
Ugly Face of Terror

Debidatta Aurobinda Mahapatra, Ph.D., University of Mumbai

The first decade of the 21st century has witnessed horrendous incidents of terror. While its beginning witnessed the attack on the twin trade towers in New York, towards its end another horrible attack occurred in the Indian commercial centre Mumbai. The attack further reinforced that terrorism has no religion, terrorists are not humans, and the terror acts surpass human comprehension. The barbaric terror attack in Mumbai in November 2008 killed about 200 people including women, children and patients. Many foreign nationals including citizens of the US, UK and Israel too were killed and many others were injured. In a sense, the incident not only fortified the global nature of terrorism but also brought into stark picture the barbarity and the degradation of human mind at its peak.

India since the beginning of the 21st century has become one of the worst victims of terrorism. As per a report by the US National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC), India's casualties within the years 2004-2007 have become the highest than all of North America, South America, Central America, Europe and Eurasia put together. As per its estimates India has lost 3684 lives in the above period while for others combined it was 3280. In the year 2008 alone India suffered many terror attacks in some of its major cities including Delhi, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Guwahati and Hyderabad. Terror strike in another Indian city, Surat also known as the diamond hub could be avoided in last minute due to prior information, and timely defuse of live bombs, lying in public parks, garbage and hanged even on tree-branches. The 21 serial bomb blasts in Ahmedabad killed 56 people and seven blasts in Bangalore killed 6 people, besides injuring hundreds. For the first time in India, the terrorists, among other places, targeted a hospital, killing not only doctors and nurses, but also patients, pregnant women and children.

On the evening of 26 November 2008 the terrorists in a well orchestrated manner, after duping the Indian marine police, coast guard and Mumbai police reached Mumbai, got

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divided into groups and continued the carnage for about 72 hours at different places. One group comprising two terrorists attacked the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminal railway station and killed the passengers who were waiting for trains. After that indiscriminate firing they turned to nearby Cama hospital and killed patients including old, women and children. This group later killed three senior police officials and some junior ranks and injured many others before they were countered at Girgam Chowpatty (sea beach) by a team of Mumbai police officials. While one of them got killed the other injured terrorist was captured alive. The CCTV footages of the terrorist firing indiscriminately at the railway station and people running chaotically to save their lives were shown repeatedly in television channels, thus providing a horrifying picture of the reality. Another group attacked the Nariman House owned and mostly housed by Jews and held hostage the residents. They later killed the hostages before being killed by the Indian security forces. Other two groups targeted the posh hotels Taj Palace and Oberoi-Trident. After killing people in the entrance and lobby they held hostage other occupants including the foreign nationals. The attack and its live broadcast in twenty four hours news channels horrified the people of Mumbai; in fact the incident took the whole city to ransom, bringing the buzzing city to a standstill.

Reportedly the terror accomplices were already staying in the area and they had concrete plans to carry out the attacks. In modern era use of modern equipments has made the terror strikes more precise and target oriented. The terrorists in Mumbai attack used GPRS system, mobile phones, mapping technology to perpetrate their inhuman acts. They underwent sophisticated training in Pakistan to carry out the attack. Despite the differences in investigations between New Delhi and Islamabad, Pakistan has admitted the terrorists sailed off from its Arabian sea coast. Pakistan has also accepted that the lone captured terrorist is its citizen. The terrorist had hijacked an Indian trawler IVM Kuber to reach Mumbai. The terrorist attack was funded by the super profits generated from the drug trafficking in Afghanistan. It is well known about 90 per cent of poppy cultivation in the world takes place in Afghanistan, the land now known as a hot bed of terrorism and religious

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fundamentalism, in which the NATO forces are fighting a long drawn war to contain it. Afghanistan, once a base of Taliban, is still known for its elusive nature due to its high mountain terrains which provide enough space for the terror culture to thrive and grow. Its border areas with Pakistan, which reportedly shelter Al Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden, are strongholds of terrorist elements.

It becomes crucial to analyze the motives behind the Mumbai terror attack in order to locate the attack in a wider perspective. First, the attack on India's commercial centre and its luxury hotels were aimed at not only to damage India's economy, but also to show world India is not a safe destination for foreign investment. India is a rising market economy and it is among the five largest economies in the world. The terror attack was aimed at instilling fear in the foreign investors to discourage them to invest in India. Second, the attack in the Taj hotel and Oberoi-Trident hotel, usually visited by foreign tourists and business persons, was to show terrorism as a means to settle perceived grievances takes into its ambit people from all over the world. In fact the terrorists wanted to give the attack an international character. Third, the attack on Nariman House, a Jewish settlement centre, was aimed at highlighting the Palestine issue. As the terror email, later disclosed by investigating agencies, revealed the terrorists wanted to target the Jews to highlight the Palestine issue. Among others, the terrorists killed one rabbi and his wife while their infant baby survived. It was difficult for a baby to comprehend the barbarity of the terror attack to which his parents became victim. Perhaps the terrorists expected backlash from Israel on Pakistan, from which the terror act emanated, thus furthering their objectives of global Jihad.

The terrorist organisations like Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen, etc. are based in Pakistan and all of them reportedly have close connections with Pakistan's intelligence agency, Inter Services Intelligence. It has been corroborated that the attack on Indian embassy in Kabul in July 2008 that killed 40 people with some senior Indian officials had the complicity of the Pakistan's intelligence agency. The Pak based terrorist organisations see India as prime rival of Pakistan. The Kashmir under the control of Pakistan has a number of

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terrorist training centres, which have been confirmed by the US intelligence agencies. In its meeting in Pakistan town Muridke on 23 November 2008, the chief Lashkar-e-Toiba Chief Hafeez Al Sayeed had criticised India for its role in Afghanistan and its involvement in reconstruction works. He exhorted the members of the Lashkar to punish India. The Peace Deal in Swat region in Pakistan on 16 February 2009 shows, in which Islamabad agreed to promulgate Sharia law in the region, shows collusion between terrorism and religious fundamentalism in the region with wider implications for Pakistan as well as the world. The fragile political situation in Pakistan has further aided this collusion.

The terror attack in Mumbai brings forth some broader issues to picture. Modern day terrorism with the use of modern technology is able to perpetrate large scale damage in any country. The proliferation of weapons including nuclear weapons has created apprehensions that the terrorists may be able to create dirty bombs to target their perceived enemy. It is not the issue of religion that has raised alarm throughout the world but its radical variety. Terrorism being a global menace, the world needs a coordinated approach to tackle the menace. Gone are the days when a particular nation could confront the menace in its territory, in the modern age when there is a vast international network of terror with all modern equipments it is time to face it collectively as a threat to whole human race. The barbarity of terrorism lies not only in the act itself but in the mind that promotes such act. Hence, the prime concern of the humanity at this critical juncture would be to address those minds or rather mindset with all means.