
Counter-Terrorism: Need for a Collaborative Strategy

V R Raghavan¹

Terrorism, as we know it today, has become a global phenomenon after the 9/11 attacks. However, this movement had persisted and threatened the safety of citizens across the globe for many years prior to these attacks. This is evident when the examples of some major terrorist attacks are considered: the destruction of the Jewish community of Hebron during the Palestinian riots (1929); the Munich Olympic massacre (1972); the hijacking of the TWA flight (1974); the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat (1981); the bombing of the US Embassy in Beirut and Lebanon (1983); the hijacking of the Pan Am flight (1986); the bombing of the Israel Embassy in Buenos Aires (1992); the attacks on the World Trade Centre (1993); the hijacking of the Air France flight (1994); the bombing of a military compound in Saudi Arabia (1995); the attack on tourists in Luxor, Egypt (1997); the bombing of the US Embassy in Dar-e- Salaam (1998); the attack on Shia Muslims at a mosque in Islamabad (1999); the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight (1999); the Russian apartment bombings (1999); and the attack on the USS *Cole* (2000). The attack of 9/11 was a landmark event that prompted the global community to address Islamic militancy under the common banner of “international terrorism”.

However, trends in this movement continue unabated even today, leaving no country safe from Islamic militancy. Some examples of this are as follows: the bus attacks in Karachi (2002); the attacks on the US Consulate in Karachi (2002); the bombing of the *Limburg* tanker in Yemen (2002); the car bombing in Bali (2002); the Moscow theatre hostage crisis (2002); the Palestine terror campaign against Israel (2002); the bombing at the Kenyan hotel (2003); the bombings at the Riyadh compound (2003); the attacks in Casablanca (2003); the serial bombings in Istanbul (2003); the bombing of the Super ferry 14 in the Philippines; the

Lieutenant General **VR Raghavan** (Retd.) is Director, Delhi Policy Group, New Delhi.

attacks on a procession of Shia Muslims in Pakistan (2004); the bombing of the commuter trains in Madrid (2004); the Al-Khobar massacre in Saudi Arabia (2004); the bombings in the London underground (2005); the bomb attacks at Sharm-el- Sheikh in Egypt (2005); the bomb blasts in three crowded bazaars in New Delhi (2005); and the bombings in Varanasi, India (2006).

Terrorist groups are able to impose tremendous casualties despite international efforts to curtail terrorism because of the use of sophisticated contemporary technology and global markets. Advances in information technology, communication networks, the airline industry and tourism sector have facilitated and increased the atrocities of terrorism by making it easier for the terrorists to “execute their plans and gather information.”² According to Gary Ackerman, the director of the WMD Terrorism Research Programme at the Centre for Nonproliferation Studies, “It seems possible that terrorists one day will use CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear) weapons as a staple of their arsenal. However, at present CBRNs are not the terrorist’s first choice in weapons. Generally speaking, terrorists prefer technology that’s easy to use, easy to find and has a successful track record.”³ Citing the example of the electromagnetic bomb that was first tested by the US in 2001, Carl Kopp, an expert on high-tech warfare, explains that terrorists could use technology to devise a “less expensive and low-tech approach” for creating destruction. He states that “the threat of the E-bomb is very real...it can throw back a civilization by 200 years...popular mechanics estimate that a basic weapon could be built for \$400.”⁴ Similarly, the Internet has made it much easier for terrorists to gather information. A CNN report reveals that terrorists used ‘Google Earth’ to gain an aerial view of JFK international airport while planning an attack on the facility. It is virtually impossible to impede progress in those sectors that enhance terrorism because these also facilitate globalisation. The only thing that can be done is to “think carefully about the consequences of the technology we invent.”⁵ The use of such measures to inflict violence in a conflict where traditional parameters of war are amiss, lends added potency to the movement itself.

Yet, efforts to counter terrorism are most often traditional in nature. This is because this movement influences states that naturally, use their customary concepts of warfare to temper large scale aggression caused by terrorism. It is from this vantage point that the “war on terror” becomes important. However, the non-conventional nature of terrorism has invoked new trends in the methods of traditional warfare. These factors have led to the evolution of the war on terror as a long and asymmetric war. In asymmetric warfare, the insurgents do not play by the rules of traditional war and use unconventional

methods to cause military and civilian casualties. These “absolutist notions of violence” demand a strategy that would “exterminate the enemy without limits in space or time”⁶ consequently, necessitating the need for “asymmetric warfare in the early 21st century.”⁷ The war on terrorism officially became a long and asymmetric war with the Quadrennial Defence Review Report accepted by the US Department of Defence in 2006. This doctrine was initiated by Vice President Dick Cheney and centred around the notion “of a ‘long war’ targeting ‘terrorists’ both within the US national space and in the target zones of the Middle East and North Africa”⁸ through “permanent and boundless militarization, securitization and continuous preemptive US

military aggression...US military systems are already under development and deployment in keeping with the Pentagon’s strategy of ‘long war’ in which the number of unmanned and armed drones is to be more than doubled by 2010.”⁹ Through these measures, the war on terror becomes a “notably broad and multifaceted campaign of a type that is essential and new... and that includes... the visible and the invisible.”¹⁰

The newness of war strategies on either side lends change to the definition of counter-terrorism as well. In contemporary times, the four aspects intrinsic to counter-terrorism are: deterrence through investigation and prosecution; preventive through timely intelligence; physical security to thwart terrorist attacks if intelligence fails; and crisis management if physical security too fails.”¹¹ Counter-terrorism addresses “capacity-building, intelligence and other information sharing, law enforcement cooperation...and... underlying conditions that can lead to terrorism, for example, extremism, poor governance, lack of civil rights, human rights abuse, religious and ethnic discrimination, political exclusion, and poverty.”¹² However, counter-terrorism cannot be accomplished through military means. Counter-terrorism requires an amalgam between hard and soft powers to reduce terrorism holistically and address the socio-political and cultural setting from which it emerges (comprehensive security). A global response to terrorism also involves multi-layered cooperation between nations and multilateral

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institutions; cooperation between the North and South; and geo-political implementation of universal laws on counter-terrorism.

Countries across the globe have attempted to incorporate this strategy along with national measures to counter terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11. The UK has increased funding to curtail bio-terrorism, advanced its fire services, and enhanced the quality of its metropolitan and national police force; it has tightened port, airport and border security; speeded up extradition processes; frozen assets of international terrorist organisations; increased joint-working and intelligence sharing internationally; increased the size of the Security Service to analyse and act on information; continued the exercise programme to deal with terrorism scenarios; and CBRN resilience programmes.¹³ The US has used four essential Presidential Decision Directives (PDD) on countering terrorism¹⁴ to launched its offensive in Afghanistan and Iraq; curtail the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) on an international level; and identify “groups or states that sponsor or support such terrorists, isolate them and extract a heavy price for their actions.”¹⁵ The US has also worked closely with “friendly governments to carry out its counter-terrorism policy and support Allied and friendly governments in combating terrorist threats against them.” Russian efforts in the war on terror have included expanding cooperation with NATO/EUROCORPS forces in Afghanistan; anti-drug trafficking effort in Afghanistan and across Central Asia; bilateral US-Russian security monitoring and contingency planning in Central Asia; and improvement of border security with the European Union (EU). Saudi Arabia has supported international efforts to oust terrorism. In the process, it has signed the following treaties that support counter-terrorism: Arab Agreement on Combating Terrorism, Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), and Arab Gulf Cooperation Council’s Agreement. Saudi Arabia is also monitoring the “regulations of charity establishments and organizations to check the transfer of money to any illegal organization. It has also approved subjects about terrorism in its educational curriculum in addition to formulating regulations to punish terrorists.”¹⁶

On a multilateral level, counter-terrorism measures adopted by the EU have intensified in the light of the 2004 Madrid and 2005 London bombings. The “EU Counter-Terrorism” strategy demonstrates the EU’s commitment to “combating terrorism globally while respecting human rights, allowing its citizens to live in an area of freedom, security and justice. The EU’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy covers four strands of work: Prevention, Protection, Pursuit and Response.”¹⁷ Recently, the member states of the United Nations adopted the “UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy” in September 2006. This is an instrument to

enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism. This was the first time that all member states agreed to adopt a common approach to ousting terrorism, contending that it is unacceptable in all its forms. This included strengthening state capacity to counter terrorist threats to facilitate the UN's counter-terrorism systems. Other counter-terrorism measures adopted by the UN include complete cooperation in the war on terror; apprehending and prosecuting or extraditing perpetrators of terrorist acts; exchanging timely and accurate information for preventing terrorism; strengthening cooperation among member states; and curtailing trans-national crime.

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India has been addressing terrorism for many decades now, particularly in the areas of Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Even though counter-terrorism efforts have curtailed the extent of violence caused by these movements, terrorist activity continues in some of these areas even today. In 2007, more than 524 people have been killed due to insurgency related violence in the northeast; 400 in Jammu & Kashmir; and approximately 370 due to Left-Wing Extremism. According to Gen. V.P. Malik, terrorism related deaths have reduced over the years because India has adopted a comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism wherein a multi-pronged process is taken up on the basis of national consensus. India's counter-terrorism policy seeks a holistic approach to the political, economic, social, perceptual, psychological, operational and diplomatic factors that cause terrorism. On this basis, security forces use "minimum force" to counter terrorism and "also reassure populations who are feeling insecure or neglected due to inadequate civil administration, especially in times of armed conflicts. Civil action is undertaken alongside sustained military operations."¹⁸ Some recent steps taken by India to curtail terrorism have included "upgrading its aviation wing to support naval forces combating terrorism, piracy and drug trafficking."¹⁹ The Railway Police Special Force (RPSF) "has sent 179 of its personnel to the Counter-Insurgency and Anti-Terrorist Training School (CIAT) in Silchar, Assam, for a six-week-long training programme"²⁰ to get an edge over terrorists and boost passenger security.

Commenting on insurgencies in India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has stated that terrorism is a threat to India's peace and should be addressed within the "framework of India's existing legal system." He has also stated that democratic governance would constitute a powerful weapon in meeting "the scourge of terrorism." India will reject any cause that justifies terrorism and "we will never succumb to, or compromise with, terror, in Jammu & Kashmir or elsewhere."²¹ Pranab Mukherjee has encouraged India to take national and international steps to ensure "an environment of security, predictability and peace for its people which is essential for prosperity and development to take place."²² In recent years, an expanded international influence has begun to affect terrorism in India. The link is expanded by the exchange of ideological impetuses, organisational support and human resources between national and international terrorist groups. Harish Khare explains that "in this age of globalization and the Internet, it would be foolish to insist that not a single Muslim should allow himself to be brainwashed by the global Islamist fervor."²³ Thus, there is a need for India's counter-terrorism strategy to address the influence of international terrorism on insurgencies in India.

India's participation in the global "war on terror" results essentially from this necessity. In this regard, India and the US have agreed to share vital information on suspected terrorists and potential threats; launched the "Global Democracy Initiative"; and taken leadership roles on the UN Democracy Fund. The Indo-US alliance has compelled the US to force "Pakistan to give assurances that it will end cross-border infiltration on a permanent basis."²⁴ India, Russia and China have intensified their fight against terrorism and drug trafficking. India and Nepal have "agreed to control terrorist activities, including those of the Maoists, and further consolidate the security on the border between the two countries. These measures include more vigilance along border areas, exchange of lists of persons with criminal records and exchange of criminals fleeing from one country to the other."²⁵ India and Israel have convened the Joint Working Group in their fight against "the growing menace" of terrorism in a regional and global context. Narco-trafficking and terrorist financing are particular targets of this joint endeavour. India and Pakistan have continued to conduct composite dialogues to curtail terrorism on their soils and support the global war on terrorism. On July 6, 2007, Manmohan Singh empathised with the ongoing internal unrest in Pakistan and stated that terrorism was a common concern of both countries. The Burma, India, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Summit has taken a "pledge not to allow terrorist groups to use their territories for launching attacks on friendly countries. They also took

a decision to set up a Joint Working Group on counter-terrorism.”²⁶ India has also urged the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to address counter-terrorism through regional cooperation. India has urged the UN to focus its attention on international terrorism and mobilise international opinion against military juntas which have destabilised peace in “open, liberal, democratic and law-aiding societies.”²⁷

India’s involvement in efforts to contain international terrorism has reduced domestic insurgency related deaths since 2002. All the

above indicates the fact that addressing terrorism in contemporary times is a conglomerate process involving national measures and international cooperation between states and non-state actors in the global order. Processes of interdependence and enmeshment are critical to this effort. “Battling terrorism requires federal governments to partner” with international bodies, local governments, intelligence organisations, national security guards, private institutions, academic institutions and the public in ways that they have never done before.

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Notes

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