

Civil society in combating terrorism and extremism politics essay



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1. The stalemate of terrorism has always been a threat to humans of this world in one form or the other, radiating from number of causes such as insensitive religious emotions, sectarian divergences, disparity of power among leftist and rightist schools of thought, communism vs. capitalism, exploitation of the ignorant and deprived ones and lust for acquisition of resources entailing in invasions etc. However, this problem emerged as a flash point after a tragic incident of 9/11 which drew attention of world towards uprooting this cancer by taking certain counter measures. Military solution, when crucial, plays its roles to some extent but cannot fully figure out the intricacies of terrorism without taking all the communities and nation onboard. This not only educates masses about issues in ' war against terror' but plays a key role in boosting morale of forces on frontlines. These have included the introduction of anti-terror laws; changes in reporting requirements for civil society organizations; and the increasing use of new border security technologies. In many countries, the impact of these measures on civil society and on citizens has been a source of great concern. The meaning of involving civil society in a wide-ranging and multidimensional response to the threat of terrorism has been stressed by various international platforms.

2. " Civil society" stands for a vast range of social groups, interests, representations, inbuilt tensions and conflicts. It is most evident by a range of voluntary associations including political parties, trade unions and professional bodies, private foundations, educational and research institutions and think tanks, religious, faith-based, and community-based organizations, and women's, human rights, social and environmental groups.

A vibrant civil society can play a strategic role in protecting local communities, countering extremist ideologies, and dealing with political violence.

3. Civil society gives a voice to different social groups and causes, which provides a channel of expression for the marginalized and can promote a culture of tolerance and pluralism. On a more practical level, civil society groups can play a significant role in building local support for counterterrorism through education, lobbying government authorities to adopt a holistic response that respects human rights, monitoring implementation of counterterrorism measures, investigating and publicizing abuses committed in the name of fighting terrorism, giving assistance and support to victims, promoting the importance of peace and security, and providing capacity-building training. This paper will address this aspect of countering the terrorism to see where and how civil society comes into action for countering terrorism.

AIM

4. To carry out an in-depth study of civil society's role in addressing terrorism, so as to identify the shortcomings hampering its efficacy with the view to enable a way forward in short and long term perspectives to make it an effective tool for combating terrorism.

SCOPE

5. The paper will focus on following:-

- a. To briefly highlight various terrorism facets for drawing their relevancy and genesis from civil society's standpoint.
- b. To ponder upon the essentials that the civil society can perform in developing its profile for handling terrorism.
- c. To highlight the limitations that handicaps our civil society's efficacy in playing its due role in addressing terrorism.
- d. To bring home an affect based approach focusing on immediate and long term actions to uplift our society's role against terrorism both in cognitive and practical domains.

PART – I

DEFINING TERRORISM AND COUNTER TERRORISM

6. The word Terrorism is very much renowned and perilous to the global world. The modern world has made a number of counter measures to face this menace. Before defining the role of civil society in combating terrorism and extremism effectively; we must understand first about terrorism, its genesis types and causes. Since, solution to any problem will prevail only by knowing its basis and objectives.

7. What is Terrorism.[1]Terrorism is not new, and even though it has been used since the beginning of recorded history it can be relatively hard to define. Terrorism has been described variously as both a tactic and strategy; a crime and a holy duty; a justified reaction to oppression and an inexcusable abomination. Obviously, a lot depends on whose point of view is

being represented. Terrorism has often been an effective tactic for the weaker side in a conflict. As an asymmetric form of conflict, it confers coercive power with many of the advantages of military force at a fraction of the cost. Due to the secretive nature and small size of terrorist organizations, they often offer opponents no clear organization to defend against or to deter.

8. That is why pre-emption is being considered to be so important. In some cases, terrorism has been a means to carry on a conflict without the adversary realizing the nature of the threat, mistaking terrorism for criminal activity. Because of these characteristics, terrorism has become increasingly common among those pursuing extreme goals throughout the world. But despite its popularity, terrorism can be a nebulous concept. No universally accepted definition exists for the meaning of the word “terrorism.” Analysts examining the question have counted more than one hundred different definitions.[2]The lack of an agreed definition allows those in power to interpret the term for their own purposes. Political leaders often take advantage of the terms ambiguity to label their opponents terrorists. However, there are certain definitions related to terrorism exist in the world with different connotation to its application used by different countries are as:-

a. United States Department of Defense. It defines terrorism as “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.” Within

this definition, there are three key elements – violence, fear, and intimidation and each element produces terror in its victims.

b. Federal Bureau of Investigation (United State). States that, “ Terrorism is the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.”

c. United State Department of State. It defines “ terrorism” to be “ premeditated politically-motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience”.

d. United Nations. United Nation produced this definition in 1992; “ An anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets.” The most commonly accepted academic definition starts with the U. N. definition quoted above, and adds two sentences totaling another words on the end; containing such verbose concepts as “ message generators” and ‘ violence based communication processes.” Less specific and considerably less verbose.

e. British Government. The British government definition of 1974 is”...the use of violence for political ends, and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public, or any section of the public, in fear.”

9. Terrorism is a criminal act that influences an audience beyond the immediate victim. The strategy of terrorists is to commit acts of violence that draws the attention of the local populace, the government, and the world to their cause. The terrorists plan their attack to obtain the greatest publicity, choosing targets that symbolize what they oppose. The effectiveness of the terrorist act lies not in the act itself, but in the public's or government's reaction to the act. There are three perspectives of terrorism: the terrorist's, the victim's, and the general public's. The phrase "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" is a view terrorists themselves would accept. Terrorists do not see themselves as evil. They believe they are legitimate combatants, fighting for what they believe in, by whatever means possible. A victim of a terrorist act sees the terrorist as a criminal with no regard for human life. The general public's view is the most unstable. The terrorists take great pains to foster a "Robin Hood" image in hope of swaying the general public's point of view toward their cause. This sympathetic view of terrorism has become an integral part of their psychological warfare and needs to be countered vigorously.

10. Historical Background of Terrorism. History of terrorism is as old as the human civilization. To overview the history of terrorism one will have to depend upon the history of violence that was given a new name in French revolution. In ancient times the terrorism manifested in the form of individual and tribal riots. Later the small states faced terrorist attacks by the bigger states as a foreign aggression. Human history has witnessed countless furious wars in which millions of people were massacred in dreadful terrorist acts. The series of human subjugation is still visible even in 21st century. The

violence which has been present in the human history throughout the ages has been given new name terrorism after French Revolution in 1779. We see in the history that Alexander the great and other warriors continuously killed millions of people that can also be termed as the terrorists of ancient human history. The Roman Empire also contested several dangerous wars to establish their kingdom in the world. Even the people of God continued to fight with each other in the name of religion.

11. We have the example of crusades wars between the Islamic regimes and Romans which were fought to manipulating the name of religion. Those wars also resulted in the killing of thousand of innocents just for the quest of power. The earlier organization that exhibited aspects of modern terrorist organization was the Zealots of Judea, known to the Roman as sicarii, or dagger-men. They carried on an underground campaign of assassination of Roman occupation forces, as well as any Jews they felt had collaborated with the Romans. In ancient India many wars were fought among different groups or tribes. The European nations also fought wars with each other resulting in the deaths of several innocent people. The French Revolutionary Governments coined the word terrorism by instituting systematic state terror against the population of French in the 1790s, killing thousands of people. In 20th Century the world witnessed World War I and II as big showdowns of terrorism to achieve the goals of superpower. Later the incident of atomic bombardment on Japan and human conflict in Vietnam are big human destruction which shakes the conscious of the mankind. In the last decade of 20th Century the phenomenon of terrorism continued to occur in the world more prominently after the end of cold war. The incidents of September 11

and July 7 are the height of terrorist acts. It shaped the world in the new directions. In modern times we have seen the horrible wars in Persian Gulf, Middle East and Africa in which the violence was used to terrorize the opponent. The war between Iraq and Iran, Kuwait and Iraq and deadly killings in Rwanda, Zaire and Congo are the worst recent examples of terrorism. Even these days in many countries of the world the proxy and guerrilla wars are harming and killing innocent and irrelevant people. In short, it can be firmly said that terrorism was present throughout the human history but since few decades it has been given a new dimension. This phenomenon should always be seen in historical perspective to understand the issue properly.

12. Types of Terrorism. The phenomenon of the terrorism is very complex on the whole in all aspects. There is disagreement among the scholars over the types of the terrorism unlike its definition. Various attempts have been made to derive the most common types of terrorism. However, the type of terrorism must be seen in socio-historic and politico economic perspective. Encyclopedia of Britannica describes the following types of terrorism:

a. Revolutionary Terrorism. It is the most common form of terrorism to achieve certain political objectives radically. Practitioners of this type of terrorism seek the complete abolition of a political system and its replacement with new structures. Modern instances of such activity include campaigns by the Italian Red Brigades, the German Red Faction (Baader – Meinhof Gang), the Basque separatist group and the Peruvian Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso), each of which attempted to topple a national regime.

b. Sub Revolutionary Terrorism. Sub revolutionary terrorism is rather less common. It is used not to overthrow an existing regime but to modify the existing socio-political structure. Since this modification is often accomplished through the threats of deposing the existing regime, sub revolutionary groups are somewhat more difficult to identify. An example can be seen in the African National Congress (ANC) and its campaign to end apartheid in South Africa.

c. Establishment Terrorism. The Soviet Union and its allies allegedly engaged in widespread support of international terrorism during the cold war; in the 1980s the United States supported rebel groups in Africa that allegedly engaged in acts of terrorism, such as the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). These types are theoretical and directly related with nation state. The typology of the terrorism is very broad subject it can be further classified on the basis of motives, methods and subjects. Let us have a glance of some other types of terrorism for further understanding.

d. Nationalist Terrorism. The aim of the nationalist terrorism is to establish a separate state or homeland for the certain ethnic, religious or tribal groups. This sort of terrorism has been popular among the most successful at winning international sympathy and concessions. It is very difficult to define terrorism because many practitioners of it claim to be the freedom fighters. They use violence to draw attention of the world to gain sympathy for their national cause. The most relevant examples of this type are the movement run by Irish republican Army in UK (IRA) and Palestine liberation organization (PLO) in Palestine. However, it is interesting fact that both of the groups

renounced terrorism in 1990s and adopted the political means of conflict resolution.

e. Religious Terrorism. Religious terrorism comes from many major faiths, as well as from small cults. This type of terrorism is growing rapidly and is discussed widely on the international media. Religious terrorists seek to use violence to further what they see as divinely commanded purposes, often targeting broad categories of foes in an attempt to bring about sweeping changes.

f. State-Sponsored Terrorism. State-sponsored terrorism is one of the most controversial types of terrorism. In this category the state uses hidden groups to suppress anti state or anti government elements in the country. State-sponsored terrorist groups are deliberately used by radical states as foreign policy tools – as Hoffman puts it, as “ a cost-effective way of waging war covertly, through the use of surrogate warriors or ‘ guns for hire”. State sponsored terrorism is normally executed by autocratic to suppress the political opponents. The state sponsor terrorist groups are more effective, efficient and active rather than any group because of having moral, political and logistic support of the government or state.

g. Inter-State or International Terrorism. This type of terrorism became evident in 20th century. Last century witnessed the events of insurgency and terrorism between two big powers in the guise of cold war. Although both the USSR and USA never confronted directly but no one can deny the proxy wars of these two powers in different parts of the world. Palestine is very clear example of the international terrorism where America supported Israel and

USSR was giving backup to Al-Fateh a militant arm of Palestinian liberation organization (PLO).

h. Group Terrorism. It occurs on the formation of various groups for common objectives in the society. Such groups are based on sectarian, linguistic, ethnic and tribal bases. When these groups work for the establishment of the supremacy and superiority for their own agenda it ultimately causes tension and clash with opponent groups. For example, Catholic and protestant conflict in Ireland, black white tension in US and South Africa etc.

13. Causes of Terrorism. To understand and solve the problem of terrorism it is essential for all to realize and identify the causes of terrorism. The terrorism is a complex phenomenon which has several reasons such as social, economic, religious and political etc. all these factors contribute in the enhancement and flourishing the terrorist activities. This global phenomenon has various causes and some of them are being spelled out briefly for the better understanding of the issue. This is also notable that the causes of terrorism may be different in various societies due to its religious, ethnic and political nature.

a. Helplessness and Hopelessness. Helplessness which leads to hopelessness is the psychological state that enhances terrorism in the society. The society in which the people are ignored and have to suffer from socioeconomic and political injustice provide conducive environment to promote terrorism. When the people and their problem are neglected or kept aloof they ultimately express their resentment in the form of violent behavior to attract the attention of the state and the people. We can witness that in the long

standing political disputes such as Palestine and Kashmir etc where the aspirations of the people were not heeded some of them started militant movements. Similarly, in communist regimes where the people were not given their socio-political rights they brought about even deadly revolution.

b. Political and Economic Deprivation. Political and Economic deprivations are the main root causes of terrorism. When the political and economic rights of the certain groups are not granted it chooses the suitable method of terrorism to show their anger. This deprivation encourages the effected groups to adopt the violent ways to get their aspirations fulfilled. For example we can see that in northern states of India such as Assam, Nagaland, and West Bengal etc. the communists started guerilla war against the Indian Government. Charles Kegley while discussing the contemporary terrorism presents a root cause school of thought which asserts that political and economic deprivation are the main causes of terrorism. He views the advocates of “ Root Causes Theory” propel that “ politically oppressed and economically deprived people are more prone to violent and terrorist behavior. They are deprived of their basic needs and this condition forces them to change their fate by hook or crook.

c. Influence of Communist Regimes. At the end of cold war the influence of communist regimes inspired by Marxist and Leninist theories made a cause of escalation of terrorism in the world. Being influenced by such regimes many freedom movements adopted violence. We see in Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka communists and Tamals started violent movements in the last two decades of twentieth century for their freedom.

d. Poverty and Economic Exploitation. In the society where there is illiteracy, hunger and economic disparity the terrorism flourishes rapidly. All these factors lead to increase in poverty which itself is the mother of terrorism. Famous philosopher Aristotle had agreed on the assertion stating that “Poverty is mother of Terrorism and Revolution”. We see for example in Muslim countries there is a huge amount of poverty and that is why, it becomes easier for the terrorist groups to find the interested persons due to their poor economic conditions. Daniel Pipes (2002) says that “As long as there is poverty, inequality, injustice and repressive political systems, militant Islamic tendencies will grow in the world”

e. Easy Access to Weapons and Modern Technology. Due to incredible advancement in weapons technology and human knowledge it has become easy for the terrorists to get them easily. Huge quantity of information about the arms manufacturing has been spread by internet which has made the access of the terrorists easy and they use weapons to get quick results the act of terrorism.

f. Sheer Success of Terrorism. Terrorism is a short cut tactic for the terrorists to achieve their goals quickly. It is more result orientated rather than peaceful movement. That is why the terrorist groups adopt this for getting more results in shorter time. Easy access to weapons and widespread information of the arms technology is the cause of escalation of terrorism in modern times.

g. Lack of Democracy and Dictatorship. Lack of Democracy is the main cause of terrorism in present times. The dictators and autocrat governments

frighten opponents. They do it to create the fear among the masses to suppress any opposition against their governments. In undemocratic circumstances the people do not find ways to express their disagreement and as a result some of them turn to the violent means to submit their expression. We can see in many autocrat and communist states in Latin America and Africa the massive force was used against the political opponents such as in Cuba Zambia and Congo etc.

h. Religious Extremism. There is a school of thought which considers that the religious extremism is the major cause of terrorism. Mark Juergensmeyer says that “ The religion is crucial for these acts since it gives moral justifications for the killing and provides images of cosmic war that allows activists to believe that they are waging spiritual scenarios”. It does not mean that the religion causes terrorism but it does mean that the religion often provides symbols that make possible bloodshed even catastrophic acts of terrorism. As evidence we can observe that the majority of the terrorist movements are inspired by the religion or at-least it is claimed.

i. Biological and Social Elements. Other than above mentioned causes sociologists have another point of view. A man is violent by nature. The sociologists present three hypotheses biological instinctual, social learning, and frustration aggression. Sigmund Freud’s says that “ Man is embodied with an instinctive urge and appetite of attacking and subjugating others”. It means that naturally human beings try to divert towards violence and terrorism by nature. The second point is that the social learning of the person also convinces him/her towards terrorism. If one grows and develops in the oppressed society one can be easily attracted towards violence and <https://assignbuster.com/civil-society-in-combating-terrorism-and-extremism-politics-essay/>

terrorism. Jean Jacques Rousseau presents the theory of social learning he says that “ human mind is like a blank sheet and whatever his society likes, paints on it”. If one lives in violent society he/she would remain motivated towards terrorism. Theory of frustration aggression was coined by the psychologists of Yale University in 1939. They viewed that the aggressive behavior of a man reveals the existence of frustration in him. It means frustration produces the aggression and it is not sui genres. All above discussion does not encompass the causes of terrorism but provides view for the laymen. However, it is the common responsibility of all the stakeholders to contemplate on the issue to understand the phenomenon of the terrorism in religio-cultural and socio- economic perspective. In short, a sense of deprivation, sense of being exploited and sense of being cheated are important factors escalating terrorism in this modern era. Other than above discussion I would like to mention the causes of terrorism in the context of Pakistan as highlighted by the Gen. Pervez Musharraf President of Pakistan. He, while addressing in international seminar on Global Terrorism on August 29-2007 organized by institute of Regional studies (IRS) Islamabad pin pointed some noteworthy causes of terrorism in Pakistani and global perspective. He described following causes which deserve due attention by the international community. Political deprivation and alienation are an arch cause of terrorism. This leads to hopelessness. The sense of powerlessness, which then leads to these terrorist acts. Lack of education and poverty are equally responsible for the increasing in terrorist activities. The illiterate are wrongly given the hope to go directly in to the heaven if he/she commits terrorist act for God or religion. Thus, in circumstance where there is lack of education and poverty it becomes easier for the master minds of the

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terrorist groups to launch the offences at the cost of the socio-economic compulsion and ignorance of the poor masses. President Gen. Pervez Musharraf has rightly indicated that the wrong understanding and misinterpretation of the religion is the important cause of terrorism. He asserts that in Pakistan there are many clerics who have limited knowledge of the teachings and values of the Islam. They misguide the people for their vested interests in the name of religion.

14. Counter Terrorism. Counter terrorism is also a contested concept. The term embodies a wide range of measures with differing impacts, which can be loosely characterized as the good, the bad, and the ugly. In the bad and ugly categories are Counter Terrorism Measures (CTMs) that overemphasize security and distort development and aid priorities, and that lead to extrajudicial killings, greater state repression, and increased human rights abuse. Overly restrictive counterterrorism measures constrain the social, political, and operational capacity of civil society actors and impede the work of groups promoting improvements in governance, human rights, and development. These are all important elements for reducing conditions, such as political marginalization, repression, and despair that can fuel grievances and lead to expressions of political violence. On the positive side are cooperative nonmilitary measures that enhance the capacity of governments to thwart terrorist attacks while promoting and protecting human rights. Also in the good category are policies that encourage support for sustainable development and good governance, as recommended in the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

15. The proposed categorization is figurative and not meant to suggest absolute judgments about particular policies. The range of counterterrorism measures is extremely wide, and specific policies can have differing impacts in varying conditions and settings. Strengthened law enforcement efforts are good when they prevent attacks and bring perpetrators to justice, but these same measures can be bad if they lead to abuses and increased repression. Efforts to prevent the financing of terrorism are positive, yet programs intended to interdict such funding often have negative implications for nongovernmental groups and charities seeking to overcome oppression. The evaluation of particular counterterrorism measures depends greatly on context and the way in which specific actors implement policies. Judgments about particular policies should be based on the degree to which they contribute to genuine security and democratic governance, while also upholding the rule of law and protecting the work of peace builders and human rights defenders.

16. Counterterrorism measures are usually weighted toward the executive branch of government, with little attention to enhancing judicial independence, legislative oversight, and citizen involvement. Emergency measures passed in the name of fighting terrorism have had the effect of undermining civil liberties, restricting the ability of civil society groups to operate, and impeding development and relief activities in marginalized communities. Repressive CTMs have reversed progress achieved in recent years toward the integration of human rights and accountable governance into development policy. Individual rights and political freedoms have eroded as states have accumulated greater security powers. The nongovernmental

monitoring organization Freedom House has reported an alarming erosion of global political freedom in recent years. In its 2010 annual survey the organization noted “ intensified repression against human rights defenders and civic activists “ and reported declines for political freedom in countries representing 20 percent of the world’s total polities. The last few years have witnessed the longest continuous period of decline for global freedom in the organizations nearly 40-year history of publishing annual ratings.[3]In 2011 Freedom House noted a further decline in political freedom and a reduction in the number of countries defined as politically free. The report highlighted the continued poor performance of countries of the Middle East and North Africa, although this trend may be partially reversed if the democratic revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia, and other countries produce freer societies and more representative governments.

PART – II

ESSENTIAL ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

17. Civil society can play a significant role in helping states increase awareness of the threat and the impact of an attack on local communities, and in deepening public support for government action to address it, which is an essential component of any effective long-term strategy. Terrorism is obviously the state of extreme in human conflict that occurs when the violence enters in the matter. The terrorism is the result of failure in conflict resolution which can occur anywhere in the world. It is the crucial social problem of the society as well. Every stakeholder should play its due role in combating the terrorism. In combating terrorism the role of the civil society

is inevitable. The broadly classified and interrelated roles of civil society in regards to preventing and reduction of terrorism are as follows:-

a. Advisory and Educational Role.

b. Community Services.

c. Advocacy and Research.

d. Legal Aspects.

Advisory and Educational Role

18. Civil society organizations can play a significant advisory and educational role. They can provide policy advice and expertise on aspects of preventing terrorism that is often not available within government. Equally importantly, civil society experts may provide alternative appropriate language and terminology to public officials in addressing issues related to terrorism and security. In order to strengthen their co-operation with governments and civil society may also find it appropriate to acknowledge positive steps or measures taken by law enforcement officials and government where they occur. In addition, they may have a positive advisory role in providing concrete alternatives to counter-terrorism policies and measures that they consider to be ill-conceived. It is important to recognize, however, that the non-state sector needs to be given relevant information in order to understand the real extent of the threat and to be able to provide adequate suggestions of a response[4]