COUNTERING THE THREAT OF TERRORISM IN PAKISTAN

Shabana Fayyaz

Central Argument

Today Terrorism is hybrid and complex in nature and scope. Driven across the continents by the non-state actors, violence is the mode of terrorism. Countering this multi-headed phenomenon requires a multi-pronged, multi-national, and sustained policy by the governments across the globe. The military means to uproot the scourge of contemporary terrorism are the short-term fixes and must be complimented by long-term political, economic, and diplomatic initiatives. That is, to come up to the challenge of terrorism the point of departure for a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy should be an understanding of what terrorism is and what terrorism is not. That is, "Terrorism is not an ideology (or religion) but a strategy which may be used by individuals, groups or states for different purposes".[1] Thus, the debate on what constitutes terrorism and how it should be countered remains as inconclusive and vibrant as the debate on what is meant by security in the international system.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the various facets of the debate on ever changing phenomenon of international terrorism and how to respond to it, within the international and national security communities. To understand the discourse at the theoretical and practical level, the paper is divided into three inter-related parts. Part one probes the unresolved nature of what is meant by terrorism? And how it threatens the present international system? Part two of the paper charts the two broad ways of thinking at the academic and policy making level as a way out of terrorism carnage. Part Three attempts to apply the definitional and operational strategies and debate on terrorism to understand the prevalent security scenario of Pakistan. In conclusion, the debate is wrapped up with some plausible recommendations for a pathway out of terrorism facing us today.

The discussion in the paper is based on the following assumptions as means to understand the unresolved puzzle of terrorism and counter-terrorism facing international community today: -

> Security is seen in holistic terms. That is, what constitutes a security threat to state and individual can range from territorial integrity, extreme poverty, spread of infectious disease, internal wars, to the, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime and terrorism. The traditional conception of security to be seen only as military and hence physical threat to state's integrity coming from outside its frontiers needs redefinition and reflection. The threats to state can originate from within having ripples felt within the state and beyond.

> To counter the diversified and complex nature of security challenges faced by states today, threats such as terrorism needs to be approached and understood at the national (that is, domestic), regional and international level. Unilateralism is not the answer to the challenge, nor can the security of one state come at the expense of insecurities of many in international system.

> Finally, it is argued that to effectively counter the terrorism, one needs to locate this phenomenon not in seclusion to other threats to security facing the world today. That is, terrorism does not happen in vacuum and its solution or way out lies in adopting a concerted and comprehensive strategy at the national and international levels.

Given this background the point of departure is, in Richard Ullman's words:

"A threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that (1) threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of the state or (2) threatens significantly to the narrow range of policy choices

available to the government of a state or private non-government entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state."[2]

This leads us to the part one of the paper that looks into the inconclusive and open-ended debate on the key question of what is meant by terrorism at the theoretical and practical level.

Part One: Debate on What Terrorism Means Continues

Although, the international community remains divided on a universal definition of what is meant by terrorism, yet it remains committed to confront it through variety of means and ends. To quote Bruce Hoffman.[3]

"In the post 9/11 environment, terrorism's power to coerce and intimidate, to force changes in our normal behavior, and to influence our policies and affect how and on what we spend money has, increased enormously."[4]

According to literal meaning, the word terror means extreme fear and thus terrorism implies the act of violence to instill fear and influence unarmed target, which may be a government, particular group, or a particular individual. Terrorism can be defined "as an act or threat of violence against non-combatants with the objective of exacting revenge, intimidating or otherwise influencing an audience."[5] Who carries acts of terrorism? Is it non-state groups or state or government? This remains a matter of debate both for academics and policy-makers.

After 9/11, most analysts assess terrorism as transnational theater of non-state actors - a threat inter-connected to the organized crime, proliferation, non-legal financial transactions, diverse world views, plus ever-widening gap between "have and have-nots". Globalization, the increased interconnectivity between people and nations – have added a new dimension to the terrorist threat. In words of an eminent specialist on terrorism, Rohan Gunaratna:

"The current and emerging threat is from networked terrorism - groups that recruit in one theatre, train in another, and

strike in third. By harnessing the forces of globalization, post Cold War terrorist groups have evolved from rag-tag groups to sophisticated multidimensional groups. In addition to attacks against civilians (terrorism), soldiers (guerrilla warfare), infrastructure (sabotage), ethnic and religious cleansing, terrorists contest elections and invest in businesses"[6]

International terrorism that ushered with the 9/11 WTC incident revealed the inability of the international institutions and States to keep pace with the changes in the nature of threats. The impact was not confined to the United States alone, and meant more than a physical and human loss[7]. On the one hand it reflected a strong message of discontent with the present international system and a complete disregard of international institutions such as United Nations to resolve difference of perceptions. On the other hand, the need to have a coordinated and comprehensive response to tackle the ever-changing face of terrorism is more urgent than ever before.

In other words, the need to have a broader vision of security and formulating an adequate counter-terrorism strategy has become one of the most difficult and at the same time most intensely debated and critical policy issue. This leads us to the second part of the paper that synthesis the debate on countering the threat of terrorism after 9/11 within the international academic and policymaking communities as Behavioral versus Structural.

Part Two: How to Counter International Terrorism – Behavioral versus Structural Approaches

Countering the threat of terrorism is an open ended challenge, and defies universal formula. Discourse on counter-terrorism is replete with the various definitional and operational tracks to the phenomenon of terrorism, ranging from military strategies (targeting leaders, the annihilation of groups), diplomatic negotiations (international facilitation, and mediation), political bargaining (power sharing, enhanced cultural and linguistic autonomy), and, sometimes a dialogue that may involve giving in to the demands of terrorists (for example, incases of Hijacking, Kidnapping and so on). For the purpose of academic analysis of the

debate on how to counter a diversified and transnational nature of threat of terrorism facing all states, one can locate it under two broad umbrellas: Behavioral versus Structural.

This leads one to underscore that there exists a theoretical and practical gap on setting a way out of the terrorism carnage both in the academic writings and policy pronouncements (that lead to policy adoption) of the global actors. That is, how one defines a problem determines how one is set about to find a solution to it.

Behavioral Approach. This approach defines the violent events (such as, 9/11 WTC incident) as anomalous to the international system and the perpetrators as irrational, abnormal or deviant radicals, religious fanatics or political ideologues. Thus a response and solution to such events require nothing less than a total military campaign. Why, because the groups that perpetrate such mega crisis are not worth talking to, as they understand only the language of force and not dialogue. One can locate number of statements given by dominant world players from time to time under this line of thinking.

The United States and its allies have embraced the Behavioral approach and thus have embarked on an open-ended campaign against the terrorism. At times this has materialized into an international campaign with the United Nations blessing as was the case of military campaign against Afghanistan (2002). While at other times, pursuit of unilateralism or action of few powerful nations is suggested as a remedy. To quote President George Bush:

"Make no mistake, the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible."[8]

Similarly, United Kingdom Prime Minister Anthony Blair a staunch ally of the United States observes:

"This terrorism is the new evil in our world today. It is perpetrated by fanatics who are utterly indifferent to the sanctity of human life…. We, like them (the US), will not rest until this evil is driven from our world".[9]

Taking a slightly different line that calls for military action along with the international consensus, Russian President Vladimir Putin states:

"There is no doubt that such inhuman actions cannot be left unpunished. The whole international community must rally in the fight against terrorism".[10]

Structural Approach, in contrast the Behavioral approach, focus on the asymmetric international environment, genuine grievances including exploitation of rich and powerful nations of the poor and under developed nations, and feeling of alienation and humiliation suffered by the "left behind" actors, nations or states. As a result, structural approach translates the events of violence, as a product or reflection of a deeper malaise that is part and parcel of the present international system. Thus to counter the challenge of contemporary terrorism, long-term changes in the rules, structures and processes of international system is proposed. The preferred strategy of dealing with the terrorist groups is an understanding the root causes of their collective grievances and initiate a dialogue that may involve policy changes. Most of the developing world leaders have largely embraced the structural point of view and reject the force as an answer to the contemporary face of terrorism.

Similarly, academics and experts working on security issues continue to stress the need to move beyond the rhetoric of force and understand the factors that trigger terrorist incidents. Bruce Hoffman stresses the importance of understanding the aims and goals that terrorists pursue as a way to counter their moves in future. That is, "all terrorists have goals....effort to understand how they think in order to anticipate their next move; we need a new theory of what terrorist want".[11]

Like Wise, Jessica Stern Observes

"..... The War we are waging is ineffective. This much is certain: If we hope to stop terrorism, we need to understand what motivates those who perpetrate it......... Thread that connect all terrorist mind is the feeling of humiliation".[12]

Another interesting observation is made by Dr Robert Bowman, USAF retired veteran, in open letter to the US President Bush in April 2002:

"We are not hated because we practice democracy, freedom, and human rights. We are hated because our government denies these things to people in third-world countries whose resources are coveted by our multinational corporations. And that hatred we have sown has come back to haunt us in form of terrorism and, in the future, nuclear terrorism. Once the truth about why the threat exists is understood, the solution becomes obvious. We must change our government's ways".[13]

At this juncture the question is, can one relate and apply the above sketched two broad strands of international discourse on countering the threat of terrorism to the security imperatives of Pakistan after 9/11?

Part Three: Pakistan Countering the Threat of Terrorism

Post 9/11 – A Mixed Picture

Two parallel images of Pakistan following its decision for "unstinted support[14]" to the US in the Global War on Terror are: "Global partner and front-line state", and, "Troubled – with parts of it remaining a nursery for future and present militants". How to cope with the twin challenge of putting one's house in order plus redefining geo-strategic relationships at the bilateral, regional, and global levels – have set in motion a journey into "uncharted path"!

Three years on its decision to rethink and redefine its national priorities[15], the blurring of distinction or fire wall between external and internal security dimension is a well recognized fact both at the policymaking and academic level. The President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf statements resonate this line of thinking from time to time:

"The country does not face any threat from outside. We should be concerned with the threat from within, posed by the

extremists. It is this threat that we should be more concerned with...... We all have to play our role to eliminate the hatred from the society".[16]

Pakistan's response to the challenge of terrorism is an ongoing and uphill task and oscillates between the "behavioral" and "structural" approaches, discussed overleaf. President Musharraf adopting a structural approach in line with the majority of leaders of the developing world observed at the United Nations General Assembly ministerial meeting observed:

"Anti terror responses must be accompanied by a "clear, long term strategy, striking at the root of the problem if we are to ensure final success against this scourge...... what we are doing is insufficient to win the ultimate war against them".[17]

Explaining the country's efforts to counter the threat of terrorism at the internal and external levels President Musharraf maintained:

"I see the war on terror in two dimensions..... The first dimension is its immediate one that is on fighting terror heads-on militarily. And then there is the strategic long term dimension that is getting at the core of what creates terrorists, an extremist, militant environment which then leads onto terrorism.... That is the resolution of political disputes".[18]

The policies being pursued by the government are a mix and match of military and non-military means. The aim is to create a "moderate and economically prosperous" state at peace within and outside. How far this aim is accomplished is too early to predict, as the problems that are part and parcel of homegrown extremism are the result of earlier state policies of neglect (economic, educational, social harmony, political) and turning a blind eye to the domestic terrorism as merely a law and order issue;

The military campaign launched by Pakistan Army in its Tribal Areas known as FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas)[19] is a matter of debate and concern both for the government

and people at large. The military has justified the actions as essential to get rid of remaining AL-Qaeda elements that fled Afghanistan following US military campaign and are being sheltered and treated as "guest" by the local tribesmen sympathetic to the "Al-Qaeda cause".[20]

The policy being pursued by the government can be termed as "carrot and stick", that is a combination of military operations, political pressure, "policy of amnesty"[21], economic sanctions and initiation of development projects[22] relating to building of infrastructure (roads, bridges, communication network), educational, social, and political. To quote ISPR Director General Major Shaukat Sultan, "the government adopted both direct and indirect strategies to flush out militants from South Waziristan. When Tribal Jirgas, Lashkars, and other tactics failed then the government opted for the military action".[23]

The present scenario in FATA reflects a mixed picture, which reaffirms a proposition of the paper that terrorism does not happen in vacuum and thus necessitates a solution that is concerted and comprehensive in aims and means. Along with the military tactics, reform at the structural level is essential. This in turn calls for a sustained effort to rid the country of the militarist mindset being promoted by the sectarian outfits and Madrassas and promote a social order based on peaceful co-existence and mutual harmony.

Conclusion: A Pathway Out of Terrorism – A sustained and Concerted Approach at Global and National Levels

What emerges from the foregoing discussion on countering the threat of terrorism at the international and national levels is the absence of a universal recipe to deal with the challenge of present and future – an ever changing face of international terrorism!

The following points can be regarded as a way forward or plausible recommendation:

> ➢ The definitional enterprise of international terrorism has become more complex given the diversity of global

security threats stretching from violence and war within states to the spread and possible use of nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons, and transnational organized crime. That is, "Today's threats recognize no national boundaries, are connected, and must be addressed at the global and regional level as well as national levels.....we all share responsibility for each other's security .... Mutual recognition of threats to human and state security calls for broad perspective on security".[24]

➢ The problem of countering terrorism requires a middle path in between the Behavioral and Structural arguments discussed earlier. While first position prescribes armed/military confrontation the later advocates dialogue, or at the very least, a combination of peaceful and forceful methods.

➢ The challenge for the international community as well as national governments is to register and adjust the behaviorist concern with the structuralist aspirations and visions of a free, fair and just world. This in turn requires, a holistic approach to the international security as well as national security.

➢ The international (as well as national) security is indivisible from the economic development and human freedom. Thus to counter the threat of terrorism, a concerted, sustained, and proactive/preventive approach should be aimed at.

➢ Weak states are vulnerable grounds (or sanctuary) for terrorist group's recruitment, indoctrination, and transit for staging actions in other parts of the world. Plus a victim of terrorist group operations, if the government in place is against terrorist regional/global agenda.

➢ In nutshell, military option can be a part of the overall strategy that essentially incorporates the political, economical, and educational elements in its fold. The military option is a short-term fix and may lead to opening of new avenues for international terrorist organizations. A long-term approach to counter terrorism requires multi-pronged and a multi-national approach.

The traditional elements of state power needs to be complemented by the non-traditional aspects of security – a vibrant civic and political community, economic stability, and moderate educational and religious institutions – a way out of terrorism carnage!

End Notes

[1] Weinberg, Leonard B. and Davis Paul, *Introduction to Political terrorism*, McGraw-Hill, Inc, USA, pp. 1-7.

[2] Richard Ullman, "Redefining Security", *International Security*, Vol. 8 (Summer 1983), pp: 129; 133 – 135.

[3] Bruce Hoffman is a leading academic authority on Terrorism, these days associated with the RAND (USA).

[4] Http: //www.globalagendamagazine.com/2004/brucehoffman.asp

[5] For a detailed analysis see Jessica Stern, *The Ultimate Terrorists,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 11 – 30.

[6] Rohan Gunaratna, "International Terrorism: What Kinds of Response?" Http: //www.un-globalsecurity.org/index.asp

[7] According to the World Bank estimates," 9/11 2001 attacks alone increased the number of people living poverty by 10 million; the total cost to the world economy probably exceeded 80 billion dollars. These numbers would be far surpassed by an incident involving nuclear terrorism". Http: //www.worldbank.org

[8] Quoted in, Paul Medhurst, *Global Terrorism,* New York: United Nations Institute For Training and Research, 2002, p: 357.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid

[11] Bruce Hoffman, op.cit.

[12] Jessica Stern, "Militant Groups: Beneath Bomb and Bombs, a Cauldron of Humiliation", *Los AnglesTimes Opinion,* 06 June 2004.

13. Quoted in, Paul Medhusrt, *Global Terrorism,* op.cit, p: 358.

14. Pakistan's President General Pervaz Musharraf on September 19, 2001, in a public address to the nation proffered five reasons for choosing to offer "unstinted cooperation":

    ➤ Secure Pakistan's strategic assets
    ➤ Safeguard the cause of Kashmir
    ➤ Prevent Pakistan from being declared a terrorist state
    ➤ Prevent an anti-Pakistan government from coming to power in Kabul
    ➤ Have Pakistan re-emerge politically as a responsible and dignified nation
    Http://www.nation.com.pk/daily/Sep-2003/main/top5.asp

15. "…. At this juncture I am worried about Pakistan only….. I give top priority to the defense of Pakistan….Defense of any other country comes later"
    President Musharraf address to the nation, quoted in, *The News,* September 20, 2001.

16. Quoted in, *The News,* December 19, 2004.

17. President Pervaz Musharraf, address to the U.N. General Assembly's Ministerial Meeting, 23 September, 2004.
    Http://www.spitimes.com/2004/09/23/Worldand nation/Leaders_to_UN_Atteck.shtml

18. President Musharraf comments to the reporters following a meeting with the British PM Tony Blair, December 2004, London. Http: //www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/Europe/12/06/musharraf.london/

19. Note:
    FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan) consist of seven Tribal Agencies and six smaller Frontier Regions, strung along a slightly oblique north-south axis. FATA shares a border with the Afghanistan, officially known as the Durand Line – porous in nature. The terrain spread over an area of 27000 square kilometers and home to three and a half million people, is primarily a semi-arid mountainous region.
    Article – 1 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan treats FATA as a separate entity, to be administered by the Federal Government as prescribed in Article – 247 of the Constitution. Accordingly, FATA is outside the executive authority of the NWFP (North West Frontier Province) and the Governor, NWFP, in his capacity as an Agent to the President, regulates its affairs. No Act of Legislature extends to FATA unless approved by the President and the jurisdiction of the superior Courts is very limited in its applicability to the matters relating to the region. The Political Agent in an Agency and the Assistant Political Agent in a Frontier Region represents the Government and embodies the executive writ of the Federation of Pakistan.

20. For a authoritative account on Al-Qaeda's Organization, Ideology and Strategy, see, Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2002

21. The Governor of NWFP acting as agent of the President of Pakistan, in December 2003, announced Amnesty for the foreigners who would surrender to the Government and not act or be involved in terrorist activities within Pakistan or across border, can continue to live in the Agency as per Riwaj and Tradition as Hamsaya. This was followed by the famous "Shikai Agreement" in which major harbourers were given amnesty; following its failure in June 2004 a major military operation was launched in Shikai Valley. Similar agreements were being made with the tribes in Wana also.

22. "The Government has increased budgetary allocations for FATA from about 1 billion rupees in 2000-2001 to almost Rs. 6 billion for the current financial years. Donor Agencies would be contributing an additional sum of Rs. 1.78 billion for various projects". This was stated by the Governor, NWFP, addressing a national seminar on "Tribal Areas of Pakistan: Challenges and Responses", organized by IPRI, September 7, 2004, Islamabad.

23. Quoted in, DAWN, December 9, 2004.

24. The United Nations Report, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, The United Nations, December 2, 2004.

Author

Ms Shabana Fayyaz is a Lecturer at the Defense & Strategic Studies Department, Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad. Presently she is on study leave, pursuing her doctoral studies at the Political Science & International Studies Department, the University of Birmingham, UK.