents may lead to open conventional war with very little warning time.
- The blurring of line between what is terrorism and what is war may also lead to rapid escalation into war.
- The closer cooperation apparent between terrorism and organized crime also points to a further erosion of authority of the state
- These kinds of activities may spread into areas of low development and literacy levels.
- Terrorist groups can use the ideologies of rights of determinism, national liberation war, and freedom movement, ethnic interest of minorities and human rights of a particular ethnic group for justifying their resort to terrorism.
- A major power can use the opportunity provided by the operation of the terrorist groups against states in the form of a war against the states as a cloak to intervene in the situation, in the name of preserving peace, security and stability in the regions<sup>2</sup>.

## **Combating Terrorism**

It is true to say that a global effort has not completely stopped the spread of terrorism from the world. Rather, day-by-day world is witnessing new dimension both in method and tactics adopted by these terror groups.

The UN adopted a text on international terrorism on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1972 in the 2114<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of the General Assembly. In 1978 the Convention against taking the Hostages as adopted by the General Assembly came into effect on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1978. In the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world witnessed a big increase in the acts of international terrorism. On 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1994, the UN General Assembly adopted a

---

<sup>2</sup> W. Laquer, "Terrorism", Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1977

declaration on Measures to Eliminate Terrorism. On 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1999 the UN Security Council also adopted a resolution and called for cooperation among the members nations against international terrorism. On 9<sup>th</sup> December 1999, the UN General Assembly adopted in its resolution, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

The attack on America in September 2001 has once again brought a new challenge and therefore concomitantly a new strategy to deal with such challenges. It was a massive attack unleashed by the Al-quaida leading to almost 5000 people dead. It was an unexpected but organized attack on America and from then onwards many new strategies were adopted to deal with the new method. It was an air-borne attack which had never held in the past by any of the groups in any part of the world. It also necessitated to have new strategies. It was an enormous task for America to fight with the terrorism. It led to series of changes. The Patriot Act was passed to deal with it internally and externally they sought to weave alliance of all such nations who were the victims of terror high handedness.

It is very difficult to eradicate the transnational terrorism as it is very easy for these groups to mount attack and all the more easy to replace their leaders when they are killed. There are other factors, too, that may hamper the strategy.

### **BALANCE OF TERROR (BOT)**

The balance of terror, or mutual deterrence, means that two (or more) opposing nations are sufficiently frightened of one another, but neither is willing to risk any action that would provoke a military attack by the other. It is said to be caused by the fact that each side possesses nuclear weapons in sufficient quantity to inflict unacceptable damage upon the other even after having absorbed a surprise attack. Therefore no aggressor can hope to escape punishment. It is the fear of the nuclear punishment that acts as a deterrent, i.e balance of fear. There are two important elements:

1. Retaliatory force or "second strike capability"
2. Unacceptable damage

Difference between Balance of Power (BOP) and Balance of Terror (BOT): In the Balance of Power system unconventional weapon and its possession was the concern whereas in the Balance of Terror thrust was on the nuclear weapon. It is true that arms eventually became unlimited in the BOP system and possession of nuclear reached up to a point of 'overkill'. Alliance with the other was the mainstay of BOP System and it was not so significant in BOT system.