



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Political Science**

**THE THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF TERRORISM**

**KEY WORDS:** definition of terrorism, problem, significance and forms.

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**ABSTRACT**

Much time and effort have been used to define terrorism. We have till now been unable to reach a consensus on the definition of terrorism. The definition of terrorism has given rise to overabundance of argument on what terrorism entails, hence there is no commonly acceptable definition of terrorism. There are several international conventions that define war crimes, but there is no internationally accepted definition of terrorism. There is not a single international convention that actually condemns terrorism. There have been genuine difficulties on an agreement as to what constitutes terrorism. It is an important and an unresolved issue that requires immediate attention. After all what do we mean when we speak of terror? An absence of a definition could lead to confusion and ambiguity. This article addresses the question: what is terrorism and how can it be defined? A universally acceptable definition of terrorism is still in limbo, however, an objective and subjective definition of terrorism is tentative. Therefore, there is need for an inner subjective understanding of what constitutes terrorism.

**INTRODUCTION**

Terrorism is neither new nor a recent phenomenon in human civilization. However, the French Revolutionary Governments first coined the word terrorism by who instituted systematic state terror against the population of French in the 1790s, killing thousands of people. In the last decade of 20th Century, the phenomenon of terrorism continued to occur in the world more prominently after the end of cold war. The incidents of September 11 and July 7 are the height of terrorist acts. It shaped the world in the new directions. Terror, terrorists, and terrorism are the burning issues of the media. In present time, the world is confronting terrorism in different manifestations. After 9/11, the phenomenon of terrorism has drastically changed the socio-economic and geo-political scenario of the world. It has shaken the social fabric and world peace. Terrorism is the result of extremism, which results in different forms of manifestation of violence. The ultimate sufferers of the terrorism are the innocent masses who have actually nothing to do with the complicated new world order. Terrorism is a tree and extremism provides balance food to grow the tree properly. Different accused groups allegedly involved in terrorism are the branches of this tree. Terrorism is the social evil and problem of today. It is the materialization of the violence, which has been an integral part of human history. The phenomenon of the terrorism has occurred due to socioeconomic injustice, political disparity and quest of selfish individuals and groups to retain the power for their vested interests. No doubt, terrorism upsets humanity overall and Creates unrest in the society.

**Defining the Problem: Terrorism**

The issue of terrorism has not been new to India for sometimes new. Some outfits in the North East first adopted terrorist methods in response to the Indian State's effort to integrate the region into the national mainstream. But the problem took serious proportion with the emergence of Sikh militancy in the early 1980s. The demand for Khalistan by some Sikh terrorist organizations shock the might of the Indian state. It was the first real challenge to the integrity of the Indian state. It turned worst as it was supported by Pakistan. The Sikh militants were trained and financed by Pakistan. The acts of terrorism carried out by them resulted in loss of huge number of innocent lives. As things went out of control, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister had to order the launch of "Operation Bluestar" to flash art the terrorists hold up inside the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The operation could not suppress the terrorists but gave it a new direction. Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated in one of the most shocking acts of terrorism. It led to the infamous anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and different parts of India in which large number of Sikh people were man cared. Sikh terrorists resorted to revenge killings. A number of important leaders were killed by them in addition

to the large number of innocent people who were killed in the bomb blasts. It took almost 15 years for the Indian state to finally control the Sikh militants. Sikh militancy is not the only episode of terrorist affecting. In fact India has paid very heavily due to this. Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by LTTE is one of the most meticulously planned act of terrorism. Apart from there a number of areas where the country is fighting acts of terrorism for a many years now. The whole of north east is hot bed of terrorist ULFA, Bodoland, MNF, TUJS and a many other outfits have refused to be part of the national mainstream and have aged war against the Indian State through terrorist means. But the most potent danger to the Indian State is the issue of Kashmiri terrorism. Though the State of Jammu & Kashmir acceded to India 1948 the merger has been refuted by Pakistan and it has tried to keep the issue alive by all possible means. The situation went out of control after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as it gave birth to a new Jihadi culture filled by foreign money and arms. It gave a new fillip to the liberation movement in Kashmir. Militant outfits were born in Kashmir valley as well as in the occupied Part of Kashmir in Pakistan. There outfits were trained in arms and indoctrinated by Pakistan's ISI and the Army. As a result India is now fighting not only against the terrorists but also a proxy war against Pakistan.

**Significance**

Terrorism is a menace that affects many countries in the world-developed, underdeveloped and developing countries alike. It has over a period, grown in proportion and magnitude from being an act which involved violence. It has grown into massive destructive activities resembling war like situation and having internal ramification. The last two decades witnessed unbridled growth and consolidation of international terrorism. People of different nationalities living in different state subscribing common ideology getting financial support through multinational networks caused the growth of international terrorism. Growth of Islamic fundamentalism mainly belongs to this type. The period also witnessed the growth of Cross border terrorism which seriously threatened to undermine the concept of State sovereignty. Groups like the Maoist in Nepal, IRA in UK, LTTE in Srilanka separate groups in J & K and North East India. Consistently try to disrupt the Political and economic processes and also try to undermine state sovereignty.

Today International Terrorism is a global challenge which is confronted by every nation. No nation can claim that terrorism is not its problem. Due to the uncontrolled growth of internet and electronic media also due the easy transfer of financial resources from part of the globe to another, international terrorism has flourished. Moreover the internet and electronic media have acted as a catalyst to propagate the ill

ideologies of the terrorists. Also availability of technology that can cause massive destruction has taken International Terrorism to new height. Today terrorists of one country are trained in another country being financed by coming for a third country and arms and ammunition coming from yet another country. Terrorism is no more national, it is truly international.

### Forms

Language, religion, culture and geographical areas are different but the process of birth is same. Although the forms and types of terrorism are different but their aims and goals are the same i.e. to create the terror, to terrorize the public and to overthrow the established government of state. Terrorism is essentially a byproduct of fundamentalism.

- **Individual Terrorism.** Acts of violence carried out by individuals basically or purely for personal ambitions or gains. Its manifestations are dacoit, rape, murders, kidnapping for ransom etc. It may be due to sense of adventure, psychological disorder and sense of prosecution or monetary gains. It is of more criminal in nature.
- **Group Terrorism.** This is by well-motivated group of people; having some vague cause of liberating or removing a system of government and bring in change to their vision of human improvement. Essentially, they remain a small group of desperados. It is generally thrown up due to political, social, religious malaise. The terrorist enjoy the political patronage and the local police are coerced to inaction by intimidation by the terrorist or the interested parties.
- **Political Terrorism.** It is the most dangerous form of terrorism. This is the use or threat of use of violence by a group of people whether acting for or in opposition to establish authority when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety and fear inducing effects on target group larger than the immediate victims for political demand of the perpetrator. Such form of terrorism engulfs larger section of population during the society into protagonists, antagonists or neutrals. This gives a larger base to the terrorist to operate with full support of a section of the population, ultimately resulting in wide spread insurgency. The terrorist then becomes a tool of insurgency. The terrorist in Kashmir and Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh and Maoist in Nepal have now moved into this form of terrorism. Thus, essentially political terrorism would include only those violent acts, which are meant to create terror and intimidation for political ends and even States can be termed as terrorists if they indulged in terrorization of a community or a group of people for political purpose in their own or foreign land.
- **State Terrorism.** State terrorism is markedly distinct form of terrorism in its manner of execution. While terrorists publicise their strikes, the state terrorises its peoples in a covert manner. The state itself becomes terrorist employing its vast resources in police forces, intelligence agencies, media and money. It is a peculiar and pathetic situation wherein the powerful force itself commits atrocities on those it is duty bound to protect against terrorism. In this type of terrorism, the law enforcing agencies themselves turn their guns on their people in the garb of giving a ready made solution to their political masters. In the long run, all such terrorism has proved counter productive as it happens to be the most repulsive to human dignity and liberty. The commercial riots in Gujarat followed by action by state government against a particular community have been termed as state terrorism.
- **Inter State Terrorism.** In this type of terrorism, certain states like Libya, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and some Arab states are sponsoring terrorism in their adversary states to advance their political interests. Inter-state terrorism is covertly or even overtly supported and abetted by the

countries inimical to the host country. After 11 September 2001, a loose coalition against this type of terrorism has been formed but only time will tell whether it is successful or not. India too is a victim of Pakistan sponsored terrorism.

- **International Terrorism.** Acts committed across natural boundaries. It has been defined as acts of terrorism that have clear international consequences, and include incidents in which terrorist go abroad to strike their targets, elect victims or targets because of their connection to a foreign state. Bombing of World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 by the members of Al Qaeda, which has worldwide influence is an appropriate example of international terrorism.
- **Technological Terrorism.** There is a need to dwell on the essential impact of technology in having facilitated the growth of terrorism, at least in dispelling a misplaced notion that most of the terrorism is being waged with antiquated means. Different types of terrorism on the basis of use of technology are :-
  - **Cyber Terrorism.** This is relatively new and highly potent form of terrorism. It is widely known the kind of damage these terrorists are capable of inflicting. Disinformation is just one of their tools. They have the capability of bringing large public enterprises as well as essential services to a grinding halt often with disastrous results.
  - **Nuclear Terrorism.** Perhaps the only way for terrorists to achieve bonafide mass destruction would be to use a nuclear weapon. It is assumed that terrorists want and can, with some effort, acquire nuclear weapons. Terrorists are capable of converting stolen nuclear material into a bomb.
  - **Bio Chemical Terrorism.** Ironically nuclear weaponry for the most destructive weapons - remain legitimate, while biological and chemical weapons, with more limited and problematic effectiveness, have been outlawed.
- **Miscellaneous.** In addition to above classifications, there are certain other facets of terrorism, which can be clubbed under this category. These are:-
  - **Financial/Economic Terrorism.** Money laundry can lead to financial terrorism and many well-known financial institutions have had offers involved in moving money in and out of offshore banks. In Indian context, Pakistan has been pumping in counterfeit currency to destabilize our economy.
  - **Religious Terrorism.** The refrain that the "Islamic Terrorists, are out there to destroy the whole world" has reached its zenith in the last decade. The jihadi culture emphasis on people belonging to a particular religion to voluntarily fight against people/ nation/ group to save their creed from so perceived atrocities being committed on them by others. It is a conspiracy aimed at the total destruction of a group. The instigators and initiators of genocides are cool-minded theorist and barbarians. The specificity of genocide does not arise from the extent of the killings, nor their surgery or resulting infamy, but solely from the intention; destruction of a group. From the inquisition to ethnic cleansing, the resulting terror has created deep splits among religions, tribes and ideologies around the world. Thus, the religions zealot committing an act of terrorism is assured by his religion and its leaders that his acts are acceptable to a "high morality" than may currently exist. The religious fanatic is assured of immortality and suitable reward in an afterlife if he or she should die in the commission of the act of terrorism. It would be difficult if not possible to persuade such a person out of his or her beliefs by reasonable arguments.
  - **Narcotic Terrorism.** Narcotic terrorism could be defined as the 'use of organized terror to secure control over a state or states by another state or organized criminal networks' or by terrorists

/insurgents or by a combination of any or all of them to achieve fixed political, economic or social objectives based on organizational and financial empowerment through drug trafficking. The profits derived from their illegal activities are either integrated into the legal economy or are used to organize crimes and carry out cross border terrorism. Pakistan has become adept at exploiting India's internal weaknesses.

Terrorism is a term which is politically loaded and does not possess a definition which is universally acceptable. Despite number of attempts by the many governments, scholars, strategic thinkers the word terrorism remains still undefined. Even the international as well as regional organizations such as United Nations, Interpol, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Organization of American States and several other agencies have not been able to reach any consensual meaning of the word „terrorism. Also among scholars it has become extremely difficult to achieve any consensus on this controversial term. Therefore, in the absence of any legally recognized and universally acceptable definition there is more chances of misusing this term i.e. terrorism specifically by the major actors of international politics. The problem with the definition of terrorism is not that it does not have any single but has as many definitions as there are scholars, nations, organizations and different agencies and they defined according to their own interest and political dynamics. Many of the definitions shows a lack of balance because they only focus on non state terrorism ignoring the fact that state terrorism is more dreadful and outrageous. It is a fact that governments will prefer only that definition that suits their interest and that do not include their acts of violence and savagery in the context of terrorism. State terrorism is not only excluded from the governmental definitions but also the academic definitions which scholars preferred suffer from this lacuna. This discrepancy is mainly responsible for the absence of any comprehensive, globally acceptable and precise definition of terrorism.

## CONCLUSION

Terrorism is a dynamic not a static concept. It is very difficult to generalize things when one is dealing with a sensitive issue like terrorism. Enough has been said and written in the contemporary literature on terrorism regarding its definitional problem. But this definitional problems can't change the fact that terrorism is one of the greatest dangers that mankind is facing today. Apart from the definitional problems, the strategies and tactics of terrorist violence are enough to suggest that it is a crime not only against the apparatus, but also against the innocent population. Moreover, modern democracies all over the world, more or less, believe in the principles of persuasion, consensus and negotiation; consider terrorism as a threat to their national security and hence put terrorism under the legal framework of national security.

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