



Dealing with Terrorism

With changes in time, the concept of security has also undergone changes. In these times of globalisation, when complex inter-dependence and enhanced multilateral cooperation should have led to greater coordination and enhanced security all round, all of a sudden, the nation-state seems to be experiencing sharp decline in its ability to defend its citizens against all kinds of threats. With the sovereign status of the nation-state having been severely dented due to multifarious factors including the forces of globalisation, the monopoly over legitimate use of violence also seem to have been drastically breached. The non-state actors (read terrorists, extremists and militants) all over have operated with impunity, with the Comity of Nations finding itself helpless against their determination to wreak havoc in pursuance of their different agenda.

India has often been christened a 'soft state' for its high level of tolerance, necessitated by its need to consolidate its nascent nation-state through different consociational (read inclusional) measures to accommodate all the constituent components of the federation at different levels of development. But now that India has been trying every possible means to shed this image by acting tough, the terrorists, separatist and fissiparous forces are still finding ways to strike at will.

But in all this, those who have desired all along to bleed India through a thousand cuts are themselves bleeding as the Frankenstein's monster they created, has not spared them as well. Today, terrorist attacks have become one of the biggest problems of our internal security concerns, with serious implications for the overarching security architecture.

Many serial bomb blasts in Bombay, train bombings, street bombings, terrorist attacks on the sacrosanct Parliament and many other such attacks later, we have been forced to do some serious thinking about the ways to deal with the same. While efforts have been made to deal with the root cause of the problem, particularly those stemming from an inegalitarian economic development and high levels of poverty, but experience says that under-development is not the only reason or only way to explain such a problem. After all, the western countries including the United States, the United Kingdom and Spain have also suffered at the hands of

terrorism despite high levels of development. So, we have to look at the problem differently and deal with the same differently as well.

We should never lower our guard, while dealing with the threats of terrorism. While we should keep trying to address the basic reasons or sources of such problems by ratcheting up our efforts to find a lasting solution through socio-economic-political-diplomatic means, we also need to think of innovative ways of tackling such non-conventional threats to the integrity and security of our country. The proxy war being waged has gone too far now to be allowed to interfere with the peaceful existence and continued well-being of this country.

Against this background, today we need a multi-pronged strategy to deal with such threats on the ground. While efforts may be made to initiate dialogue with such estranged groups as and where possible to bring them aboard as well as to redress their developmental grievances through special initiatives and coordinated action, but more than that we now need to include the civil society in our overall strategy to tackle such threats. Since the threats are unconventional, the response also has to be unconventional. Today, every civilian in this country needs to be on his/her guard all the time and has to act as the ears and eyes of the state for all our security efforts to make any sense.

Our national security apparatus needs to give it a serious thought. Today, we not only need to further train and equip our police and para-military forces with better incentives thrown in to attract better quality people into such forces, we also need to harness the services of such agencies as National Cadet Corps, National Service Scheme and Civil Defence Wings in the interests of our internal security. We further need to find out, create and include more such groups to be a part of our extended security infrastructure. As many as possible, the members of the civil society need to be made part of this overall strategy and as such, special awareness and training programmes may be organised to make them an inalienable part of the security machine. After all, everyone needs to understand that with the country being insecure, they can never be secure.

Besides, we also have to improve the ground infrastructure to be better able to detect and prevent such threats to the lives and property of our citizens. So such simple things as installation of X-ray scan machines and close-circuit cameras coupled with regular checking with metal-detectors should be made compulsory at all the railway stations, bus terminals, important private and government offices as well as important and crowded thoroughfares and locations. The services of sniffer dogs can also be employed as and where required depending on threat perceptions, but definitely at all the crowded places. While costs involved in all this may seem prohibitive to begin with, but compared to the potential threats to the lives and property of our nation, they appear trifling. With such threats and their unpredictability only growing with every passing day, that seems the only way whereby such threats need to be tackled in future. So, before the push comes to shove, we should actually get going and try all the measures as suggested above.

Today, every citizen needs to be a soldier and every next location needs to be guarded and secured like a cherished fortress. Today, the way to deal with such non-conventional threats to our internal security is by taking all such pre-emptive measures and by becoming smarter and

thinking faster than the terrorists to beat them at their own games. Terrorism as a problem today warrants a synergised approach of all the stakeholders including the citizenry to be better equipped to fix it forever. One is sure that right policy leadership and a right mix of suitable interventions, we shall soon be able to tackle the problem of terrorism in our country.

Salient Points

- India has often been christened a 'soft state' for its high level of tolerance.
- Those who have desired all along to bleed India through a thousand cuts are themselves bleeding as the Frankenstein's monster, they created, has not spared them as well.
- Developed nations specially USA, UK and France have also suffered at the hands of terrorism despite high levels of development.
- We need to think of innovative ways of tackling such non-conventional threats to the integrity and security of our country.
- We now need to include the civil society and the services of such agencies as National Cadet Corps, National Service Scheme and Civil Defence Wings.
- we also have to improve the ground infrastructure to be better able to detect and prevent such threats
- Today, every citizen needs to be a soldier.
- Right policy leadership and a right mix of suitable interventions is required.

Glossary

Fissiparous: reproducing by fission

Ratcheting: a steady progression up or down

Trifling: of small value

Shove: push