

# Fourteenth Colonel Pyara Lal Memorial Lecture

## New Face of Terrorism : Analysis of Asymmetric Threat from Land, Sea and Air\*

Shri Vikram Sood\*\*

### Introduction

The character of terrorism has changed over time and let me begin by first talking of the 'The Ultimate Threat'.

I quote from Graham Allison's 'Nuclear Terrorism - the Risks and Consequences of the Ultimate Disaster' where he writes about Tom Clancy's 1991 bestseller 'The Sum Of All Fears'. The novel is about a stolen nuclear weapon planned to be detonated at the Super Bowl in the USA. Allison says that the comments Clancy received after this novel was published had left Clancy uneasy so he wrote an afterword in which he said and I quote:-

"All of the material in this novel relating to weapons technology and fabrication is readily available in any of the dozens of books .... I was first bemused, then stunned, as my research revealed just how easy such a project might be today. It is generally known that nuclear secrets are not as secure as we would like – in fact, the situation is worse than even well-informed people appreciate. What required billions of dollars in the 1940's is much less expensive today. A modern personal computer has far more power and reliability than the first Eniac, and the 'hydrocodes' which enable a computer to test and validate a weapon's design are easily duplicated. The exquisite machine tools used to fabricate parts can be had for the asking.... Some highly specialised items designed specifically for bomb manufacture may now be found in stereo speakers. The fact of the matter is that a sufficiently wealthy individual could, over a period of time from five to ten years, produce a multistage thermonuclear device. Science is all in the public domain, and allows few secrets."

I have quoted from the author of a bestseller fiction, but truth is stranger than fiction. Let us remember that Osama bin Laden was/is a billionaire, al-Qaeda's members were in touch with Pakistani nuclear scientists like Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Abdul Majeed, while their masters were surreptitiously offering or supplying uranium enrichment technology and know-how to Iran, Libya and North Korea. State sponsored nuclear terrorism is the best way to describe this.

The five-ten year period that Clancy spoke of is over and there is no way of confirming that the world has become any safer after September 11, 2001 or November 2008.

### The Definition and Mode of Operations

The world has had trouble defining terrorism with the old cliché – one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. Although terrorism had gone global in the 1980s and then further embellished in the next decade, it was not until Sep 11, 2001 that the word and the act evoked any response from the USA. Even then, it has been-my terrorist first and then, maybe, yours, as we have seen in our neighbourhood.

It has moved from what one may call gentlemen militants / anarchists / terrorists of the 19th century and early 20th century who targeted only heads of state, monarchs, prime ministers – even up until 1970s. They operated as romantics

and quite often bungled their individual acts of heroism causing no great loss to anyone.

In the last three decades, there has been a dramatic shift in terrorist objectives and scale of operations. The range of its effectiveness, its lethality and ability to be catastrophic without the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), its instant nature, use of modern technology and communications which give it the ability to strike across frontiers have multiplied many times over. The tactics too have changed; suicide terror is an increasingly common phenomenon. Armed assaults, where death for the terrorist is almost certain, is another phenomenon. We have also seen the use of vehicles, from the cycle bomb to the aeroplane in terrorist attacks. There are many other ways asymmetric warfare has changed and a considerable amount of this change has been technology driven in the past decade and a half. If the 1980s produced international state sponsored jihad, it also allowed nuclearisation of a rapidly Islamising state.

The revolution of the Internet and the mobile phone has been a quantum jump, the full scope of which has not been realised yet. It is difficult to predict how much, how easy and how cheap this technology will be in the future and what use the terrorists can put this to.

All this is accompanied by an effective use of the media eager for 'instant' stories.

In today's context when we refer to international terrorism, we invariably refer to Islamic/jehadi terrorism. Unfortunately, the response to this, described as the global war on terror, is neither global, nor is it against terror. It seems restricted to handling the problem in only one part of the globe against targets that are unevenly defined. The war either in Afghanistan or in Iraq, is not about defeating terror because both have created more terrorists than it destroyed. An over-militarised response has given it the wrong description of a 'war on terror' whereas one should be thinking in terms of counter-terrorism.

The battle has become globalised— capitalism versus global Islam. On one side are the affluent, powerful, politically empowered, mainly Christian States which are running out of resources; ranged against them is a group which is poor, politically un-empowered and Muslim, and resource rich. Both find nationalistic politics an impediment to their progress because nationalism impedes economic domination and theological control. The former wants unhindered access to finance, markets and resources required to retain its primacy while the other strives for an Islamic take over by establishing the supremacy of an overarching Islamic Caliphate.

The present day terrorist considers civilian targets as fair game and suicide terrorism as the most favoured method. One could say that this was reflection of how the character of war itself had changed from WW I to WW II and beyond. The indiscriminate targeting of civilians by the combatants during the WWII going on from Hiroshima to Agent Orange in Vietnam were other examples where the state led with attacks on civilians.

The ability to perpetrate violence was a state monopoly. But, with the easy availability of small and lethal weapons, easy money, technology and weak failing states willing to wage asymmetric warfare for various reasons, has seen the emergence of non-State actors in destabilising regions by inflicting terrorist violence of even greater magnitude.

From specified ideological or military targets emanating from ideological beliefs, real or perceived oppression or wrong doing, terrorism has moved to

punitive, revenge or catastrophic terrorism.

The present day globalisation of terror, especially jihadist terror, is the outcome of Cold War, when States had combined to give money, arms and manpower to defeat their Cold War rival. A multi-billion dollar religious terrorist force was created in the name of freedom because of fortuitous confluence of mistakes that one superpower did not learn from the mistakes of the other. It was the first time that Muslims from different countries got together to work against the Infidel. The Ummah had arrived and has since then been spreading its message. The present day radical Islamist terror is the result of global Cold War ambitions and compulsions rather than any intrinsic ability and zeal among the radical Muslims to take this route.

This was the beginning of the internationalisation of terror. Yet, throughout the 1990s terrorism and terrorist groups expanded beyond borders of their sanctuaries, threatening the stability of regions. We in India battled our imported demons for decades as the world looked away and concentrated more on violations of human rights by countries tackling the worst kind of terrorism. Terrorism was like a tropical disease that afflicted only the developing world while the rich remained happy together. It was only September 11, 2001, that changed the perception of threat but did very little to change the method of tackling it.

Today, there is a genuine and widespread rage against the USA and its allies in the Muslim World. To many in the Islamic world, Osama bin Laden is not the evil incarnate as it is made out in the West. Osama would deliver his followers from centuries of insults and humiliation by the West. They believe in him and in his tactics. That is why they are willing to die. And there is no way you can kill a man who is willing to die. Right or wrong this is a perception that has to be corrected.

It is not as if the Muslims world is faultless. A cursory review of wars, civil wars and other contemporary conflicts will show that there is a greater incidence of Muslim involvement—either fighting others or among themselves. 90 per cent of the cases seem to have affected Muslim societies/countries. Of the 22 members of the Arab League or 57 of the OIC, almost all have had major political violence in the last 25 years.

Muslims have a difficult time living as minorities in Non – Muslim countries, as we see in parts of Europe – France, Germany or the UK. In the west there is a mutual problem of how to arrive at an amalgam; in India we are increasingly going to face the challenge of preserving the equilibrium which others and some of our own seek to destroy.

## **Islamist Rage**

There may be Muslim anger at the West, but there has also been considerable state assistance to Islamic terrorism. Saudi Arabia has funnelled billions of dollars into West Asia, Pakistan and the rest of the world for over three decades for the propagation of puritan Islam in madrassas. This has made it easier for young minds to accept the cult of violence and be prepared and ready to kill in the name of religion. The other sponsor of jihadi terrorism has been Pakistan. This in fact has been the main weakness of the so-called global war on terror for it accepts the two main sponsors of Sunni Islamic terrorism as partners in the war on terror. Both the countries remain reluctant partners, or even duplicitous partners, yet continue to receive certificates of good behaviour from the US. There has been a lethal mix of Saudi money and Pakistani manpower supplies to jihad. Saudi funding through various trusts like the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation and the Al Rashid Trust, have helped finance madrassas and mosques. Saudi financial contribution to the making of the Pakistani nuclear bomb and contribution to the Afghan jihad has emboldened Pakistani

adventurism as well as obduracy.

Post 9/11 and particularly post-Madrid 2004 have led to a hardening of positions in Europe among the majority population and at the same time there are more second and third generation Muslim youth finding their way to jihad. The stereotype of the jihadi coming from the Arab world is changing. Post-September 11, recruits are just as easily to be found in poly-techniques, high schools and university campuses in Europe. Hundreds of European youth, mainly second generation immigrants, have found their way to Iraq to fight in the Sunni triangle. There were reports of a two-way traffic between West Asia and Europe of illegals coming in to Europe and legals going to perform jihad in far away places. Three of the July bombings in London were young second-generation youth of Pakistani parentage. Youth in the UK have been increasingly under the influence of the Deobandhi mosques where al Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT), Lashkar e-Jhangvi (LEJ) and Hizbut Tehrir (HT) activists have been active.

In Europe, intelligence and police officials from the UK, Spain, Germany, France and the Netherlands meet in state-of-the-art environments to exchange information and data, reports and wiretaps that would help follow leads in their anti-terror effort. Cooperation on this scale or even at a much lower scale is unthinkable on the Indian sub-continent as this would be counterproductive to policies followed by the Pakistani establishment. Indo-Pak talks on curbing terror are more a dialogue of the deaf than any purposeful discussions.

More dangerous than al-Qaeda in the Indian context are the activities of the International Islamic Front established by Osama in February 1998. Five Pakistani terrorist organisations are signatories to this IIF – HuM, LeT, Harkat-ul-Jehadi-ul-Islami (HUJI), JEM and LeJ – all Sunni, all anti-Christian, anti-Jew and anti-Hindu, and continue to exhort the destruction of India and prophesies victory over Jews and Christians.

Another centre is Bangladesh where jihadi organisations propagate jihadi terrorism in India and South-east Asia. The location of the continuing jihad against Christians, Jews and Hindus can be anywhere. It will be where the jihadis feel that it would be easier to operate and have the maximum impact. This obviously makes the USA and Europe the most likely targets.

Groups like the al-Qaeda and LeT cannot be controlled by a purely non-military response because they seek the establishment of Caliphates, through violence if necessary, and which is not acceptable in the modern world. It is necessary to militarily weaken these forces, starve them of funds and bases and then to tackle long-term issues, and by providing them better education, employment and so on.

There is a naive assumption that if local grievances or problems are solved, global terrorism will disappear. The belief or the hope that, if tomorrow, Palestine, or Kashmir or Chechnya or wherever else, the issues were settled, terrorism will disappear, is a mistaken belief. There is now enough free floating violence and vested interests that would need this violence to continue. There has been a multifaceted nexus between narcotics, illicit arms smuggling and human trafficking that seeks the continuance of violence and disorder.

### **Global Jihad and Leaderless Jihad**

The last few decades have also seen the largest scale of state sponsored terrorism raging from West Asia to South Asia, where the assistance in all its aspects has been so thinly veiled and the only precaution sponsoring states seem to take is that they

do not wish to be caught in the act. It is a misnomer to describe such terrorists as non-state actors. Over time these terrorist organisations either morph on their own or are encouraged by their sponsors to split and re-emerge in their new incarnations.

Marc Sageman in his book 'Leaderless Jihad' which is about terror networks in the 21st century, documents how Islamist terror networks were evolving into more fluid, independent and unpredictable groups than those in the past. He refers to scattered groups and individuals who drift into Internet chat rooms and the various websites of the terrorists that now flood the net and whose protagonists have little or minimal contact with their sponsors, thus making it more difficult for authorities to keep track of such activities till sometimes it is too late.

Until 2004, most of the networks functioned through face to face interactions among friends or controllers (the 1993 World Trade Centre Bombings, the 1993 Mumbai serial bombing, the 1998 US embassy bombings in East Africa, the 9/11 attacks, the Indian Parliament attack in December 2001, the 2004 Madrid train bombings). Starting around 2004, communications and inspirations shifted from these interactions at local halal ethnic restaurants or barber shops close to radical Islamist mosques to interaction on the internet. The Madrid bombers were inspired by a document posted on the Global Islamic Front website in December 2003. People involved in the Mumbai 2008 case made use of internet protocols to keep in touch and draw inspiration even during the actual incident.

## **WMD Terrorism**

The world has not seen WMD terrorism but fears of this taking place are uppermost in the plans of most counter terror and intelligence/security organisations. The nuclear and thermonuclear arsenals of the USA and Russia are still so vast that they have individual weapons that have greater destructive power than all the non-nuclear bombs dropped by all the air forces of the world in all the wars in human history, including Iraq war.

Theoretically, the various kinds of some 20000 nuclear bombs would be at risk, but in practice the more realistic fear would be use of a small weapon stolen from one of the nuclear states, or a plutonium or heavily enriched uranium basement type bomb or the theft of material to make a dirty bomb. Weapons of the first kind form part of the inventory of the US and Russian forces. It is possible that weapons of this kind would attract the attention of terrorists. Particularly attractive could be the American W-25 SADM, a 25 kg device that can be parachuted into enemy territory to destroy bridges, tunnels and other such installations. There is also the 20 kilo Davy Crocket, jeep mounted warhead originally meant to halt a Soviet blitzkrieg in Europe.

The W-82 is a three foot long atomic artillery shell that weighs about 40 kg, or the two foot long which can be carried in a back pack. The Soviet arsenal also included suitcase devices, backpack weapons like the Army's RA 155 and the Navy's RA-115-01 which is meant for underwater use.

The threat is not just from the terrorists getting hold of a nuclear device in the Islamic world or by jihadis but such small devices could be as attractive as the Stringer missiles were during the campaign against the Soviets in Afghanistan. The issue here is not the large scale disappearance of such weapons but even one will be enough to create a catastrophic terrorist incident. However, experts also believe that it was more likely that that terrorists would prefer to acquire fissile material and make their own bomb rather than try to buy one off the shelf, as it were.

## **Maritime Terrorism**

The world has seen terrorism on the ground, in the air but has not seen much of it on the high seas. The attack on the USS Cole was a relatively small terrorist attack when compared to the sea-borne attack in Mumbai in November 2008. Since each terrorist attack should be seen as the possible precursor to something even bigger, the Mumbai attack has exposed India's vulnerabilities all along its 7500 km long sea coast and the scattered islands in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. This remains a major vulnerability of India.

Over 50,000 ships pass through the Malacca Straits each year. A terrorist attack in the narrow critical part of the Straits could block the Straits and cripple world trade. This would provide terrorists a large iconic impact that would not be available through a terrorist attack on a ship on the high seas. International threat perceptions of maritime terrorism are high and will continue to remain high in the foreseeable future.

The possible use of oil for causing massive disruptions in the world economy has been receiving increasing attention from the international jihadi terrorist elements. The need for attacks on oil installations is a frequently occurring theme in the messages of Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants. Till now, the attacks on the oil industry have been in the form of one reported attack on a oil tanker at the Aden port, attacks on the foreign experts working in the oil industry in Saudi Arabia and the blowing-up of oil pipelines in Iraq. The attacks, though spectacular, have not had a sustained effect. The oil industry, like the tourism industry, has shown itself to be resilient despite its vulnerability. Both the tourism and oil industries have so far been able to recover from the sporadic attacks on them fairly quickly. The economic disruption, though considerable, was temporary and did not have a serious effect on the availability and affordability of oil. This should not lead to any feeling of complacency that attacks of a more disastrous nature are unlikely. Counter-terrorism techniques tailor-made for the energy sector need urgent attention.

India's plans for ensuring the supplies of energy to fuel its expanding economy through a network of pipelines from Turkmenistan and Iran via Pakistan and from Myanmar via Bangladesh would remain a pipedream till the already-established international jihadi terrorist networks in the region are not neutralised.

The surviving terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan continues to pose a threat to peace and security and economic prosperity in South, West and Central Asia. The emerging one in Bangladesh has serious implications for South and South-East Asia.

## **The Economy of Terror**

The world has not seen financial terrorism, something that would send the dollar into a spin. Modern terrorism thrives not on just ideology or politics. The main driver is money and the new economy of terror and international crime has been calculated to be worth US \$ 1.5 trillion (and growing), which is big enough to challenge western hegemony. This is higher than the GDP of Britain, ten times the size of General Motors and 17 per cent of the US GDP (1998). Loretta Napoleoni splits this terror and crime GDP into three parts. About one-third constitutes money that has moved illegally from one country to another, another one-third is generated primarily by criminal activities and called the Gross Criminal Product while the remaining is the money produced by terror organisations, from illegal businesses, narcotics and smuggling. Napoleoni refers to this as the New Economy of Terror.

All the underground transactions of arms and narcotics trading, oil and diamonds smuggling, charitable organisations that front for illegal businesses and the black money operations form part of this burgeoning business. Terror has other reasons to thrive. There are vested interests that seek the wages of terrorism and

terrorist war. Narcotics smuggling generates its own separate business lines, globally connected with arms smuggling and human trafficking, and all dealt with, in hundred dollar bills. These black dollars have to be laundered, which is yet another distinctive, secretive and complicated transnational occupation closely connected with these illegal activities and is really a crucial infusion of cash into the western economies.

The nineties were a far cry from the early days of dependence on the Cold War sponsors of violence and terrorism. In the seventies, terrorists began to rely on legal economic activities for raising funds. The buzzword today is globalisation, including in the business of terrorism. Armed groups have linked up internationally, financially and otherwise, have been able to operate across borders with Pakistani jihadis doing service in Chechnya and Kosovo, or Uzbek insurgents taking shelter in Pakistan.

In today's world of deregulated finance, terrorists have taken full advantage of systems to penetrate legitimate international financial institutions and establish regular business houses. Islamic banks and other charities have helped movement of funds, sometimes without the knowledge of the managers of these institutions. The source and destination of the funds is not what has been declared. Both Hamas and the PLO have been flush with funds with Arafat's secret treasury estimated to be worth US \$ 700 million to 2 billion.

It is not easy but the civilised world must counter the scourge of terrorism. In a networked world, where communication and action can be in real time, where boundaries need not be crossed and where terrorist action can take place on the Net and through the Net, the task of countering this is increasingly difficult and intricate. Governments are bound by Geneva Conventions in tackling a terrorist organisation, but the terrorist is not bound by such regulations in this asymmetric warfare.

## **The Changing Face of Terror in Pakistan**

South Asia, as we all know, is both the battleground and home for these groups, threatening to destabilise political structures and social fabric of the region by acts of terror directed against specific religious and ethnic communities.

There is a clear distinction between the groups which existed during the Afghan jihad and today. There are marked differences in composition, objectives, modus operandi, networks, finances and reach. The pre-al Qaida groups, like Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HM), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI), Lashkar-e-tayyeba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), were created by state agencies in Pakistan for specific objectives. The objectives were two-fold: help the Americans drive out the Soviets from Afghanistan through guerilla war and launch a protracted proxy war in Kashmir. These groups largely depended on the state munificence and funds generously provided by the USA and other western nations, and west Asian countries like Saudi Arabia, through a network of newly created banking organisations like the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), cowboy methods like currency chests flown into Pakistan, besides guns and ammunition shipped and airlifted in tonnes from different parts of the world.

These groups largely drew the cadre and leadership for jihad from madrasas and extremist religious groups in Pakistan which were amply supported by the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Pakistan Army. They relied primarily on the religious "brotherhood" both within Pakistan and outside, and their association with the ISI to create a chain of madrasas and training grounds for recruiting, indoctrinating and training the so-called "freedom fighters" (mujahideen). Their area of operation was pre-determined and they worked strictly under the control of the ISI (and CIA) in Afghanistan.

Terrorism in the Indian sub-continent underwent dramatic changes after the disintegration of Soviet Union and more so, after September 11, 2001. Funds, resources and support for the jihadi groups dried up rapidly. Many of the groups died a natural death. Others were given a make-over by the ISI with a new identity and new grounds of training and operation. A large number of the cadres, unemployed, drifted to rabidly Sunni groups like Sipah-e-Saheba of Pakistan (SSP) and LeJ, criminal activities like carjacking, extortion, and kidnapping for ransom and smuggling. Others joined newly created groups like JeM and United Jihad Council carved out of old Afghan groups like HuA and HuM.

Unlike Pakistan where religious extremist groups have remained on the fringes of the political spectrum, in Bangladesh such groups have had a decisive role to play. One such group is Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) which owes much of its growth to the Islamisation of the country's political institutions initiated by President Zia-ur Rehman in 1977. The present Awami League government of Sheikh Hasina is far more confident and has taken significant steps to curb terrorism aimed at India and also to reign in right wing elements that may be a threat to Bangladesh. However, in the past, both Awami League, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by former Premier Begum Khaleda Zia, assiduously courted JeI for their own bitter and protracted duel for supremacy. The Awami League, for instance, sought support from the religious parties to campaign against the BNP while the latter has co-opted JeI as a coalition partner. JeI, as a result, is today the third largest political party in Bangladesh.

The rise of radical political and religious parties like JeI promoted the growth of madrasas in the country, mostly funded by west Asian countries. These madrasas played host to various terrorist groups anxious to recruit and train young students. One of the more prominent ones is HuJI, widely regarded as al-Qaeda's operating arm in south Asia. HuJI has been consolidating its position in Bangladesh where it boasts a membership of more than 15,000 activists, of whom at least 2,000 are hardcore.

The decimation of the Taliban and the emergence of al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden gave a new hue and ideological boost to terrorist groups. The list of enemy expanded to include the USA and Israel besides India. New alliances were established. Terrorist groups drew recruits from religious extremist groups like SSP and LeJ. Drawing upon the resources of the ISI, these groups established sleeper cells in different parts of India and in other parts of the world.

With cumulative bans imposed on their activities by the US State Department, the United Nations and various governments, including that of Pakistan, these groups, particularly LeT, established new networks of finances, tapping into Pakistani diaspora in the UK, West Asia, the USA, Australia and Europe. These groups began relying on transnational smuggling and hawala syndicates to transfer funds and arms. There was a decisive shift in targets, both in terms of location and character, and modus operandi. The targets today range from political leaders to mass transit systems to nuclear stations, with the clear objective of instigating communal violence in India and inflicting heavy damage to the economy. The methodology has shifted from isolated attacks to bombings of public transport systems and markets and religious places to spread panic and fear. Kashmir is no longer the operational ground nor, the sole target. The groups today live by a pan-India, and at times a pan-global, agenda of establishing the Caliphate.

Pakistan's duplicity in dealing with terrorist and extremist elements came to haunt the region when Lahore-based LeT trained jihadis, with the connivance of ISI and Pakistan Army, attacked Mumbai and raised the spectre of another war in the region. Even after suffering several attacks in the past three years, Pakistan Army

refuses to give up its support for terrorist groups like LeT or the Haqqani Network in Afghanistan.

## **Left Wing Extremism**

It is increasingly evident that the menace of Left Wing Extremism has been underestimated by the Government all these years. Not only does it impact in areas which are rich in mineral resources (80 per cent of India's high grade iron ore, 85 per cent of total coal deposits) are in the so-called red corridor. The insurgency has spread rapidly in the last few years, but has also occupied larger areas as government and governance have receded. 225 districts are affected up from 160 a few years ago; estimated to have Rs 1500-2000 crores through extortion, narcotics and hijacking government development funds. they have an arsenal of about 10000 assorted weapons from AK series to INSAS, LMGs and SLRs to 303 rifles. Originally concentrated in the rural areas of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal they are now also moving into urban centres of Raipur, Surat, Faridabad, Bastar and other places. Local grievances, exploitation and absence of governance have been the planks for their movement.

Backed by a strong informer system, the terrorists avoid any frontal engagements with the Security Forces (SFs) and there is a greater reliance on IEDs. They rely on rapid movement both in attack and escape. There has been a rising trend in the incidents as statistics reveal. In 2006 there were 1509 incidents which rose to 1591 in 2008 and 2258 in 2009. Left Wing Extremists have begun to move into other states like Haryana, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Assam, Kerala and Delhi. These are early stages but then every movement has an early stage before it gets out of hand unless tackled early and counter insurgency is not politicised. The tendency to rush in with humanitarian aid as an attempt to solve the crises is invariably a misplaced tactic and does nothing to win over the population or the insurgents. Developmental assistance without ensuring a semblance of law and order, will always be counter-productive. The entire counter effort has to be fought on a different grid, needs human intelligence (humint), quick reaction teams and the development of capacities to clear and hold. None of this will be achieved overnight and needs sustained long term efforts. Unless, all this is done the movement will continue to grow and may well join hands with other ethnic and religious groupings in the country or aided from outside.

## **Technology as a Force Multiplier for Terrorism**

We have all spoken and read about the exponential transformation in technology in the past two decades. From the first text message which was sent in Britain in 1992 and ten years later 100 billion SMS messages were being exchanged every month and today 4.1 billion messages are sent daily — is just an example for a typical day. Not only is this the manner in which technology is changing; today we talk of gigabytes and terabytes. But another improvement is on its way – petabytes. When this happens, then it would be possible to store the entire Library of Congress — the world's largest with 120 million books/journals stored on 850 kilometres of shelves with 10,000 books added daily, and these could be stored in just 0.02 petabytes. In March 2007, the CIA began working on a digital library of national intelligence information and it would have everything from raw data to analytical information and it was expected to be bigger than the Library of Congress.

Two years ago the size of the Web was such that Google could search 60 billion pages in a second or less. But there is a Deep Web, that cannot be accessed and it is estimated to be 50 times larger. There is so much information overload that the 16 US intelligence agencies employ 45000 analysts. Of course in India, we don't have that kind of global threat perceptions or requirements or even the funds but

need some scaled down model. There are 1.6 billion people on line today, up from 1 billion two years ago. 60 per cent of the world's population of 6.6 billion today uses cell phones up from 12 per cent in 2000. Islamist groups are known to use mini-cameras to post their propaganda films on YouTube. Steganography is commonly used to embed secret messages on the net.

Terrorism is now truly global and as multinational as Microsoft. The USA and al-Qaeda are the two that have global reach today. But terrorism is unremittingly lethal and it is cheap (the ingredients for sirin gas which, when used properly with a spray, could kill anywhere between a few hundred and a few thousand, cost only \$ 150). The irony is that the American state spends multi-million dollars in developing state of the art drones, armed with advanced weaponry; these can now be hacked into by insurgents with a US \$ 26 off the shelf Russian software which highlights the disparity between costs to insurgents and counter insurgents.

There are many players in the field today — the fanatics, the criminals, the drug-traffickers, the human traffickers. The masterminds are not the archetypal villains epitomised by Bollywood, but could be the boy or girl next door in the suburbs of Atlanta or Marseilles or an alumnus from Binori mosque in Karachi. For us in India we have learnt to live with it, having been victims of this for the last three decades and more. It is a problem that will not go away easily, soon or completely.

Future wars are unlikely to engage massive armies locked in prolonged battle for real estate. Attacks could now come by stealth, master-minded by some computer whiz kid along with some science graduate, and the targets are our ways of life. The terrorist of the day wishes to use 21st century tools to push us all back to the 7th century. It is a highly unconventional war that the State hopes to fight only with conventional weapons or tactics. Unless the State learns to be flexible and agile, and unless there is full scale cooperation internationally, it will always be an uphill struggle with the peak never really visible.

It is the use of modern technology by the terrorist that has led the counter terrorist to evolve expensive, all pervasive surveillance and counter terrorist techniques in ways that leave the espionage and counter espionage activities of the Cold War years far behind. In the west, especially in the US there has been an upsurge in intelligence activity as the US battles to secure itself in the new global war. Faced with an information overload where every

e mail, every telephone call, every SMS, every fax is subject to surveillance apart from the literature floating on the web, intelligence activity has been outsourced in a major fashion. From just being a military-industrial complex it is now an intelligence-industry complex where major players like Lockheed Martin, Booz Allen and Hamilton, CACI International, SAIC and IBM are now active associates of the CIA, NSA and the Pentagon in intelligence activities at home and abroad. Blackwater and Dyncorp as well as others provide the muscle power. Their charter includes covert operations and interrogations of suspects. Privatisation of espionage and authorised privatisation of violence will change societies in ways that will become apparent only later when the power of these groups may exceed those of the state, especially in weaker or smaller states.

## **Intelligence**

It is an unending nightmare for intelligence agencies the world over. Who? What? Where? When? And how? In what language will the terrorists communicate and what medium? What code? Will we get to know before they strike? Not all attacks will be preventable. Only finely co-ordinated, transparent and real time co-operation on a global scale will make the task of the terrorist more difficult, if not impossible.

The terrorists have gone global so must the counter-terrorism.

Despite the rapid development of the technological element, the human element will continue to be the most important factor in determining the outcome of the campaign against terrorism. In spite of the superiority of the State in numbers and material, and technological resources, the international jihadi terrorists do not show as yet any signs of withering away. The quality of the human element they have at their disposal would substantially account for this. The quality of the human element available to the security and counter-terrorism agencies should surpass that of the terrorists, if the State has to ultimately prevail.

With only mediocre human element, even the best of technological capability cannot produce adequate results. The best of human element can ultimately prevail even if the technological capability is up to the mark. The human element is very important at every stage of counter-terrorism—intelligence collection and analysis, use of the intelligence for prevention, neutralisation of the capability of the terrorists, investigation of terrorist strikes and successful prosecution. How to develop an unbroken chain of human competence of high quality? That is a question which would continue to need attention in the years to come.

There has to be a revolution in the intelligence culture and tradecraft or operating techniques in order to be able to prevail over the terrorists. The existing tradecraft served adequately the purpose of the penetration of the State adversaries in order to collect humint. It has been found to be inadequate, if not unsuited, for penetrating the set-ups of non-State actors, particularly the terrorists, who operate on the basis of the principle of autonomous cells. The progress towards the evolution of new tradecraft and new techniques has been unsatisfactory.

A revolution in the intelligence culture also calls for effective networking of national and foreign intelligence agencies and sharing without inhibition of all relevant intelligence. The intelligence and counter-terrorism networking has to be as effective as the networking by the terrorists. Such networking was found difficult even in days when the number of intelligence agencies in each nation was small and manageable. How to ensure this in an era of mushrooming agencies is another question which needs urgent attention.

There has been some progress towards international intelligence co-operation at the bilateral level, but the progress towards multilateral co-operation is still years away. Since the US is and will continue to be a predominant player in all intelligence co-operation networks, suspicions of its real intentions and fears of its using such networks for serving its hegemonistic and strategic interests would continue to dog any progress towards multilateral co-operation.

There is an equally urgent need for a revolution in counter-terrorism training methods with an emphasis on joint training in specialised counter-terrorism schools for the officers and staff handling counter-terrorism in all intelligence and security agencies, and police forces and the improvement of language capability. The training should develop in the officers an ability to think and act unconventionally with the help of suitably devised counter-terrorism games similar to the war games.

### **Effects on Terrorist Groups in India**

The emergence of new terrorist groups and coalitions added a disturbing dimension to the terrorist threat to India. While the birth of a new terrorist coalition, which called itself Indian Mujahideen (IM), raised fears about a resurgence of radical elements within the 150-million strong Indian Muslim community, it was the discovery of Hindu extremist group or groups involved in some of the terrorist

attacks, till date attributed to Islamic groups, which challenges the earlier Indian claims and adds weight to the protestations made by the Muslim community about painting the entire community with a tar brush every time a bomb explodes anywhere in India.

India thus witnessed the emergence of two clear strands of terrorism, linked in a regrettable sort of way to the State's inability, and timidity, in tackling terrorist groups and persons firmly, and decisively. The IM presents the first strand. According to investigations carried out so far, some of it since discredited by the discovery of Hindu brand of terrorism, it is a diffused but highly networked group of terrorists, driven by a dangerous cocktail of extremist ideology, and a simmering sense of anguish and revenge. They are mostly young professionals as well as from the blue collar class who are aware of the global jihadi propaganda but are provoked more by actions of the police and rival communities at the domestic level.

### **The Role of the Army in Counter Terror and Counter Insurgency**

The Indian Army has been required for internal security duties almost from the very beginning when it was called in to tackle the communist insurgency in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh from 1949 to 1952. The Indian Army was also pressed into action to deal with a Pakistani guerrilla invasion in Jammu and Kashmir in 1947. Then, it was successively involved in the north-east in the 1950s and 60s, till the present day in cases like the Bodo and Assamese movements. The Army was called in for action in the Punjab in the 1980s and has been in Jammu and Kashmir since 1990.

The Army and the security forces (SF) have lost 5,962 personnel to terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir from 1990 to July 5, 2010. This year alone 45 SF personnel have died in the State fighting terrorists. Elsewhere, as many as 939 officers and men lost their lives in Manipur; 783 in Assam; 81 in Meghalaya and

22 in Mizoram. In addition, 1,226 SF personnel have died fighting Maoists between 2005 and 2010; this year, till July 5, we have lost 204 men in uniform.

Since 1990, the SF have faced 1,511 cases of human rights abuse. These were investigated by various agencies, including the National Human Rights Commission, and 1,473 were found to be false while 104 men found guilty have been punished.

Ideally, one would not want the Army to be involved in counter-insurgency operations. The Government and the people have faced insurgencies almost from the beginning and we should have evolved suitable instruments for dealing with insurgencies, terrorism and such like internal security situations. The induction of the Army into counter-terror/counter-insurgency mode, usually in case of non-availability of the para-military is accompanied by the introduction of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act to provide it legal cover for internal security duties. The Army needs to be protected and empowered but with this empowerment comes accountability. Machil incident in J&K cannot be allowed to be repeated. The problem that arises, apart from the fact that the Army is unfamiliar with the terrain, it is not supported by adequate intelligence. Added to this, are the problems of civil-military co-ordination and the ownership of various forces that are deployed. The police answer to the local government, the para-military forces to the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi and the Army has its own command structure under the Ministry of Defence. There is also the problem of co-ordination among Central and local intelligence agencies.

In Jammu and Kashmir the concept of Unified Headquarters was introduced in 1994 and later tried in Assam in 1997 and Manipur in 2004 but had limited success

because the body lacked statutory authority. Political parties did not take to this structure with any great enthusiasm as it required them to commit to a counterinsurgency plan which was probably at variance with their political plans. The concept of a Unified Headquarters has been a partial success and effective civil-military co-ordination remains a big challenge to evolving any cohesive long term plan that goes beyond containing insurgency to eliminating it.

## The Future

Some of the trends that are likely to emerge in India are given in the succeeding paras.

The Birth of Terror Coalition: -

(a) This implies a tie up between the Pak-based JeM and LeT working with Bangladesh based groups like the HUJI (B) and then tied in with Indian groups like the SIMI and other smaller groups. The IM is a product of such coalition and they-the IM could become part of global jihad.

(b) The spread of a pan-Islamic character across the breadth of the country, with the left wing extremists already talking of coalescing with other groups - Sikh, Islamic or ethnic - would be a cause for concern for the government. This is aggravated if there is the inevitable foreign hand. Be that as it may, it is feared that the northeast especially Assam and West Bengal would be increasingly under threat from a mixture of Left Wing Extremism and Islamist terrorism. This is perhaps the most dangerous part of this spectre of terrorism.

Pakistan is not expected to give up this weapon of state sponsored terrorism as a force equaliser against the stronger India. This can happen only if the price of terrorism is more than what Pakistan can afford to pay and Pakistan overcomes its fear psychosis about India. In the decade ahead we should not expect any appreciable change in the level of terrorism. In fact we should be prepared for new kinds of terrorism. Despite having become a victim of its own terrorism, Pakistan is unlikely to be able to reverse this without further trauma.

We should be looking at the many ways terrorism could morph and evolve in the years ahead:-

(a) Terrorist groups will be smaller, more lethal and in some cases even have the lone operator.

(b) Terrorists will be networked, mobile, educated, in the younger age group which would give them greater zeal, idealism and greater readiness to take risks.

(c) Similar groups – mercenaries to provide support services – for counterfeiting, fund transfers, arms smuggling etc. will operate.

(d) The nexus between mafia and terrorists will grow.

(e) The nexus between the terror groups - in whatever form they take in the years ahead - and the military in Pakistan, is not going to change.

(f) Cyber terrorists will abound.

Terrorists, in our region — whatever their grievances, — revenge for perceived injustice, to weaken/destroy non-Muslim or anti-Muslim countries, or establishing Caliphates – will target mostly soft, vulnerable and high-profile urban

targets, especially mega-metropolis like New Delhi or Mumbai.. This would mean vital infrastructure and communications, hijack of airlines, attacks on embassies, foreign interests, mass transit networks, maritime assets – all that would hurt economic interests.

It has to be accepted that there can be no final victory in any battle against terrorism. Resentments, real or imagined, and exploding expectations, will persist. Since the state no longer has monopoly on instruments of violence, recourse to violence is increasingly a weapon of first resort. Terrorism can be contained and its effects minimised but cannot be eradicated any more than the world can eradicate crime. An over-militaristic response or repeated use of the armed forces is fraught with long-term risks for a nation and for the armed forces. Military action to deter or overcome an immediate threat is often necessary but it cannot ultimately eradicate terrorism. This is as much a political and economic battle, and also a battle to be fought in the long-term by the intelligence and security agencies, and increasingly in cooperation with agencies of other countries.

Ultimately, the battle is between democracy and terrorism. The fear is that in order to defeat the latter, we may end up sacrificing some of our democratic values.

\*Text of the talk delivered at USI on 22 Sep 2010. **General Deepak Kapoor, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)** former Chief of the Army Staff and Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee was in the chair.

\*\***Shri Vikram Sood was Secretary Research and analysis Wing (RAW)** from Jan 2001 to Mar 2003 (till retirement). He has been writing regularly for Hindustan Times, New Delhi, mainly on matters concerning national security. Presently, he is Vice President, Centre for International Relations with The Observer Research Foundation.

Journal of the United Service Institution of India, Vol. CXL, No. 581, July-September 2010.