TERRORISM

Introduction -

Until the 1990's, terrorism was widely considered to be a security concern of a second order.

But, the events of 11 September 2001, changed the whole discourse dramatically and pressed upon the significance of terrorism as a policy goal. It became a principal security threat in the 21st century, reflecting upon the fact that in the era of globalization, non state actors (terrorist groups) had gained important advantages over the states. Terrorism is both a highly contested phenomenon and a deeply controversial concept.

The Problem of Definition -

Both political and academic efforts to get to grips with terrorism have repeatedly been hung up on the issue of a proper definition which distinguishes terrorism from ~~co~~ criminal violence or military action. The problem starts with labelling because the term 'terrorist' is a description that has never been voluntarily adopted by any individual or group.

It is applied on them by others, first and foremost by the government of the states they attack. States find it quite easy to produce definitions of terrorism. For example, USA defines it as a 'calculated use or threat of violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies.' The United Kingdom's government defines it 'as the use or threat, for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological course of action, of serious violence against any person or property.' Ultimately, terrorism appears to be defined by intention rather than by behaviour.

The problem with this whole view is that state simply assumes that the use of violence by 'subnational groups' is automatically illegal, thus, owing to the fact that ~~sad~~ state alone has the right to use force. But, people outside the State ~~purview~~ purview may wonder ~~whether~~ whether all use by violence by non-state actors is unjustifiable, even if it

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has been formally declared to be illegal by the state. The revolution- ary terrorists believe themselves to be just in opposing with violence a regressive regime in which no freedom of political expression or organization has been permitted. Such differences of perspective has given rise to the view that 'one's person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter.' This relativism is central to the impossible task of finding a consensual definition of terrorism.

Definition — Inorder to define terrorism, it would make more sense to construct the types/kinds of actions that are generally categorised as a 'terrorist act'. There are many kinds of actions that are used by terrorist group like assassination, kidnapping, hijacking, bombings, suicide missions, etc that are seldom used in conventional military conflicts and they signal a special type of violence. But, it is also true that too many terrorist

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actions duplicate either military or criminal acts. It can be stated that 'terror is simply a tactic, a method of random violence.' It is a distinct form of modern political agency which intends to threaten the ability of a state to ensure the security of its members and thus, it claims to legitimacy. The **central feature** of terrorism is that it is a form of political violence that aims to achieve its objectives through climate of fear and apprehension. Terrorist violence is clandestine (hidden) and involves an element of surprise. It often takes the form of indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets, although attacks on symbols of power and prestige and the kidnapping and murder of promenent businessmen, government officials and political leaders are also viewed as an act of terrorism.

Therefore, the concept of terrorism can be defined by the nature of :-

(1) The **act** itself – clandestine violence that has an

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indiscriminate character. However, terrorism is a social fact rather than a brutal fact and also that the intentions behind acts of terrorism maybe complex or uncertain.

(2) Its __victims__ – generally innocent civilians but attacks on military installations or political leaders and governmental officials also fall into the category of a terrorist act.

(3) Its __prepetrators__ – non-state bodies that intend to influence the actions of the governments or international organizations. This is known as 'terrorism from below.' There canbe 'state sponsored' terrorism which is 'terrorism from above'.

The use of term 'terrorism' assumes that certain forms of political violence canbe distinguished from other forms by the fact that they aim to provoke 'terror' rather than simply lead to destruction. However, all forms of political violence or warfare aim, at some

level, to strike fear into the wider population. In conventional usage, the term is associated associated only with non-state actors.

Terrorism, however, is different from –

(1) guerrilla warfare – Though both lay emphasis on corroding an enemy's will to resist by drawing it into a protracted armed struggle but, terrorism relies more on 'propoganda by the deed', whereas, guerrilla armies typically rely heavily on a mass base of popular support.

(2) Conventional warfare – It is often embraced by those who have no realistic possibility of prevailing against their opponents in a conventional armed contest. It also lacks the organizational strength that which is the strong point of a conventional warfare. Terrorists rely on strategies of provocation and polarization.

[Different forms of Terrorism] — (Classification)

Terrorism comes in various forms and

it can also be transformed.

There are, basically, four types of terrorism —

(1) <u>Insurrectionary terrorism</u> — This is aimed at the revolutionary overthrow of a state. Examples include anarchist and revolutionary communist terrorism.

(2) <u>Loner or Issue terrorism</u> — This is aimed at the promotion of a single cause (~~tootoo~~ bombings of abortion clinics in USA in 1995, or nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway by a religious cult).

(3) <u>Nationalist Terrorism</u> — This aims to overthrow colonial rule or occupation, often with the goal of gaining independence ~~foo~~ for an ethnic, religious or national group. For eg - The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, Hamas and Hezbollah in Israel and, ~~the~~ kashmiri militant groups, etc (Khalistan movement)

(4) <u>Global Terrorism</u> — It is aimed at inflicting damage and humiliation on a global power

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or at transforming global civilizational relations. (i.eg - Al-Qaeda, ISIS or other forms of Islamic terrorism.

NEW TERRORISM

— This concept suggests that there has been a revolutionary change in the nature of terrorism. Its most important and defining feature is that religious motivations for terrorism has replaced secular motivations. The secular character of 'traditional' terrorism has been ~~derived~~ derived from the idea that, for much of the post 1945 period, terrorism was associated with nationalist and particularly separatist movements. The goal of terrorism was narrow and political. However, by 1980's, religion had started to become an important motivation for political violence. Al Qaeda was and many other organizations that came up during this period was certainly an examples of this trend which was motivated by a broad and radical politico-religious ideology.

Proponents of the idea of 'new terrorism' suggests that because

terrorism had become a religious imperative and even a sacred duty, the nature of terrorist groups and the function of political violence has changed dramatically.

Religious belief has altered the moral context in which groups resort to, and use, violence which has increased symbolically and has been embraced as a manifestation of 'total war'. There has been growing association of terrorism with weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and also nuclear weapons, as well as increased use of suicide terrorism. There has been changes in the organisational character too. New terrorists tend to operate within more diffused and amorphous international networks of loosely connected cells and support networks. For eg - Al-Qaeda is often portrayed more as an idea than as an organization, its network of cells being so loosely organized that it has been seen as a form of 'leaderless jihad'. (Islamic Terrorism)

Although Islamic terrorism has been portrayed as a manifestatat

manifestation of religious revivalism; it is better understood as a violent response to political conditions and crises that have found expression in a politico-religious ideology which emerged in late 1970's and was shaped by three major developments –

(i) A growing number of Muslim states experienced crises of governmental legitimacy as popular frustrations grew against corrupt and autocratic regimes that failed to meet their citizen's economic and political aspirations. This led to growing religion based movements to overthrow 'apostate' (a person who forsakes his/her religion). Muslim leaders in countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Pakistan, etc came to be dubbed as Islam's '<u>near enemy</u>' (enemy within)

(ii) US influence in the Middle East expanded and it came to be seen as the '<u>far enemy</u>' because of its

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policy of support of Israel, the sitting of US troops in the Muslim 'holy ground' of Saudi Arabia and its support for 'apostate' Muslim leaders across the region made the USA appear to be a threat to Islam.

(iii) There was a tremendous growth in politically engaged forms of religious fundamentalism in many parts of the Islamic world, a trend that was radically accelerated by the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Key counter terrorism strategies include the strengthening of state security, the use of military repression and political deals. State security and military approaches have often been counter productive and have provoked deep controversy about the proper balance between freedom and security.

Effective solutions to terrorism have usually involved encouraging terrorists to abandon violence by drawing them into a process of negotiation and diplomacy. But, this has proved to be inappropriate in dealing with Islamic terrorism.

Conclusion - Terrorism is a deeply controversial term. Mainstream, radical and critical perspectives offer quite different views on the nature of terrorism and the value of the concept. It is widely assumed that September 11 marked the emergence of a profoundly more significant form of terrorism, which can strike anywhere, any time. However, although many accept that there are important links between modern terrorism and the process of globalization, many have questioned whether terrorism has genuinely gone global or not. Its a tough question to answer and as a

concept , terrorism is linked to various aspects of global politics making it a highly volatile subject .

Concepts -

- State terrorism - Terrorism carried out by the government bodies such as the police, military or intelligence agencies.

- Nihilism - belief in nothing or the rejection of all unconventional moral and political principles.

- New Terrorism - A form of terrorism that is supposedly more radical and devastating than traditional terrorism because of the nature of its organization, political character, motivations and strategies.

- Suicide Terrorism - A form of terrorism in which the perpetrators intends to kill himself/herself in the process of carrying out the attack.