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History of terrorism in India: An analysis

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Abstract

Being located in South Asia, the present epicenter of terrorism, India has fallen in the gravity of terrorism since independence. It has claimed more lives in India than anywhere else in the world. More than one hundred thousand persons have fallen as the victims of terrorism in various parts of the country. The Indian version of terrorism is as old as the 1940s and started just after the independence. Even the pre-independence era was not totally free from terrorist activities. Terrorism, in some extent practiced as a weapon in the freedom movement especially in Bengal, though the overall picture was non-violence.

Keywords: Terrorism, Khalistan Insurgency, Naxalism, Northeastern States, Kashmir Movement

1. Introduction

Being located in South Asia, the present epicenter of terrorism, India has fallen in the gravity of terrorism since independence. It has claimed more lives in India than anywhere else in the world. More than one hundred thousand persons have fallen as the victims of terrorism in various parts of the country^[1]. The Indian version of terrorism is as old as the 1940s and started just after the independence. Even the pre-independence era was not totally free from terrorist activities. Terrorism, in some extent practiced as a weapon in the freedom movement especially in Bengal, though the overall picture was nonviolence.

Since its existence, terrorism by its nature has modulated by different compulsions in different regions in India. In some areas terrorism is fabricated on ideological motives, whereas religion became the source in other cases and even some areas terrorism has launched on the bases of ethnicity. In other parts of India, the militants employ terrorism as a technique in the insurgence phase of conflict, to further their political cause. Even the ethnic conflicts are also seemed as a part and partial of Indian societies. For an example in a vast country like India, with a pluralistic society, there is no dearth of ethnic and political groups which are dissatisfied with their present status. Not all of them have secessionist demands, but many provide ready material for ambitious political leaders and external forces inimical to India, to manipulate and exploit for their own designs. This produces a wider degree of distance between the government and the community and later this developed to terrorism. The trends of separatist terrorism in the land of peace for first time rooted from its North Eastern region. Just after the independence the Nagas demanding independence approached the means of insurgency and terrorism. In Later years the trends spread to other parts of North East as well as to other parts of India. Unlike Nagaland and other north eastern states, Khalistani Movement and Kashmiri insurgency rooted in late 1980s. Unlike Nagas these terrorist groups also started for independence. In 1990s the left-wing Naxalism also emerged as a major insurgent movement for laborer and workers' rights.

Although India has been facing this problem in veering degrees of intensity since independence, in recent times the tendency has increased into several folds. The country is today facing a proxy war, as well as both secessionist and ideological terrorism. Mainly the trend of terrorism in India is divided to five broad categories. These are Khalistani terrorism, Kashmiri terrorism, Insurgency in North-East, the Naxalism and the International terrorism. Here is a close look to all this trends of Terrorism.

Khalistani Terrorism in Punjab

A study of early history of terrorism in India shows that these are quite a few communities and groups in India who have a long history of taking to terrorism to gain their political

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objective. A few of these are Bengalis, Marathas, and Sikhs. Just after Independence, some tribes in the North-Eastern region of India raised the banner of revolt and resorted to violence to achieve their revanchist goals. It was followed by wave of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir aimed at tearing the state from India and making it a separate state and the nationalist terrorism in the state of Punjab known as Khalistan terrorism. Terrorism in Punjab started as a product of Sikh Separatist Movements to establish an independent Sikh state, Kahlistan. This insurgency shock India throughout 1980s and into the early 1090s. More than 20,000 people including civilians, terrorists, and police have been killed ^[2].

Historical Background

The demand for the separate state for the Sikhs developed in early 20th century with the rise of Sikh nationalism in British India. As the two nation theory asserted by Muslim league to form two separate states for the Hindus and Muslims, many Sikh believed that they too should have been granted a separate state to protect their religious interest from overwhelming Hindus ^[3]. These concepts begin to fabricate slowly when the district magistrate of Amritsar put a ban over Punjabi slogans in 1955, and the declaration of Hindi as their mother tongue by most of the Hindus residing in Punjab in the 1961 census. Again award of Chandigarh to Haryana by the Saha commission in June 1966 and failure of center to consider establishing the system of Punjabi Suba further fueled to this concept ^[4].

Sikh separatism did not become a serious concern to Indian authority until 1970s and 1980s when strands of the Sikh nationalist struggle begin to take a shape of violence. Though the movement rooted in early 20th century it was militarize only after 1970s. During initial stage the movement was almost peaceful. A militant, but nonviolent, Sikh campaigning for self-rule followed and, in 1966 Punjab was split again to form a smaller, predominantly Sikh state within the India. While the Akalies were following a path of agitation and confrontation side by side, a more sinister development bordering separatism taking shape. On 19 September, 1971, Jagjit Singh Chauhan, a former finance minister in Akali ministry, in an interview simultaneously to the *Pratapand* an Urdu weekly of London, raised for the first time, demanded for Khalistan and stated that a rebel governments would be formed with headquarters at Nankana Sahib (birth place of Guru Nanak situated in Pakistan) and also circulated the map of the proposed Sikh state. On 14 December, 1971, through a clandestine radio operating in the name of Khalistan radio, Jagjit Singh Chauhan called upon the Sikhs to utilize the then Indo-Pak war for raising the demand for Khalistan. He also formed a Sikh home land in England in April 1972, to highlight the issue. Meanwhile, in December 1992, a committee of Akali Dal finalized the much publicized Anandpur Sahib Resolution., which talked about a separate state for Sikhs in northern parts of India, and got endorsed by the general body meeting of the party at Amritsar in august 1977. It drive a high huge and cry through the country. It is argued that seeds of separatism were being shown by the Akali Dal through this resolution while it has consistently argued that resolution has been misconstrued and only voices for more autonomy to the state. Thus an agitation programme of militancy also started taking shape during these periods ^[5].

A new figure now emerged to lead the militant Sikhs in their demands for more autonomy. In August 1977, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrenwala became the chief of Damdami Taksal; the religious institution. On 13 April 1978, a clash between Nirankaries and the Sikh followers of SantJarnail Singh Bhindranwala and Akahand Kiratani Jathha took place at Amritsar, in which 13 Sikhs were killed. It was a landmark development in Punjab as a subsequently a *Hukumnama* was issued to boycott of Nirankaries.

It could be seen that a militant movement was getting merged into a political movements and the Akalis kept on following the path of confrontation. Meanwhile, in April 1980 Baba Gurucharan Singh, the chief of Nirankaries was killed followed by the Lala Jagat Narain, the proprietor of Hind Samachar group of Newspapers in September 1981. These incidents, in which the hand of Bhindrasnwala was suspected, generated tremendous amount of tension in Punjab. There after a series of violence and act of violence like sabotage of railway tracks, hijacking of Air India planes, and a series of bomb explosions spread throughout the Punjab and Delhi. A large number of Sikhs celebrated 'Panth Azad Week' by burned article 5 of Indian constitution during the Akali congregation at Anadpur Sahib. Several Hindu temples were desecrated during this period. A.S. Atwal, the DIG of Punjab police was shot dead near the Golden Temple in April 1983, and the murderers sought sanctuary in the temple. Late Lala Jagat Narain's son Ramesh Chandra was another victim who was shot dead in May 1984. On the other hand Bhindrasnwala started indulging in venomous propaganda against the Hindus which incited Hindu-Sikh communal feeling. He started propagating a theory of separate Sikh nation which should fight for independence, collect arms and prepare a hit-list of those disagreed with their goal and organize their murder. Stocking of arms and ammunition started taking place in the golden temple which he used as a sanctuary and to incite and mobilize violence and communal riots. The speeches from behind the sanctuary added more fire on the ongoing hate riots which resulted the killing of thousands of people including police personnel, politician, religious and spiritual leaders as well as the innocent people. Scores of people were tortured and subjected to painful death and large quantities of dead bodies were seen laying on the road and elsewhere. This led to Operation Blue Star, meant to eliminate the extremists using Golden Temple for spreading the violence ^[6].

Ethnic Separatist Terrorism in North East

Among the terrorist movements existing today, anti-state, separatist, ethnic, and sub-nationalist movement in north-eastern parts of India is the oldest as well as most complex one. The multiple demands by the multiple ethnic groups pushed the movement into the zone of complexity. Though the demands of all seven states are more or less common and objected to greater autonomy or independence, still are contradictory in nature. To match this tempted goals various separatist organizations approached the means of violent armed struggle against India. Again attached to various national boundaries and their secrete involvement constantly escalating the movement. As the terrorist campaign spread to all the state except Arunanchal Pradesh and Meghalaya, resulted heavy violence within and outside the state and took scores lives. These trends are still continuing and seemed more lethal presently.

Historical overlook

The north-east region of India is consisted with seven different states, popularly known as 'Seven Sisters', and comprises an area of approximately 2,65, and 000 sq. Km.. The estimated population of the region is around thirty six million which constitutes approximately 8 percent of India's land mass and around 4 percent of its population. Though the common belief prevails that the North-East lies under a single ethnic, economic, cultural and political construct; in fact more divorced than any other part of India. In fact the estimation shows that there are 116 tribes inhabiting in this area. Interestingly, there are numerous sub-sects within the sects. Of the 1,692 languages and dialect spoken all over India, 420 are used as spoken languages in this region^[7].

The pre-independence picture of, what now called north-east was not as like as the present structure. Previously it was under the control of various neighboring states such as Myanmar, Tibet, and Bangladesh. It was the 'Treaty of Yanaboo' concluded between British and Burmese, whereby on 24 February 1826 the king of Burma renounces all claims upon and gave all authorities to the British to rule the state of Assam^[8]. Despite legitimate bonding with several communities with other communities of neighboring countries, Sir Cyril Redcliffe, who was in-charge of drawing the border, in hurry drew the line which divided the same community between the countries, and perhaps favored India more than others, during the time of partition^[9]. Sir Cyril's 'theory of divided lines', which cuts across homes, hearts, and societies, not to speak of states, further had a sharp impact on the nation-building campaign led by India to maintain its integrity. But this pattern of these processes within the region itself have been difficult, developed the ethnic and separatist struggle against India. Secondly the wide cultural difference between the region and the rest of the country, also cultivate the notion of separation. It must also be noted that the caution outlook towards the region is also because of the insensitivity of New Delhi towards the region. Addition to it, New Delhi has done almost nothing to assimilate the region into the greater Indian ideal, and has certainly not made any efforts to include north east India into its nation-building process. "It is no wonder, than, that the continuation of the colonial practice and behavior has caused the north-east to perceive the center as a colonial power"^[10]. Continuation of this practices and lack of any major staples to bring this region closer, the gap between the north-east and the rest of India has grown; and subsequently resulted to terrorist movements.

Jammu and Kashmir Terrorism

Starting from independence, terrorism has been the part and partial of Indian society and the Kashmir Diaspora contributes significantly to this figure. Subsequently Kashmir conflict and the age long terrorism contributed other insurgent movements in India. Not only that, this age long issue has been the battleground for all major Indo-Pak war. During the 22 years of terrorist struggle in the valley, 43,000 people have been killed in Kashmir including more than 14,000 civilians and over 850,000 persons have displaced from their homes^[11]. Again the Pakistan involvement and growing *Jihadi* movements contributed a significant development to this conflict. The highly lethal struggle has started after the call of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) for armed struggle against India in order to secure independence for Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Since then, it

has witnessed many terrorist strikes like those of the parliament attack, attack on Kashmir Vidhan Sabha, Mumbai serial blast, Kandahar Hijacking, 26/11 and others^[12].

Historical Background

Like most of the major conflict situations that are prevailing in India today, the Kashmir issue also a product of British Raj. During independence the British gave options to every princely state either to merge with India or Pakistan or remain independent. Based on this theory Kashmir, the princely state ruled, by Hindu ruler, Maharajah Hari Singh, where as about 77 percents of the population are Muslim. In December 1947, Pakistan attacked Kashmir to merge it forcefully. In that juncture Maharajah called for India's help and agreed to merge with India with certain conditions. Followed by the formal signing of deceleration to be merged with India, India sent military troops to Kashmir to prevent the interference of Pakistan. Challenging this move, Pakistan launched formal war with India which failed and got defeated. And the Kashmir dispute became a part and partial of Indian subcontinent.

Followed by the Indian complain, the UN formed a separate commission to look this matter. The UN commission on India and Pakistan (UNCIP) adopted a resolution on 13 August, 1948, which was acceptable for both India and Pakistan. The resolution suggested for four inter linked linear steps. First Pakistan have to withdraw its army from the occupied areas of Kashmir, secondly the tribal would be cleared from the state by the joint efforts of both the countries, thirdly all steps would be taken to restore normalcy for which India was to maintain a certain level of military forces in the state: and finally, the when normalcy would be restored, the majority voice will decide whether they would merge with India or Pakistan, with no provision for independence. Within this Pakistan forcefully occupied nearly one-third of the state and didn't withdrew its army from state as prescribed by the UN resolution. And the issue continues throughout the history stretched by violence and terrorism^[13]. In 1957, declared Kashmir as the integral part of Indian Union^[14].

Cross Border Terrorism in J & K

The growing trends of terrorism have been poses a greater threat to internal as well as external security of India. But the foreign involvement to terrorist movement in J&K further wider its security challenges. The statistics shows that the foreign mercenaries are now 60 to 70 percent compare to 40 percent in 1994 and 15 percent in 1990^[15]. Reportedly, foreign mercenaries are more ruthless and being religiously motivated, tend to be more indiscriminate. This new dimensions to the proxy war were resulted the use of modern and unconventional weapons including IDXs, grenades, RDX, and state of art weapons supplied through Pakistan's ISI which subsequently increased the fatality and destructions ratio. This decade long movements of terrorism has resulted the deaths of more than 42,000 persons including 15,000 civilians since 1988^[16]; not to mention the internal migration and displacement of the Kashmiri pundits and Buddhists communities from the valley.

Emergence of Naxalite Movements

The history of Naxalite movement goes back to 1960s when the communist movement was on full swing. In 1964, during Chinese aggression to India, the party split into two,

Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI [m]). The main reason for split was the ideological differences, while CPI approaches the peaceful means to root out capitalism; the CPI (M) adopted the traditional path. While the communist movement was almost peaceful and attached with main stream politics, an incident in remote area of West Bengal transformed the history of leftwing extremism in India. In a remote village named Naxalbari, A tribal youth named Bimal Kissan went to plough his snatched land, after obtaining a judicial order. But the landlord attacked the youth with his followers. React to this the tribal people of the area retaliated and started plough their land forcefully. Therefore a rebellion struggle emerged which left one police sub inspector and nine tribal's dead. In a short span this movement's attracted greater attention of public and tremendous support cross section of the communist revolutionaries. Though the revolution suppressed in 72 days, the kind of revolution erupted in the Naxalbari gave birth to the terms Naxalbari movements, Naxal movements and Naxalites which gained popular currency in Indian political lingo. With the formation of Communist party of India (Marxist-Leninist) and Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and under the leadership of Charu Majumdar the movement expanded to other states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. Now it is seen throughout 13 states and 156 Districts.

Naxalism Today

The communist movement in India has traversed through several stages, now seems like concentrated on guerilla war and armed struggle against land lords and exploiters and of curse against the police personnel and paramilitary forces who restricting them. In recent scenario, the movement seems more aggressive against the armed forces than others. The movement, however, continues to have a large support base because of the intellectual appeal of its ideology. It has survived more than a quarter century of onslaught by the security forces -- without any external support, unlike the Punjab terrorism and the Kashmir militancy. The movement has developed an inherent strength. The present statistics shows that there are more fatality occurred due to the Naxalite strikes than the terrorist strikes in Kashmir. According to the data given by the South Asia Terrorist Protocol (SATP), the fatality because of Naxalites is three times high than the Kashmiri insurgents till August of the year. The statistics also states that while the fatality rate of Kashmiri insurgents is decreasing year by year, the fatality rate is maintaining because of the Naxalite activities. This constant increment of Naxalite activities now a day seems like the most gregarious threat to the international security of the nation.

International Terrorism in India

While there was no sign of decreasing of terrorist activities in India, continues increment of international linked terrorist incidents has added more worries of Indian policy makers and law enforcement authorities. As the Khalistan terrorism had well-handled and brought to the main steam and North Eastern terrorism seems like lost its rhythm and on the path to negotiation; Kashmir terrorism and related international terrorism such as cross-border and suicide blasts possess top most challenge to present Indian security structure. There is no doubt that Pakistan has been the Main source of international terrorism in India. Pakistan has been the safe

haven of international terrorism, encouraged and allowed to grow several anti-Indian terrorist organizations in its border. Not only that, they also provided with commando training and weapons to launch the war against India. Apart from that there is also some avoidance that Bangladesh and Myanmar also playing the extensive game of proxy war and providing shelter to anti-Indian terrorists. The main forms of international terrorism are seeing in the form of cross border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and Jihadi strikes on major cities of India. These two types of cases have briefly discussed here.

Cross Border Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir

India has been the worst victim of cross border terrorism since 1980s. Being the extensive product of Kashmiri militancy it was ramped throughout the valley then gradually extended to other parts of the country. Pakistan's role in spreading terrorist activities in Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir are well known. Proper coordination in interception and the commitment of the state and its police in countering such activity lay at the root of the control of terrorism in Punjab. But in the case of Kashmir, terrorism still persists because Pakistan has taken recourse to the concept of jihad to fulfill its long time policy of securing the independence of Kashmir from India. Actually Pakistan's inclination of using force to annex Kashmir has been apparent from the very beginning. The blueprint of aggression against Kashmir which was drawn in Pakistan in 1947-48 continues to be followed as policy even today. Attacks by infiltration in 1965, which led to the second Indo-Pakistan war, Pakistan's proxy war since 1988, and the Kargil offensive of 1999, confirm that Pakistan prefers to follow a policy of confrontation in Kashmir. The separatist movement in Kashmir began to metamorphose into militancy in April 1988 due to the resurgence in the activities of the JKLF. Gradually, the movement was taken over by Pakistan-sponsored radical Islamist groups, making terrorism, insurgency and ethnic cleansing its main weapons. The involvement of Pakistan's intelligence agencies like ISI transformed the movement into a campaign of terror. By 1989, the situation underwent a sea-change with the use of sophisticated firearms and extensive use of explosives, which were smuggled in from Pakistan. Infiltration of Pakistan-trained Kashmiri youth also went up. It was estimated by the task force that a total of about 20,000 Kashmiris were trained and armed by/in Pakistan. "Logistical support, primarily weapons and ammunition, is brought from Pakistan. Training, organization, propaganda and indoctrination are carried out in the safety of Pakistani sanctuaries." Yossef Bodansky, analyst with the Freeman Centre for Strategic Studies, aptly said: These militant groups were used for terrorizing the people of Kashmir, forcing them to accept rigid Wahabi codes of conduct, whip up anti-India feelings among them and to undertake various subversive missions to destabilize the state. They also acted as Pakistan's recruiting and motivating agents, whose job included sending disgruntled Kashmiri youth to Pakistan for undergoing arms training. During the most violent phase of terrorism in 1990-91, terrorist groups virtually ruled the congested urban areas of the major towns of the Valley. Over the years, there was a considerable increase in Pakistani backed military organizations in the Valley. At one time there were about 120 militant groups in the Valley. With the passage of time some of the militant groups disintegrated due to security

forces operations, while others merged with some of the major militant outfits. By September 30, 1999, there were about nine major militant outfits operating in the Valley. These militant outfits are carrying out their subversive activities in the Valley in pursuance of their jihad against India. And ISI of Pakistan is the main body facilitating movement of weapons across the borders to Kashmiri militants. It has set up training camps in Pak-occupied Kashmir and plays a crucial role in sustaining these camps. Everyone agrees that jihad cannot be carried on without the support of the ISI. Extending the notorious Jihadi movements, the foreign militants have been targeting the important places of India. In this case also, ISI is playing a vital role including training and necessity weapons to militants. To weaken the India's growth and terrorizing the people, terrorists has been targeting the crowded places, religious places, and major establishments. Examples includes the 26/11 blasts on Mumbai.

Conclusion

Since the independence India has been victimized by the rampant of terrorism. With the instigation of Kashmiri struggle against India, this problem has been multiplied and now seems like rose to the zenith. But it was the 1980s that introduced cross border terrorism in to the complicated Indian terrorism. Again the game of proxy war by Pakistan and its intelligence agency ISI, the Indian terrorism further became more complicated. Now the situation seems like relentless. The important thing to Indian terrorism is that it is the combination of all kind of terrorism prevails in the earth, such as Leftist terrorism in the form of Naxalite movements, rightist terrorism in the terms of Khalistan, Kashmir and North eastern separate movement, as well as international terrorism In terms of cross border terrorism and global jihad movements. The statistics says that terrorism in India is much more vulnerable than any other country and taken more lives than others. The data issued by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) states that as many 4,108 terrorist incidents have occurred in India between 1970 and 2004 and has taken more than 12,539 lives with an average of almost 360 fatalities per year.

During this period, India ranked sixth among all countries in terms of terrorist incidents (behind Peru, Colombia, El Salvador, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland and Spain). According to the report published by Terrorist Organization Profiles (TOPs), maintained by National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), as much as 56 terrorist groups engaged in terrorist activities in India. These groups prepared with highly sophisticated weapons have engaged a variety of attacks such as bombing and assassination, both of innocent civilians and security forces. The statistics shows that 38.7% of terrorist events were facility attacks, 29.7% percent were bombings (in which the intent was to destroy a specific facility), and 25.5% were assassinations. The recent events in Mumbai would be classified as a series of coordinated facility attacks.

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