

## **REEXAMINING INDIA'S COUNTER TERRORISM STRATEGY**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Terrorism in India is looked at as one of the aspects of maintenance of Law and Order which is a subject matter of federal units under the Indian constitution. Hence the Police Departments of the States which are responsible for maintaining law and order deal with terrorism, which is not enough. Central Government of India and Central Security Forces should be playing an important role in Planning and execution of confrontation with terrorism. But technicalities of the constitution do not make it possible. That is why; Central Government has set up a National Counter Terrorism Centre. It has not yet been put into practice, because of the resistance by federal units. If India wants to manage terrorism in real sense, then it is imperative to consider terrorism as a federal Crime and National Emergency like incidents. In order to prohibit such criminal acts, India needs to initiate a comprehensive internal security like US and Israel.*

**KEY WORDS:** Terrorism, India, USA, crime, National security, International relations

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Today terrorism is an international issue. Among the 193 states in the global community, more than 100 states are plagued by it, so it is not confined to a single state. However, nature of terrorism is continuously changing in its methods, techniques, objectives. This change has remained progressive, though. Most of the states infested by terrorism opt for the mediation by their military or the security forces to handle and fight back terrorism. Not only India, but many countries like America, Russia, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are in severe danger of the extreme terrorism, as far as their national security is concerned. International scene has changed a lot recently. Today although interstate wars or fights are not taking place, violence and deaths of innocents continue to rise. Earlier, during wars between the states, the armies used to get involved and the security personnel would die in the conflicts. However today, the terrorist violence is taking toll of innocent citizens. Though there are no wars between nations, violence in the world has not stopped yet. There has been tremendous human loss (violence) during 1991-2016 which is even greater than the human loss during the World War II. Main reason behind

this is the internal conflicts within the countries and terrorist violence. Terrorism is the main reason to cause an economic and human loss on a very large scale.

## **GLOBALIZATION AND TERRORISM**

Though terrorism existed for very long time in international politics, its present dreadful nature has come forward only after 1990. The earlier political nature of terrorism has changed into religious one now. India's internal security is in jeopardy since 1989, only because of the terrorism issue. Before we get to know the Indian approach to combat terrorism, we need to understand how globalization has been responsible to make terrorism as a global issue and how it is spread throughout the South Asia.

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, globalization picked up its pace and terrorism became more competent. As the process of globalization has made the transport of goods and services smooth cross borders, the Trans frontier trade of arms, explosives like RDX, drugs, and technology and weapons of mass destruction, arms and equipment speeded up at an unimaginable rate. Terrorist organizations could strengthen their capability of working on the international level. These organizations became too competent for a single nation to fight back on its own. For instance, any covert and overt operations against terrorism have no other choice but to deal with only through international cooperation. Organizations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS have their branches and affiliated groups spread over more than 50 countries. War on terror becomes difficult because of the changing nature of terrorism. In the disguise of terrorism, that came forward, is invisible to us. In 1990-91 Kuwait knew that Iraq had invaded its land. So it was easy for UN Forces to identify enemy and to fight back the aggression. Terrorism is not the same case though. Like others India could not make out the way to resist the terrorist attacks that we have been suffering for last twenty years consistently. The main concern is who are we fighting with? As these organizations are not located in a specific place, nature of these organizations is too subtle to fight with.

Most of the countries in the world, today feel beaten up with terrorism. Cross border terrorism has emerged as a real headache because no one could really prove the operations of terrorists that occur are indigenous or planned cross borders (in a neighboring country of a particular country). Additionally it is frustrating that International Law or UN Constitution does not have any mechanism (in absence of proofs) for the disciplinary action against the nation that encourages terrorist activities. With this advantage on hands, many countries make a point blank use of terrorist activities to create problems for the rival country. India is the victim of crossborder terrorism and since 1989 more than one lakh innocent people have lost their lives because of terrorist violence.

## **Terrorism sabotaging peace talks between India and Pakistan**

Due to the problem of Indo-Pak cross border terrorism, a bilateral dialogue and mutual trust building process has already been disrupted. India was firm on its stand: not to have a dialogue with Pakistan until Pakistan does not stop aiding and abetting the terrorist operations and violence in India. The former Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh did not visit Pakistan even once during his two terms of ten years. Only reason for this was Pak's aid to the terrorism. He had made a reference to Pakistan as an International centre of Terrorism in his speech in the Annual meeting of the UN General Assembly in 2013, in New York. Indo-Pak peace talks are at a complete stop at present. At present terrorists like Hafiz Saied, a mastermind of Mumbai 2008 terrorist attack, live and move freely in Pakistan. Several reports of the international institutions has confirmed in their reports that Pakistan has been an abode of terrorists who have been raging havoc with their violence in Afghanistan and India.

### **South Asia, New Centre of Terrorism**

In 1990, the centre for terrorism moved from West Asia to South Asia. Before that, during 1960-1990, terrorism that had flourished in West Asia, was mainly emerged from Arab-Israel conflict. There are two important reasons for the movement of centre of terrorism from West to South Asia during the decade of 1990.

First reason was the rise of Taliban regime in 1996 in Afghanistan. Origin and development of Taliban had a full endorsement by Pakistan and also its complete support in economic, political and ethical sense. Fundamental principle of this regime in Afghanistan is the religious fundamentalism. Taliban regime in Afghanistan has been responsible for the spread of terrorism in South Asia. Taliban conducted several training camps for the terrorists and then dispatched these trained terrorists to Africa, Russia, India and China. Taliban also gave the asylum to Al-Qaeda, an international terrorist organization. Terrorism based on this religious fundamentalism grew rampant like a weed all over the Asian continent (Western, Central and South Asia) during the period of five years from 1996 to 2002.

Secondly, America waged a war on terror after the 9/11 terrorist attack on American Twin Towers. As per America's speculation Osama Bin Laden, a Master mind of this attack, hid in Afghanistan. So America started a military campaign against Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Pak had declared its support for this campaign openly and India did it secretly. Naturally America and Pakistan got on the hit list of Al-Qaeda and because of growing terrorism, whole of South Asia became the centre of discussion for the entire world.

## **Terrorism and Internal Security of India**

Terrorism is one of the important issues that have brought Indian Internal Security in jeopardy. India had to face hundreds of terrorist attacks, during the period from 1989 to 2016. More than one lakh people were killed in those attacks. It is very sad and unfortunate that India has not yet chalked out a serious national comprehensive strategy to confront the issue of terrorism. It is necessary to study the reasons and course of the escalation of terrorism in India, before we analyze the approach of Indian Government to combat the terrorism.

### **Spread of terrorism in India**

Terrorism has spread in India in two phases – First. 1989-2001 – Centre of terrorist activities was mainly India's Jammu and Kashmir valley during this period. During late 1980s the then Military Dictator General Zia- Ul -Haq had designed an ambitious project called 'Lahore Plan' in order to disturb the Law and Order situation in Jammu and Kashmir. As per this plan Pak decided to create instability and disorder with the help of some terrorist organizations in J&K. He designated the ISI, (Inter-Services Intelligence) Secret Service of Pakistan, for the training of the terrorist organization in Pakistan occupied Kashmir region. Special feature of this phase was that the terrorism during this phase was limited to the Jammu and Kashmir region and Pakistan had sent the trained terrorists to Kashmir. Second phase of terrorism in India began after 2001. Pakistan's ISI designed again a project called 'Karachi Plan' in this respect. Karachi Plan maintained the expansion of the terrorist operations all over India, instead of limiting the scope of operations only to Kashmir valley. It was decided to focus the terrorist attacks on India's prominent cities, business centers, holy places, places of worship, and the places known for Hindu-Muslim unity. Special feature of this phase was that Karachi Plan insisted on conversion of local Indians into terrorists instead of sending them from Pakistan. This effort of Pakistan gave rise to the groups like 'Indian Mujahidin' which consists of local Indians. In addition to ISI of Pakistan, as an originating agent of Indian Mujahidin, one more factor is responsible for the rise of this terrorist group in India and that is the communal riots in India especially in the states like Gujarat. Muslim youth in very large numbers joined the 'Indian Mujahidin' just to take a revenge of the oppressions in these riots. Terrorist brutality and abuse in Mumbai during last 10 years has a very dark background of the Gujarat communal riots.

Apart from crossborder terrorism India is also suffering from one more type terrorist violence. Sometimes religious conflicts from all over Asia seem to reflect in terrorist brutality in India. Few years back an incidence of bomb blast at Bodhgaya city is the best example. Root cause of this blast could be found in the issue of Rohingya people, a minority Muslim group in Myanmar. Communal conflict between Rohingya people and the local Buddhist -community in Myanmar has reflected in the bomb blast at Bodhgaya in India. Similarly, terrorist attack on Mumbai in

2008 had the reflection of Arab-Israel conflict in Western Asia. Jews and their residences in Mumbai became the target of terrorists during this attack.

## **THREAT OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS TO INDIA**

### **A. Threat from Al Qaeda**

This organization is operational in several countries for last twenty years. After the death of Osama Bin Laden, Al Zawahiri became the leader of Al- Qaida. Like any multinational company, Al-Qaida also has multiple branches in several countries. But it has never tried to operate, interfere or establish a regional office in India before. Terrorist organizations like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed that caused violence in India, were indirectly connected to Al-Qaida. David Hadley, one of the masterminds of terrorist attack on Mumbai in 2008, conceded to the Intelligence Agencies, that the Al-Qaida had played an important role in many of the terrorist attacks in India. Also, in 2002, during the raids in Iraq, American Security Forces had found some documents of Al-Qaida that had references to India and many Indian people. But it never directly interfered in India recently. However recently, a videotape of Al Zawahiri, underscores the future strategy of Al Qaeda in India. This videotape of his 55 minutes speech of Zawahiri has special reference to India. He mentioned in that speech that Al-Qaida has its eye on Indian places like Kashmir, Gujarat(city like Ahmadabad in Gujarat), Assam along with the Bangladesh and Myanmar. He made an announcement of Jihad and an organizational structure for its actual operations in these areas. Like the Board of Directors of a multinational company, India will have separate structure of executives (masterminds). Terrorist named Asim Umar who looks after the operations in Pakistan, would be in charge of the operations in India too.

Al Zawahiri announced formation of a separate sub organization, namely 'Kaidat-Al-Jihad', in order to bring the 'jihad' in actuality in India. All this arrangement is done with a careful and strategic planning. This videotape has disturbed the Indian Government. This is a big challenge by Al-Qaida to India, especially NDA Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The day when PM Narendra Modi of the present ruling NDA government took the charge Indian Embassy at Herat in Afghanistan was attacked. Organization named Pakistan-e-Taharik-I-Taliban, which has connections with Al-Qaida, was responsible for this attack. It looks like the attack was the first signal of caution to the new government in India.

### **B. Threat from ISIS to South Asia and India**

Although, today's most dreadful international terrorist organization ISIS is targeting Europe frequently, it's leaving its imprints on South Asia also. There are reasons to it. Firstly, whenever a superpower withdraws from a certain region or subcontinent, there is a vacuum of power which gets created. There often is a conflict for bridging this vacuum. The ISIS has also initiated through such processes. The NATO forces were active in Iraq. In 2012, these forces

were withdrawn, which created a vacuum of power. In 2012, ISIS started bridging this vacuum. The NATO forces had also mostly withdrawn from Afghanistan in 2015 and ISIS was trying to bridge this vacuum of power. Afghanistan's geographical location is strategically crucial. It goes without saying that if Afghanistan comes under control, South Asia, West Asia and Central Asia will also come under the control. The reason behind this is that the borders of Afghanistan are joined to all these subcontinents. In south Asia, borders of Pakistan and Uzbekistan are joined to Afghanistan, while in the West Asia, borders of Iran are joined. This is the reason why ISIS has turned its attention towards South Asia from West Asia. ISIS had accepted the responsibility of some attacks which took place in Afghanistan in last couple of years. This needs to be noted. Secondly Pakistan's role in the ISIS threat to India also needs to be considered. The ISIS flags which are frequently seen in Kashmir nowadays and also the activities which are visible in the name of ISIS in India can have a contribution and encouragement from the Pakistan secret agency ISI. Presently, ISIS may not be directly a threat to India but to create such illusion can be a conspiracy from ISI. It is thus necessary to understand the conspiracy behind this. Pakistan is nowadays infamous as an exporter of Terrorism. The American President Barack Obama in his last 'State of Union address' has also clearly mentioned that Pakistan has grown into a paradise for terrorists. On this background, it is possible that Pakistan and ISI may try to portray before the world India as the paradise for terrorists and also that it is from India that many Muslims are becoming terrorists. Second point may be that today, majority of the attacks by terrorists are trained in Pakistan. The attacks in Chechnya, Africa, Europe, and America had the involvement of these terrorists. Due to this, the world has created an image of Pakistan as a Factory of Terrorists. thus in order to change this image, Pakistan is passing onus on India. It can be a well planned action of Pakistan to create a row that now India is exporting terrorists. Pakistan wants to show the world that the Muslim youths from India are increasingly attracted to ISIS and they are ready to and fight anywhere in the world. It wants to demonstrate that In future, India is going to become the exporter of terrorism. And for this cause, the youths from India is being taken into ISIS. Pakistan can undertake such actions to keep away from getting its self image blemished.

The third possible reason why ISIS has turned its attention toward India is the hunt for volunteers and fighters. There is a competition for supremacy within Al-Qaida and ISIS. Al-Qaida is now aggressive towards ISIS. Also the Taliban in Afghanistan has intensified its opposition towards ISIS. Till today, ISIS used to get Pathani fighters from these organizations which it no more acquires. In Chechnia, the Pathani fighters were seen as the main mode of terrorism. They used to work for Al-Qaida and Taliban. However both of these organizations have gone against ISIS. Thus now ISIS is in search of new soldiers and a new land. As a part of this search it has began to look towards India and also South East Asia.

## **Indian approach to combat terrorism**

India's approach to combat terrorism is to maintain law and order in the country. In India terrorism is still perceived as a law and order issue and being handled by the internal police forces of the federal units. India mostly relies on the Police Department of its federal units for the planning and management of the problem of terrorism. India never and still doesn't look at it as a national problem or threat to the national security. Naturally India cannot use the military to fight back terrorism. When countries like Israel and America confront the terrorist attacks, they perceive it as the situation of national emergency and handle the situation through military forces. -In India, however, this has become a great issue of conflict between Centre and federal units. The Central Government recently seems to have changed the mindset and trying to combat the menace of terrorism by use of central forces. In order to allow the central forces to deal with terrorism the central government in India floated the concept of 'National Counter Terrorism Centre'. The national Counter Terrorism Centre will be a centralized agency to coordinate the collective response to terrorist activities at the central level.

Terrorism brutality is grilling India hot for last twenty years and yet there is no unanimity among our politicians on how to handle and manage the problem of terrorism. As against this after the 9/11 terrorist attack in America, there has not been a single brutal terrorist attack. Credit for this goes to the concrete steps America has taken to combat terrorism. Immediately after 9/11, America passed most ambitious 'Homeland Security Act' and later in 2005, National Intelligence Act to determine the scope of Secret Service. America began its War on Terror by administering number of Military Operations on Afghanistan to end the Taliban regime and to make surrender or kill Osama Bin Laden. This definitely helped America to protect itself from further Terrorist Attacks. India lacks the political willpower to develop any strategic planning or to pass a National Security Act, in order to control and stop the consistent terrorist attacks. In absence of such effective legislation, terrorists move freely in India and do whatever they want and in whichever way they can. Whenever we have a terrorist operation in India, first (and only) situation we experience is the charges and countercharges, recriminations, and abdication of responsibilities of the Central and State Governments, central and State Secret Service Agencies, and Central and State Home Ministry. Meanwhile, another terrorist attack occurs.

After the terrorist attack of 2008, in Mumbai the then Home Minister P. Chidambaram announced the four point strategy to fight terrorism in future. These are four policies –

1. Developing NATGRID (National Intelligence Grid)
2. Reforms in Unlawful activities Prevention Act.
3. Modernization of Police department.

4. Establishment of NCTC, National Counter Terrorism Centre. However there has not been a complete activation of these four points in the proposed strategy.

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