

## Dialogue is the Best Course to Combat Terrorism

Terrorism today happens to be the most common globalised terminology being used in modern times. Its intensity has increased after 9/11. Pakistan has become a scapegoat in the whole terrorism scenario due to the proxy war conducted by the United States against the former Soviet Union in '80s to contain communism. Pakistan was the main actor then — and happens to be again in 2010 — along with the United States against a common enemy Al Qaeda and its offshoot Taliban in the war on terror. But the question being asked today is how to contain terrorism? It has become a dilemma for the world states. Force is the last option. The foremost priority is the need to focus on dialogue. And for the success of talks, patience is required. It's a slow, painstaking solution. Art of diplomacy and sincerity is required to bring positive results. It is not literally possible to achieve victory against terrorists by force. How the Russians were defeated by the tribal militants two decades back is no secret. Now the Americans have replaced the Soviets. But the US is in close touch with Pakistan and the US is not alone as the Nato is involved. Washington has engaged dialogue with the moderates to achieve results. Avenues for talks have not been closed along with raging war being fought in Afghanistan by the United States and Pakistan troops engaged in terror war in North and South Waziristan and Swat.

The United States directly or indirectly has sway over world politics. Terrorism and its expansion had been explained through different perspectives and the solutions that had been extracted includes a wide range of strategies including diplomacy, talks, coercive methods, and the last option being war. Pakistan is engaged in strategic talks with the United States with top priority on war on terror.

### Need to contain terrorism through dialogue

The prevention of terrorism and the international law framework both need greater attention from scholars and policy makers, as part of a balanced and comprehensive approach. In a clearer sense, terrorism is the fate of globe and there are no feasible ways to eliminate terrorism through the use of force. Dialogue is the only way to tame the terrorists. Among the terrorists organisation, there are moderate elements and the best way to avoid killings of innocent people is to engage in talks with the moderates. Terrorism cannot be mitigated as the magnitude of terrorist organizations having global exposure is continuously rising throughout the globe. The defined concepts of eliminating terrorism from the world have varied and many analysts believe that no state can wipe out terrorism as a force to reckon with. Only talks is can bring desired results.

Many people perceive it as big game in which the state as well as non-state actors play a very destructive role. Many see the role of Taliban as politico-oriented Islamism movement of some sectarians present in different parts of the world that has been gathered under a platform of hate and phobic elements in the tribal region of Pakistan under al Qaeda and Taliban. Their aim is to bring Islamic revolution among the Muslim states and weaken its enemy — the United States through acts of terrorism. Terrorism in western world is usually known with reference to Islam, the ideology behind these deadly deeds is narrated under the concept of Jihad. However, modern days missionaries and Muslim moderates have

played a useful role in trying to curb this menace. The terrorism today is perceived as an inheritance of Muslim extremists like Osama Bin Laden and Mulla Omer and many others.

These fanatics including Laden and Omer remained major contributors as friends of the US in the victory against the proxy war two decades ago against the Soviets.

It was the region of Afghanistan where the decline of Soviet economy begun and lead to the collapse of the politico-economic system resulting into splitting of the Soviet Union. The Afghan warriors then played a major role in defeating the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

The terrorism and its deeproot ideologies begun from this era because the leaders of the modern day terrorism arose from here having a large materialistic support from the US for a long time for attaining the victory against communism. Organizations like al Qaeda took birth from this period, and the Taliban concept emerged from the madressahs in Pakistan, which produce Taliban in thousands.

### **Pakistan, US dialogue to contain terror**

Pakistan and the United States have been holding talks on terror and are successfully achieving results. Though both the countries had differences at times but eventually the process of dialogue is producing desired results. The strategy to counter terrorism being pursued by the two countries has dealt a vital blow to the terrorists. At times the US was stubborn and Pakistan had to be soft and at times Pakistan was stiff and the US showed flexibility.

The latest strategic dialogue between the US and Pakistan on steps to contain terror held in the middle of July, 2010 was productive.

Important, arguably central, as the security angle may be to the Pakistan-US strategic dialogue but the American side appeared to be saying to Pakistan, tell us your needs. A sum of \$7.5bn a year in non-military aid has to be spent over the next five years. The Pakistan government can influence the right choice to a great extent, if it gets its act together. Economic prosperity can help largely to eliminate terrorism.

It would not be wide off the mark to suggest that the American campaign in Afghanistan is beset by strategic confusion. While publicly the Americans vow that reconciliation will not be pursued until the Taliban insurgency is dented, there are real doubts if that is in fact achievable. A central plank of counter-insurgency strategy is the civilian government, but Afghan President Hamid Karzai seems more interested in pursuing a quick deal with the Taliban than improving governance and leading a civilian surge.

### **Pakistan, India dialogue**

Pakistan at the same time is also engaged in talks with India. With Delhi's top priority being terrorists attack in Mumbai and for Pakistan, Kashmir and water issues are core issues. Though nothing emerged in the brief meetings in Beijing between Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh but it was reassuring to see the Pakistani premier emphasise the importance of fighting hunger, poverty and illiteracy in the

region — in addition to jointly combating terror. The latter is important to furthering the Pakistan-India dialogue as neither country, especially ours, is immune from the violence that the war against militancy has engendered.

But how well can India and Pakistan work together to battle violence considering the high level of mistrust that exists between them? Suspicions of each other's intentions must be allayed through talks and one of the most effective ways to make talks successful would be to work jointly on improving socio-economic conditions in both countries. Not only would this create confidence in each other's endeavours, perhaps even lead to lingering disputes being resolved, it would also strike at the roots of terror that is perpetrated largely by a class of people with serious social, political and economic grievances.

However, the more optimistic interpretation is that India and Pakistan are warily re-engaging one another, the diplomatic hiccups the result of a nascent but real process of rebuilding trust and confidence in a relationship poisoned by mutual distrust. For a dispute that is over six decades old, a few months — from the prime ministers' meeting in Thimpu to the present — is a mere blink of an eye. The optimists suggest that the excruciatingly slow pace of re-engagement isn't indicative of problems but a way of building a solid base for the next phase of the peace dialogue between the two countries. Rational and sensible people on both sides of the border will be hoping that it is the optimistic hypothesis which is true.

But even if it is not, the two sides must ensure that they keep talking to each other. The constituency for peace in India and Pakistan is elastic — engagement will ensure that constituency grows. No talks, though, would mean that the Mumbai attackers have won and the people of South Asia have lost.

No matter how quickly the joint anti-terrorism mechanism that the two countries installed some time ago is made fully operational, terrorist activities will continue unless there is greater concentration on the people's welfare.

## **EU strategy on countering terrorism**

Gilles de Kerchove, Europe Union Counter-terrorism Coordinator, spelt out the EU strategy to counter terrorism. Kerchove revealed the work of the Council of the EU in the field of counter-terrorism: maintain an overview of all the instruments at the Union's disposal, and closely monitor the implementation of the EU counter-terrorism strategy. The importance of the role was reaffirmed by the European Council in the adoption of the Stockholm Programme (December 2009).

He emphasized on what the UN Global Strategy called "conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism" were exactly that, conditions in which terrorism could spread but not all societies faced with such conditions triggered such a violent response. Countries which cannot provide good governance of all their territory allow the development of "safe havens" in which terrorist groups can thrive. The EU has made a start in providing direct support for the counter-terrorism efforts of a number of key countries, in South Asia, the Sahel and

Horn of Africa, through the "Instrument for Stability". However, responding fully to these problems is a much broader challenge for the development community. Kerchov said, "Since 2006, the EU and the Legal Adviser of the US State Department have engaged in a dialogue about counter- terrorism and international law. Questions discussed include the use of the concept of "war" and "laws of armed conflict" in the fight against terrorism as a matter of law; the relation between and applicability of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the fight against terrorism; the rights of detainees apprehended in the course of the fight against terrorism in particular the conditions at Guantanamo; the treatment of prisoners and interrogation methods used in detention centres where detainees are held; so-called renditions and secret detention centres.

## Conclusion

Arguably, dialogue is the best course to combat terrorism. The other option is war. But if the war is lost, what then? However, if the talks fail, there are reasons to believe that as the tempers cool down of the leading actors, dialogue can start again. And terrorism is pursued by religious fanatics. It is not easy to win wars in mountainous areas or erase the hideouts of the terrorists. There are moderate elements among the terrorists and accept talks to find out ways to achieve peace.

The Taliban are feared because of their utter defiance of the country's laws and their evident lack of respect for the rule of law and due judicial process. Where they held sway they instituted an arbitrary justice system that featured summary executions and torture. The law they followed — and do follow in certain parts — was of their own devising, characterised by a brutality that defied every national and international covenant of fair legal process and concern for citizens' rights.

Now, as talks with hardliners Haqqani group is being pondered by Kabul, it may bring positive results in the weeks ahead. Even if the first of talks fail, (if dialogue are held) at least, an understanding can be reached in the second round. So, dialogue is the most practical way to counter terrorism.

Terrorism is no doubt an enemy that must be defeated, but not simply through military means even if it is a joint effort. Dialogue is the only plausible answer to achieve results in fields that can help control terror. Among the most potent weapons that can crush terrorism are the elimination of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease that affect millions in the subcontinent.