

TERRORISM: Definition - Comprehending Individual, Group and State Terrorism Underlying Causes. History and Present Situation.

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Acts perpetrated to terrorise people evoke reactions of indignation and are widely condemned. The phenomenon of terrorism is one of the most perplexing problems confronting the international community today. Yet there is no agreement on the definition of "terrorism". Terrorism is complex and has numerous forms therefore it has not been possible to evolve a universally acceptable definition. Whosoever makes an effort to define terrorism depends on his own subjective judgement. If I call my opponent a "terrorist" irrespective of the fact that he is a "freedom fighter", then I am imposing my own meanings on the word rather than providing an objective definition of terrorism. The appropriate definition must be the one on which there is agreement between both the adherents of terrorism and those who abhor it.

Most of us agree that terrorism is a violent method of expressing opposition and offering resistance to an undesirable situation or state of affairs. It is the threatened or actual use of force or violence for a cause, which may be political, social, economic, ethnic or religious. Thus it is employed as a means to an end. It is a special mode of violence which may be considered as coercive intimidation. Terrorism is an act of political criminality, yet it is different from ordinary crime which is usually motivated by private interests. State terrorism or violence by the government in power may transform victims into terrorists. For instance, Zionist terrorist groups - the Stern and Irgun - were in fact comprised of immigrants from anti-Semitic Germany and Eastern Europe. Similarly the Shi'ites who hijacked the TWA aircraft were refugees in Beirut from Israel's bombings and invasions of Southern Lebanon.

Terrorism may seek to combat injustice and oppression of one form or another, particularly when all legal and political means have failed and there exists a danger to the very survival of a people. Probably this is the reason why some eminent philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon believe that terrorism is a phenomenon which is liberative. According to Sartre it is the key to freedom. In the words of Fanon, when a people take violent part in the national liberation they do not allow anyone to set themselves up as liberators. While explaining the distinction between common violence and terrorism, Yasser Arafat said in an interview::

"The difference is the same as between

legitimate armed resistance and wanton acts of destruction. We are opposed to terrorism because we are the victims of terrorism. Any armed resistance can be condemned as terrorist activity. This is how we are seen by the Western/American/Israeli mass media. But there is a fundamental difference between terrorism and armed resistance. It is the right of the people of any nation facing opposition, occupation and racism to offer resistance by all means. The United Nations Charter gives them this right." (South. Jan. 1986 p. 15)

It is evident that there are basically two different mental approaches towards terrorism. The Western point of view generally is that terrorism in all forms must be condemned, whether it is motivated by purely criminal intent, or is the result of a pathological condition, or is in the form of legitimate resistance, or struggle for national liberation. Therefore according to this view point, reprisals over terrorist activity must be condoned.

The third world also condemns terrorism. But its attitude, particularly towards anti-West terrorism, takes into consideration the liberation struggles of the peoples of Palestine and South Africa, and therefore, lays emphasis on the removal of the causes of terrorist activity, condemning instead the retaliatory reprisals, such as Israel's bombings of Palestinian bases, or South Africa's raids against three African Front Line States, or the United States' action against Libya, as State terrorism. There are many instances of the disappearance of terrorist activity when the root cause of the same has been removed. Examples can be cited of Jewish terrorism against the Palestine Mandate, the EOKA terrorist campaign in Cyprus or the Algerian FLN terrorism.

Terrorist activity may be initiated by an individual or a group. It may be controlled by an organization or by a state for carrying on such activity outside that state. Broadly speaking, terrorism has been divided by experts into four specific categories:-

- (i) National or Domestic Terrorism; (ii) International Terrorism; .
- (iii) Transnational Terrorism; and (iv) State Terrorism.

National or Domestic Terrorism is terrorist activity of nationals of the same state, perpetrated either by individuals or an organized group. Its targets usually are the established regime, or eminent personalities, or a specific class of the population, or mere innocents, or representative objects.

International Terrorism involves more than one state. For instance, where an individual or a group controlled by a state carries on terrorist activity outside that state, or in another specific state. Again co-operation between groups of terrorists of different nationalities in a terrorist venture may be described as International Terrorism.

Transnational Terrorism is terrorist activity in the international arena not necessarily controlled by a state, but when the victims are of 4 nationality different than that of the terrorist or when terrorist activity takes place on a third party's territory.

State Terrorism is directed by those who command power in a state and is carried out by state organs against a faction of its own population or against the population of an occupied state. The object is to terrorize the people to compel their obedience to the regime. Any action taken by a stronger state against a weaker state or states under the pretext of retaliatory reprisals for perpetrating terrorist activity also falls in the category of State Terrorism.

The many-sidedness of terrorism is generally acknowledged. It has already been stated that the groups which mount terrorist attacks usually do so in support of some specific cause. The causes may include protests against colonial oppression, or racial discrimination, resistance to an alien rule, efforts to change the socio-political status quo, to bring about a world-wide revolution, or to realize a spiritual ideal. Some experts have identified the causes in the following order:

- (i) Movements of national liberation;
- (ii) Ethnic separatist movements seeking independence from an incumbent power;
- (iii) Ideologically extremist groups;
- (iv) Issue-oriented interest groups wanting to effect changes in the existing political regime; and
- (v) Sociopathic or psychopathic individuals or groups who resort to terrorism in the name of some political end.

Every member state of the international community may have been afflicted by terrorism in its history. Primitive or medieval terrorism was usually regional or domestic. In the early republican period of Islamic history (i.e., 632 to 661 A.D.), three out of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs were assassinated. Thereafter in the seventh and eighth centuries the Khawarijite terrorism, which was directed against the established political

regime, was ruthlessly suppressed by state terrorism of the Umayyads. Again in the thirteenth century, before the collapse of the Abbasids, many important political personalities were kidnapped or struck down by the terrorist fraternity of the Assassins, and men of eminence fled from place to place seeking personal safety,

In the West, the history of terrorism is traced from the French Revolution and particularly from 1878 in Russia when Narodnaya Volya (The People's Will) was founded. The object of this terrorist group was to disrupt and ultimately to overthrow the Tsarist regime, and it selected as its targets the very symbols of Russian authority i.e., the Tsar himself, his family members and high officials of his government. During the decade that followed bombings, assassinations and kidnappings became the order of the day in Russia.

In 1937, as a result of the assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia, the League of Nations adopted a Convention for the prevention and punishment of terrorism. It took serious note of attacks on heads of state as well as acts calculated to endanger the lives of the members of the public. But due to the out-break of the Second World War, the Convention never came into effect.

Modern terrorism with its international and transnational dimensions actually manifested itself after the end of the Second World War, and is a refinement of the well recognized age-old tactics, except that the contemporary terrorist is conscious of the advantages and vulnerabilities of recent technological advances. Thus so far as weapons, **mobility**, **tactical** communications and targets are concerned, the impact of technology on terrorist capabilities has contributed to the proliferation of terrorism.

A series of unassociated global political developments are considered to have been responsible for the current wave of terrorism. Among these political developments are included radical student movements of the 1960s in the universities of the United States, Western Europe, Japan, Latin America and the Middle East as an aftermath of the war in Vietnam; the rural insurgency movements in a number of Latin American countries transforming themselves into urban guerrilla warfare; the war-punctuated regional conflicts involving a number of nation-states; the 1969-70 decision of some Palestinian factions to expand the sphere of their liberation struggle outside Israel; the violent movement of the Southern Africans against the policy of racial discrimination (Apartheid) of the Pretoria regime; the Israeli attack on Lebanon; the Iranian Revolution; and the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet armies.

The international community has been making efforts to evolve effective methods for the prevention and punishment of terrorism as there is a general consensus on the need to check terrorism. So far these efforts have led to the adoption of such Conventions as the Tokyo Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft of 1963; the Hague Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft of 1970; the Montreal Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation of 1971; the New York Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons including Diplomatic Agents of 1973, and the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages of 1979.

The United Nations General Assembly appointed an Ad-Hoc Committee in 1972 to study the question of international terrorism and to recommend practical measures of co-operation for the speedy elimination of the problem. The salient recommendations which were subsequently adopted by the General Assembly were:

- a. Unequivocal condemnation of all act of international terrorism;
- b. All states as well as the relevant United Nations organs to contribute to the progressive elimination of the causes underlying terrorism;

All states to refrain from participating in terrorist acts in another state;

- d. Appropriate measures to be taken such as the harmonization of domestic legislation with international

Conventions with a view to the elimination of the problem of terrorism; and

e. All states to cooperate through the exchange of relevant information concerning prevention of terrorism, and to incorporate, into appropriate bilateral treaties, special clauses respecting extradition or prosecution of international terrorists.

At its 40th Session the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus 'Resolution No. L-0161 on measures to prevent international terrorism which, inter alia, unequivocally condemned as criminal, all acts, methods and practices of terrorism where-ever and by whomsoever committed, including those which jeopardize friendly relations among states and their security. The General Assembly also urged all states to contribute to the progressive elimination of the causes underlying terrorism and to pay special attention to all situations, including colonialism, racism and situations involving mass and flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and those involving alien occupation, that may give rise to international terrorism and endanger international peace and security.

So far as Pakistan is concerned, it has been a victim of all varieties of terrorism domestic, international as well as trans-national.

It has been subjected to acts of hijacking by its own nationals and has also had to cope with Sikh terrorist hijacking acts. The killing of an Iraqi diplomat in his car, the bombings of Saudi and other airlines offices, and the Pan-Am hijacking in September 1986, indicate how vulnerable Pakistan is to terrorist activity. Furthermore, the acts of sabotage and terrorist subversion inspired West Frontier Province and the other Provinces of Pakistan are increasing every day, and have created a very alarming situation indeed. Pakistan is a party to the Tokyo, Hague, Montreal, New York and other international Conventions against Terrorism and has always supported the United Nations resolutions regarding the prevention of international terrorism. In the regional arena, as a member of SAARC, Pakistan was party to the Summit decision taken at Dhaka in December 1985 to set up a Study-Group to examine the problem of terrorism as it affected the security and stability of member states of SAARC. It directed the Council of Ministers to consider the Report of the Study Group and submit recommendations as to how best the member states could cooperate among themselves on this issue. The Study Group met in Dhaka in June 1986 and recommended several measures to combat terrorism. The Council of Ministers in its last meeting at Dhaka approved the recommendations of the Study Group and decided that another Group of Experts be convened to consider measures necessary for their implementation. Thus a Group of Experts met at Dhaka in September 1986 and agreed that the member states should seek to coordinate their policies in order to ensure fulfilment of their obligations under the relevant international Conventions.

Thus Pakistan fully shares the concern of the international community on the alarming increase in acts of terrorism. It condemns terrorist activities whether perpetrated by individuals, groups or states resulting in violence against innocents, and favours concerted action at the international level to prevent terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. While taking measures to prevent acts of terrorism on its own territory, it has always tried to fulfil its obligations under the aforementioned international conventions to which it is a party.

However, Pakistan has always taken a consistent stand that it is necessary to remove the underlying causes of terrorism, and that its support for anti-terrorist measures, does not in any sense imply a disavowal of the right of people to self-determination and liberation struggles against alien and colonial domination or foreign occupation as well as war against racism. Furthermore, it has firmly

held that the fight against terrorism must not held transgress the principles of non-interference and non-intervention as well as of the use or threat of use of force in international relations. Therefore, Pakistan did not approve of the United States' action against Libya and likewise condemned Pretoria's attack on Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana.

Today the international community is divided by political differences, sectional interests and controversies which obstruct solution of the problem of terrorism. The West is not willing to accept the distinction between terrorist and national liberation groups, and the Third World insists that attention must be focussed on the removal of the causes of terrorism. The result is that the United Nations which has been trying, for a number of years, to arrive at a satisfactory definition of "terrorism". has not met with any success so far. The International Conventions already signed in this connection are applicable only to restricted areas of the problem and are hence of doubtful utility.

It is therefore evident that groups such as the African National Congress fighters against illeral racist policies of Pretoria are adjudged as anti-apartheid terrorists, the Palestinians' struggle for a national homeland and self-determination is regarded as PLC terrorism, and the Afghan guerrilla war for the liberation of their country is considered as terrorist activity of mercenaries, there is no possibility of arriving at any agreement for even a partial solution of the problem at the international level in the foreseeable future.

Although it may not be possible to completely eliminate the phenomenon of terrorism yet it certainly can be contained. If the United Nations has failed to arrive at a workable agreement on the problem, then the answer may lie in exploring the possibilities of arriving at regional agreements or agreements restricted to specific areas of the problem. In this regard the examples of Agreement, of Organisation of American States in 1971 and of the Council of Europe in 1977 may be cited. Even the OAS states are trying to reach such an agreement as the need for regional cooperation against terrorism in South Asia has been generally acknowledged by all of them. The Organization of African Unity and particularly the 8th Non-Aligned Summit Conference held at Harare in September, 1986 have referred to yet another dimension of terrorism and felt the necessity of arriving at an agreement against the recruitment, use, financing, and training of mercenaries whose activities have prejudiced the peace, sovereignty and stability of some of the African states.

It is indeed understandable that such agreements may not contain enforcement clause for breaches by signatories and therefore, in view of the hard fact that in an hour of crisis nations will usually put national self-interest before their international treaty obligations, there is no certainty that these agreements will be followed at the time of such a cruel test. However, attempts in this direction must be continuously made so that reasonably powerful agreements of this nature could be arrived at in due course.

The Organization of Islamic Conference has so far concentrated its attention on emphasizing the need of solidarity among Muslim states. But taking a serious note of the multi-dimensional problem of terrorism, a resolution was adopted at the 5th Islamic Summit Conference held at Kuwait in January 1987 to the effect that in view of the absence of specific internationally agreed criteria to enable the world community to clearly distinguish between terrorism and national struggle, an international conference sponsored by the United Nations be convened to examine the question and to establish the difference between terrorism and the liberation struggle of peoples. The United Nations may convene such an international conference, but in the meantime, at the regional level, the OIC states can consider taking effective practical measures to prevent and combat terrorism. These measures may include cooperation of the member states on bilateral or multilateral basis:

- (i) In the exchange of information regarding terrorists and suspects;
- (ii) In strengthening the security and administrative machinery for curbing terrorism;
- (iii) In consulting one another on how to improve existing protective measures against possible terrorist action;
- (iv) In training in the field of antiterrorist techniques;
- (v) In organizing seminars or workshops on negotiating tactics with terrorists in a situation of crisis; and

(vi) In evolving a common policy on how to react to terrorist demands.