

How Not to Combat Terrorism

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Terrorism today is engaging attention of whole world. But Indians today are more concerned with growing terrorism in their own country. There is hardly any country, which is not affected by terrorism today though reasons are widely different. In many countries terrorism is fired by separatist fire. Many regions were included in colonized countries by imperial powers to suit their own convenience least knowing that increased awareness and democratic movements in future would ignite separatist movement and when their aspirations for autonomy or independence are denied violence would be used.

Basque in Spain, South Ireland, North and North East in Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Nagaland and Assam, Tripura and Manipur in India and in several other regions in other countries separatist violence would break out claiming large number of lives and destruction of properties. What colonial powers did for their convenience in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, present generations are paying price for the same.

Add to this list the sins committed by American imperialists in 20th and 21st century to satisfy their lust for raw materials and oil in the third world countries and Middle East and everybody knows the violence it has resulted in and the price thousands of innocent people are paying for it. The powerful media, however, sees Islam as the root of violence and ascribes genesis of terrorism to Islam.

The remedy for this terrorist violence is also simple. Declare war against terrorism, do away with concept of humans rights, find some puppets to fight its war against terror, put some suspected youth in jails and torture them till they die or go mad and feel safe from further terrorist attacks. Who commits sins and who pays? What do authorities care? They care only for their lust for power and money.

A survey was done recently by an international agency World Public Opinion. org of several countries to find out how many people support torture as an effective method to combat terrorism. The survey was to gauge how many people support abolition of torture by the state as it is totally against human rights and human dignity. Largest number of Indians, though not surprisingly, supported retaining of torture to 'save innocent lives'. 59% Indians said torture is necessary to combat terrorism.

People of 14 countries favour abolition of torture, even in the case of terrorists who have information that could save lives of innocent people. But four nations, including India lean toward favouring an exception in the case of terrorists, according to the WorldPublic Opinion.org poll of 19,063 respondents.

Majorities in India (59%), Nigeria (54%), and Turkey (51%), and a plurality in Thailand (44%) want exception for terrorists. Among all nations polled in both 2006 and 2008, India also has the largest increase in support of making exception for torture in the case of terrorism - 32% two years ago to 59% now. But it is also to be noted that those who believe torture should be totally abolished also has risen in India from 23% in 2006 to 28% in 2008. But large majorities in all 19 nations favour a general prohibition against torture. On

average across all nations polled, 57% opt for unequivocal rules against torture. Thirty-five percent favour an exception when innocent lives are at risk. Just 9% favour the government being able to use torture in general.

It is also interesting to note that support for unequivocal abolition of torture was highest in Spain (82%), Great Britain (66%) and France (66%), followed by Mexico (73%), China (66%), Palestinian Territories (66%), Indonesia (61%) and the Ukraine (59%). Here the question is why support for torture is so high in case of terrorist violence? Answer is not very difficult to find.

In India the Hindu right wing constantly propagates that terrorism can be effectively fought only by implementing laws like TADA or POTA and using torture as an effective tool. Leaders like Bal Thackeray even said that the Hindu youth should become human bomb and get away with it as the government has no moral courage to take any action.

The second reason is also connected with this. It is generally propagated by the media that it is Islam which is responsible for terrorism, being a religion of *jihad*. Whenever any bomb blast takes place the police immediately come out with a theory that HUJI and SIMI are involved, much before even any investigation begins. The police gives such statement because its mindset is also after all product of general atmosphere in the country.

Also there has been general atmosphere of Hindu-Muslim conflict for close to one and a half century since the advent of British imperialism and it is thought that all terrorists are Muslims, and they should be taught a fitting lesson. Even otherwise in India awareness of human rights is very low and since British time police have been nurtured on the philosophy of torture as an effective way to make suspected people confess to their crime.

And communal approach has been so hardened over the years that even if 'Ulama of Darul Ulum, Deoband issues fatwa against terrorism and constantly campaigns against terrorism through huge rallies and Bal Thackeray publicly states that the Hindu youth should become human bombs, still only Muslim youth will remain suspect in every bomb blast case and would be tortured.

The communal approach has been so hardened that in a TV discussion after two bomb blasts in Navi Mumbai and Thane by activists of Sanatan Sangathan when the moderator asked if these organisations should be banned like SIMI, most of the participants said no as in their view no Hindu organisation be anti-national like SMI.

What is more unfortunate that leaders of secular parties for fear of alienating public opinion do not challenge communal forces effectively and let menace of communal polarisation grow in the country. After Bal Thackeray's statement not a single leader of any political party countered him, let alone demand his arrest. Their only concern is votes, not secularisation of the country.

As USA has miserably failed in solving the problem of terrorism by using torture; and ruining lives of hundreds of innocent people in Gantanamo Bay, India, and for that matter any other country, can also not succeed in solving this problem simply through torture. It is a political problem and has to be solved politically. Political policies, not the jackboots, can solve such problems.□