



## INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES IN COMBATING TERRORISM AND THE ROLE OF INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

The United Nations ('UN') and its specialized agencies have for several decades been active in developing a wide range of international legal instruments to suppress terrorist activities and bring the perpetrators to justice. However, terrorist acts continue to take place regularly globally, taking a high toll of innocent lives. Although several international and regional conventions on the subject have been adopted, the legal regime still needs to be completed, since some means of terrorist attacks, such as those used in Nice in 2016, are not directly covered under any of the existing conventions. The present paper exclusively deals with the global initiatives in combating terrorism and the role of India.

**KEYWORDS :** International Initiatives, Terrorism, India, United Nations.

### INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The assassination of King Alexander I of Yugoslavia and the French Foreign Minister, Louis Barthou, in 1934, led to the adoption by the League of Nations of two important conventions in 1937: the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism, and the Convention for the Creation of an International Criminal Court. Although they never entered into force, the former instrument is significant in that it defined 'terrorism', something which remains controversial to this day, as "all criminal acts directed against a State and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons or a group of persons or the general public". This formulation could be viewed as a precursor to the formulations found in more recent instruments.

It is also significant that it was possible at the time to adopt an accompanying Convention for the establishment of an International Criminal Court with jurisdiction to try terrorist crimes. This stands in stark contrast to the lack of agreement to include terrorist crimes among the "most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole" within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court at the 1998 Rome Conference.

These factors are important in placing the current initiatives on countering terrorism in a proper historical perspective.

### THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Efforts at the UN in the 1970s to adopt a comprehensive treaty banning terrorism could not reach any conclusion as they got bogged down in the debate about the underlying causes of terrorism and efforts to distinguish acts undertaken in the 'struggle for national liberation'. In September 1972, the UN Secretary-General ('UNSG') requested the General Assembly ('UNGA') to include in its 1972 session an additional agenda item, having in mind the increasing incidence of acts of violence directed at national leaders, diplomatic envoys, international passengers and other innocent civilians, which had created a ubiquitous climate of fear. The UNGA adopted the item (with an amended title) and referred it to the Sixth Committee.

A study prepared by the Secretariat concluded that the origins and underlying causes of terrorism were complex and varied, but that many of them lay in international political or social situations which the UN was founded to improve. Following consultations, the Chairman of the Sixth Committee reported that in his view the most difficult question remained that of

definition: all Members were in principle prepared to condemn international terrorism, but it appeared impossible to do this without identifying the phenomenon more precisely, and while there was no objection to the idea that the UN should continue to deal with the problem of international terrorism by pursuing an investigation of its causes and of appropriate counter-measures, opinion differed on the precise course to be followed and whether the two aspects of the problem – causes and measures, could be separated.

### THE SECTORAL CONVENTIONS

Nevertheless, beginning in the 1960s, international efforts by the UN and its specialized agencies, in particular the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Maritime Organization, and the International Atomic Energy Agency, led to the development of ten conventions and protocols which are referred to as the 'sectoral conventions and protocols', dealing with specific acts or offences in their special area or field of application.

Due to the futile efforts to elaborate a common legal definition of terrorism, these instruments generally prohibited specific terrorist acts that States Parties were required to criminalize under their national laws, without however using the terms 'terrorist' or 'terrorism', thereby avoiding or side-stepping the problem of definition. Further, most of the instruments (as well as amendments or additions thereto) were introduced only after a number of incidents in the world, and could be considered as a response to plug the legal gaps they exposed.

### RECENT CONVENTIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

UNGA resolution 51/210 (1996) established an Ad Hoc Committee to elaborate an international convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings and, subsequently, an international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism, to supplement related existing international instruments, and thereafter to address means of further developing a comprehensive legal framework of conventions dealing with international terrorism.

During the next decade, Member States completed work on three more counter-terrorism instruments covering specific types of terrorist activities: the 1997 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, and the 2005 International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. Unlike the earlier

Conventions, these 'new generation conventions' expressly characterise the offences as 'non-political', and neither a request for extradition nor one for rendering mutual assistance could be refused solely on such ground.

## PILLARS OF UN GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY



The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy on 8 September 2006. The strategy is a unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism.

### 4 PILLARS

The General Assembly reviews the Strategy every two years, making it a living document attuned to Member States' counter-terrorism priorities. The fourth review of the Strategy took place in June 2014 (A/RES/68/276) and was preceded by a report from the United Nations Secretary-General (A/68/841) that included an overview of the evolving terrorism landscape, recommendations to address challenges and threats, and a compilation of measures taken by Member States and United Nations entities to fight against terrorism. The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the form of a resolution and an annexed Plan of Action (A/RES/60/288) composed of 4 pillars

1. Addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism
2. Measures to prevent and combat terrorism
3. Measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard;
4. Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

Following is the full text of the Resolution and the Plan of Action:

- Plan of Action
- Measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism
- Measures to prevent and combat terrorism
- Measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard
- Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism

## THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY

The General Assembly, Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and reaffirming its role under the Charter, including on questions related to international peace and security, Reiterating its strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes, as it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, Reaffirming the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 49/60 of 9 December 1994, the Declaration to Supplement the 1994 Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 51/210

of 17 December 1996, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in particular its section on terrorism,

Affirming Member States' determination to continue to do all they can to resolve conflict, end foreign occupation, confront oppression, eradicate poverty, promote sustained economic growth, sustainable development, global prosperity, good governance, human rights for all and rule of law, improve intercultural understanding and ensure respect for all religions, religious values, beliefs or cultures,

1. Expresses its appreciation for the report "Uniting against terrorism: recommendations for a global counter-terrorism strategy" (doc. A/60/825), submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly;
2. Adopts the present resolution and its annex as the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy ("the Strategy");
3. Decides, without prejudice to the continuation of the discussion at its relevant committees of all their agenda items related to terrorism and counter-terrorism, to undertake the following steps for the effective follow-up of the Strategy:
  - a. To launch the Strategy at a high-level segment of its sixty-first session; To examine in two years progress made in implementation of the Strategy, and to consider updating it to respond to changes, recognizing that many of the measures contained in the Strategy can be achieved immediately, some will require sustained work through the coming few years, and some should be treated as long term objectives;
  - b. To invite the Secretary-General to contribute to the future deliberations of the General Assembly on the review of the implementation and updating of the Strategy;
  - c. To encourage Member States, the United Nations and other appropriate international, regional and sub-regional organizations to support the implementation of the Strategy, including through mobilizing resources and expertise;
  - d. To further encourage non-governmental organizations and civil society to engage, as appropriate, on how to enhance efforts to implement the Strategy.
4. Decides to inscribe in the provisional agenda of its sixty-second session an item entitled "The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy".

## INDO-U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM COOPERATION BEFORE 9/11

India and the United States have both been facing the problem of terrorism and both countries have been cooperating on counterterrorism for years. The first Indo-U.S. conversation on the issue of combating international terrorism started under the U.S. President Ronald Reagan's administration during the Cold War era. Initially, U.S.

assistance in capacity building was provided through aviation security aimed at preventing hijacking. This has since expanded to cover other areas, such as the forensic examination of explosive devices (Raman, 2010). Though Washington had taken a few steps to assist India with the Sikh insurgency in the 1980s, more U.S. support was provided on issues of counterterrorism in the mid-1990s. The United States started facing Islamic terrorist threats soon after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and these threats manifested in the form of U.S. nationals being targeted by these groups. Among such attacks were: the bombings of the World Trade Center in 1993, the bombing of the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and the bombing attack on the USS Cole in 2000.

A series of dialogues between the officials of the two countries were held after the kidnapping of six western tourists in

Kashmir in 1995. But the first instance of Indo-U.S. counterterrorism cooperation was seen in 1996 when the United States banned the fundraising activities of Sikh terrorist organizations that were operating in the United States. The general perception of counterterrorism analysts at the time was that the full potential of bilateral cooperation on Sikh terrorism could not be realized due to the political influence of the Sikh community in the United States (Nayak, 2010).

In 1997, the two countries signed a landmark U.S.-India extradition treaty, which led to the U.S. extradition of Sikh militants wanted in India. Since then counterterrorism cooperation has evolved as an important aspect of Indo-U.S. bilateral ties. However, both countries came closer after the hijacking of Indian Airline Flight 814 on 24 December 1999. In the aftermath of the incident, a Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism was established in January 2000 that was aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts worldwide. The first meeting of the Joint Working Group was held in February 2000 followed by a meeting between the U.S. Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott and the Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh in London.

The Indian government agreed to the U.S. offer of anti-terrorism assistance programs. They agreed that the Joint Working Group should continue to meet regularly and become an effective mechanism through which both sides could share experiences, exchange vital information, and intensify their cooperation in combating terrorism. In the light of above discussion, it is clear that both India and the United States have a mutual interest in strengthening a regime aimed at countering international terrorism. Such a convergence of interests provided an ideal platform for a rich, enhanced cooperation between the two countries (Pillai, 2000). The Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism provides a multi-disciplinary approach to counterterrorism cooperation and reviews the progress of the cooperation periodically.

#### **INDO-U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM COOPERATION AFTER 9/11**

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Center changed the definition and manner in which the world viewed terrorism. Soon after 9/11, the U.S. security setup changed and Afghanistan and Iraq were pounded by U.S. soldiers. Following the 9/11 attacks India offered substantial support to the U.S. through the course of their counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan. For the first time in history the Indian Army offered its military base to the United States. The military base was not allowed even to the USSR, which was considered a close Indian ally during cold war (Ashley, 2005). Before the commencement of the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), India provided satellite imagery of Afghanistan to the United States. Furthermore, the Indian Navy also contributed by escorting vessels carrying cargo for military operations through the Strait of Malacca and the Andaman Sea.

At the diplomatic level, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited the United States to reaffirm India's support on counterterrorism cooperation. This visit paved the way for deeper intelligence sharing between the two countries, with New Delhi providing much more strategic assistance pertaining to the Indian Ocean and South Asian regions. During the visit leaders of both countries issued a number of policy statements jointly on the scope of counterterrorism cooperation. Both the leaders highlighted a joint statement on 9 November 2001 (U.S. Department of State, 2001). The statement remarked that, September 11, the people of the United States and India have been united as never before in the fight against terrorism. . . . They noted that both countries are targets of terrorism, as seen in the barbaric attacks on

September 11 in the United States and on October 1 in Kashmir. They agreed that terrorism threatens not only the security of the United States and India, but also our efforts to build freedom, democracy and international security and stability around the world. As leaders of the two largest multicultural democracies, they emphasized that those who equate terrorism with any religion are as wrong as those who invoke religion to commit, support or justify terrorist acts.

President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee agreed that success in this endeavor would depend heavily on building international cooperation and securing the unambiguous commitment of all nations to share information and intelligence on terrorists and deny them support, sustenance and safe havens. The two leaders agreed to consult regularly on the future of Afghanistan. They welcomed the measures outlined in the UNSCR 1373 and called on all nations to ratify and implement existing UN Conventions on counter-terrorism. They expressed support for India's draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and urged the resolution of outstanding issues to enable its adoption by the UNGA.

Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Bush agreed that developments in Afghanistan have a direct impact on its entire neighborhood. They emphasized that the Taliban and the Al-Qaida network have turned Afghanistan into a center of terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking and have brought immense suffering to the Afghan people. They agreed that a peaceful, progressive, and prosperous Afghanistan requires a broad-based government, representing all ethnic and religious groups, friendly with all countries in the neighborhood and beyond, as well as sizeable and sustained international assistance for Afghanistan's economic reconstruction and development. The two leaders committed themselves to work together, and in partnership with other countries and international organizations, to achieve these goals.

Another high-level visit was made by Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani and Defense Minister George Fernandes in January 2002, which was followed by the meeting between Foreign Minister Jaswant Sinha and U.S. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. The U.S. secretaries of state and defense, along with the other top U.S. officials, made visits to New Delhi in 2002. Numerous high-level exchanges took place in 2003 (Kronstadt, 2003).

The first meeting of the U.S.-India Cyber Security Forum recognized the increasing interdependency between India and the United States in the information technology arena. Cooperation between the United States and India is of growing importance as U.S.

government and corporations utilize information technology companies in India at a rate of about \$9 billion annually (Embassy of India, Washington, DC, 2004).

During the second meeting of the U.S.-India Cyber Security Forum, both government and industry representatives from each country convened to identify areas for collaboration in combating cyber-crime, cyber security research and development, information assurance and defense cooperation, standards and software assurance, and cyber incident management and response (U.S. Department of State, 2004). During the meeting underlining the importance of this proposal in counterterrorism cooperation, a press statement issued in November 2004, at the end of the second meeting of the forum, said:

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman emphasized that the U.S.-India Cyber Security Forum "holds great promise for future cooperation." The Indian Head of Delegation, National Security Council Secretariat Joint

Secretary Arvind Gupta, delivering a statement to the Forum on behalf of J.N. Dixit, India's National Security Advisor, said that "Securing cyberspace will remain one of the biggest challenges facing the international community for years to come and this Cyber Security Forum has emerged as an important bilateral mechanism to address such issues" (Ibid). In September 2016, both the countries held the fifth U.S.-India Cyber Dialogue in New Delhi and discussion revolved around ways to increase bilateral cooperation on a wide range of cyber issues and strengthening the U.S.-India strategic partnership by (as the document states):

- Exchanging information on cyber threats and issues of mutual concern, and discussing possible cooperative measures;
- Promoting bilateral cooperation on law enforcement and cybercrime issues;
- Creating a mechanism for cooperation, including setting up appropriate sub-groups;
- Affirming common objectives in international cyber fora, especially the application of international law to state behavior in cyberspace, the affirmation of norms of responsible state behavior, and the development of practical confidence-building measures;
- Confirming support for the preservation of openness and interoperability, enhanced by the multi-stakeholder system of Internet governance; and, Confirming support for the preservation of openness and interoperability, enhanced by the multi-stakeholder system of Internet governance; and, Coordinating cyber capacity-building efforts, including testing and standards with respect to cyber security (U.S. Embassy and Consulates in India, 2016).

A breakthrough development on counterterrorism cooperation occurred in 2016 during the prime minister's second visit to the United States. Through a joint statement, both the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation against terrorist threats from extremist groups, such as Al-Qaeda, Daesh/ISIS, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, D Company and their affiliates. They intended to do so through deepened collaboration on UN terrorist designations. Further, they directed their officials to identify specific new areas of collaboration at the next meeting of the U.S.-India Counterterrorism Joint Working Group (Government of India, 2016). The leaders also applauded the finalization of an arrangement aimed at facilitating the sharing of terrorist screening information. They also called for Pakistan to bring the perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai and 2016 Pathankot terrorist attacks to justice (ibid). India appreciated the U.S. designation of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen leader Syed Salahuddin as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. This act was seen as evidence of U.S. commitment towards ending terror in all its forms. In this spirit, the leaders welcomed a new consultation mechanism on domestic and international terrorist designation listing proposals (Ministry of External Affairs, 2017).

The new Trump Administration in the United States seemed unclear on how it would engage with India on certain issues. But in a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February 2017, President Trump referred to India as "a true friend and partner in addressing challenges around the world." In March, the Indian National Security Advisor Ajit K. Doval visited the United States, met U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis, Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly, and the National Security H. R. McMaster. The main agenda of the meeting was the "expansion and deepening of India-U.S. cooperation in collectively addressing the challenge posed by terrorism in South Asia." Both sides also discussed a wide range of regional security issues including maritime security and counterterrorism. The leaders also reiterated their

commitment to working together as partners to "combat the full spectrum" of terrorist threats, affirming that both great democracies would stand together in the fight against terrorism (Indian Express, 2017).

The first face-to-face meeting held between President Trump and Prime Minister Modi took place in June 2017. The meeting was dubbed as a success because the United States affirmed India's role as a crucial and natural partner over collateral issues of counterterrorism, regional security and international peace. Prime Minister Modi said that the challenges arising out of terrorism such as extremism and radicalization should be tackled with utmost priority. Both leaders also emphasized the need for destroying the safe havens of terrorists (Hindustan Times, 2017). In this spirit, the leaders welcomed a new consultation mechanism on domestic and international terrorist designations listing proposals. They further called on Pakistan to expeditiously bring the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai, Pathankot, and other cross-border terrorist attacks to justice. These attacks were perpetrated by Pakistan-based groups and swift action was recommended to counter the growing specter of radicalization. The leaders also announced increased cooperation aimed at preventing terrorist travel and disrupting global recruitment efforts by expanding intelligence sharing and operational-level counterterrorism cooperation (Ministry of External Affairs, 2017). They welcomed the commencement of the exchange of information on known and suspected terrorists for travel screening. They further resolved to strengthen information exchange on plans, movements and linkages of terrorist groups and their leaders, as well as on the raising and moving of funds by terror groups. An important step was taken in the form of affirming support to the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism that will advance and strengthen the framework for global cooperation and reinforce the message that no cause or grievance justifies terrorism. They also pledged to work together towards preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and towards denying access to such weapons by terrorists and non-state actors (ibid).

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between India and the United States has been transformed into a global strategic partnership based on shared democratic values. The region of South Asia has been vital to U.S. interests in the 21st century. Thus India, a dominant regional actor, could not be ignored by U.S. foreign policy makers. With growing economy and manpower, India has been characterized as a nascent and natural partner of the United States. In the wake of emerging trends in global terrorism it is in the interest of regional and global security that both India and the United States should make efforts towards immunizing the menace of terror. Though India has long been victimized by terrorism, it was only after the 9/11 attack on U.S. soil that the former's plea was acknowledged at the global level. The attack on the World Trade Center changed the manner in which terrorism was viewed by the international community. In the aftermath of this attack India showed its sincere support to the war on terrorism. Since then both countries have developed close ties on counterterrorism cooperation. After the 26/11 Mumbai attack, the United States expressed congressional desire to improve coordination between the two countries to combat terrorism and advance international security.

Although India is socially, politically and economically better than Pakistan and had made remarkable progress in all spheres as compared to Pakistan, but there remains a stigma and chances of reconciliation in all regards with its neighboring country. India and Pakistan share borders, share history, share the heritage, share the sky to say it poetically, so there need to be congenial relationship between two countries



and it is not always wise to hurl abuse at the neighbor, it needs to be met with revulsion by all intellectual and learned citizens of these countries who can motivate the state actors to open hands for a peaceful and democratic relationship between the two nations. The media of both countries can play an effective role by objectively presenting the news and not playing with and lighting the people's emotions. Even the educational ties, trade ties, and cultural exchange programs between India and Pakistan might be established and such an environment might ultimately solve the problem of terrorism among the two nations.

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