

## **Managing Terrorism: A Glimpse at Indo-US Cooperation**

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### **Abstract**

The article seeks to look at the evolution of India-US relationship from the lens of the two countries' counter terrorism stance. The prospects cooperation between India and the United States of America in countering terrorism is a converging point for their respective foreign policies. This Paper will be divided into three sections. The first section would cover the landmark terrorist attacks on these countries and the democratic values they represent. The second section would cover the occasions on which these two countries came together to counter terrorism and finally the challenges that still remain.

The end of the twentieth century marked a beginning of a new age of world politics. The disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic marked the end of decades-long arms race.(17) Many new international initiatives such as the Rio declaration and The World trade organizations were set up on the prime of international cooperation on issues like Trade, financing development , climate change, environment , disease mitigation. Old rivalries gave way to new alliances. This period also saw a decade of development of India-US relationship.(18) Despite some bumps in the roads, notably their respective stances on Nuclear proliferation, the presence of players like Pakistan and Soviet Union etc, India and the United States the largest and oldest democracies in the world entered a new phase of their relationship.(1)

The twenty-first century also brought with it some new challenges. Terrorism by no means was a modern phenomenon. Three universally accepted components of a

terrorism are 1. Violence 2. Against non-combatant 3. Intimidation. The new age terrorism is a mutation of political motivations combined with the proliferation of technology and weapons of mass destructions. Terrorist groups' organisational structure is as well defined as that of any Multi National corporation. Access to mass media is another aspect which has given these organizations a platform to communicate their agenda. The very act of terrorism in one part of the globe can create terror in another.

September 11, 2001 is forever etched in the memory of the World. And it was for more than one reason.

The decade before 9/11 saw the rise of the United States of America as the sole superpower. The era of unipolarity had dawned. The disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic had proved the ascendancy of Liberal Democracy and Capitalism. As Francis Fukuyama famously declared in *The End of History and the Last Man*, the verdict was in: Liberal Democracy conquers all. Despite a few setbacks notably the bombing of the United States embassy in two East African cities, one at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the other at the in Kenya on August 7 1998, it seemed the United States stood unchallenged. The United States Armed forces was the most superior and had command bases all across the globe, the next twelve nations in terms of military spending could not in aggregate compete with the United States. (17) In terms of Economy, despite a minor recession, the United States was still the largest economy in the world. The cultural appeal of the American way of life and the globalising trend of McDonaldization was all but set to take over the world. It seemed the twenty-first century would continue under the reign of the United States. This grand illusion was soon to be shattered. (17)

Nineteen terrorists, fifteen from Saudi Arabia, two from the United Arab Emirates, and one from Lebanon and one from Egypt, all of them part of an international terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda hijacked four United States airliners. Two crashed into the twin towers of world trade centers New York, One crashed into the heart of United States military base the Pentagon and the last crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. On a closer look one could hardly miss the symbolism, the trade centers which represented not only the economic prowess but the primacy of the United States in the Bretton Woods system and Pentagon which was the heart of the United States armed forces. (3) It was not just an attack on the United States, it was an attack on the American way of life. The last such incident was on 7th December 1941, when a United States Naval base Pearl Harbor was attacked by the imperial Japanese Naval Air Service. This Incidence forced the United States to give up its one fifty year old isolationist stance from world politics and enter World War two. This subsequently resulted in the victory of the Allied forces in 1945 and liberated Europe from the yoke of tyranny of Nazism.

Much like Pearl Harbour, 9/11 would start a decade long armed struggle for the cause of freedom. Operation Enduring Freedom a United States led alliance of twelve countries and declared a Global War on terror on terrorist groups in Iraq, Afghanistan and covert operation on Yemen. (4) This would launch many debates in Academic circles on nature of terrorism, the role of Humanitarian intervention the proliferation

of weapons of mass destruction. Above all the intention of Global war on terror was to preserve Freedom , which was the pinnacle of western democracy.

Across the Pacific ,India had successfully completed a decade of its Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation reforms with promising growth in it's GDP. After conducting its second Nuclear test Pokhran-2 India had joined the Nuclear Club.(8) The loss of the USSR as an important ally was filled with foreign policies such as the Look East. Even relations with the United States were looking up after a period of coldness stemming from multiple factors ranging from but not limited to India's closeness with Moscow, the Nuclear Non proliferation treaty etc. During the historic visit of President Clinton to India in 2000, a joint statement titled *India-US Relations: A Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,* ' *Institutional Dialogue Between India and the United States,* was signed by both President Clinton and Prime Minister Vajpayee, New Delhi, March 21.(12)

India was emerging as not only a major power in the South Asian region but also a relevant voice of the developing world on International forums like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and World Trade Organisation. Kargil was a triumph which seemed to settle the border dispute with Pakistan. (8)India's multilateral ventures such as the Non Aligned Movement were flourishing with more than hundred nations participating. The South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation seemed to be gaining momentum. The twenty-first century like its potential ally across the Pacific brought great promise for India.

Two months after 9/11, on 13th December 2000 the Indian Parliament was attacked by five terrorists who were identified by the Indian establishment as Pakistan backed terrorist organisations Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e- Mohammad.All five terrorists were killed, around 8 security personal and one gardener was killed from the Indian side.(13) The attack on the same lines as the United States was seen as a symbolic one, on the heart of Indian Democracy.A more modest series of events followed. The Indian Armed forces launched Operation Parakram which was planned by the Indian Cabinet Committee on Security ,a limited offensive stanoff against the Kashmiri forces in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. The Standoff lasted for less than a year , the cost came out to be 2 billion dollars, there were 800 casualties in battle related accidents. The western media held its breath for this standoff had the potential to escalate into a Nuclear war since Pakistan was in no shape to fight a conventional war with India. However the United States was currently using Pakistan as a military base for its tactical operations in Afghanistan , it could not afford Pakistan going into a war. International efforts were made to neutralise the crisis by both George H.W. Bush Jr. and Tony Blair.Troops on both sides were called off. (8)

The Domestic Politics of both the United States of America and India shifted drastically after these events.In the United States The internal dimension of the U.S. war on terrorism gave way to antiterrorism legislation, such as the US Patriot act ; security institutions, such as the Department of Homeland Securit were established; it ushered an era of wide preventive detention regime numerous suspects; Extensive surveillance and intelligence-gathering programs by the National Security Agency , the Federal

Bureau of Investigation , and finally the strengthening of emergency-response procedures; and increased security measures for airports, borders, and public events.(10)

The Global War on Terror itself claimed major victories in initial years: Toppling of Taliban Regime in Afghanistan , Closing of Terrorist training camps, world wide arrest of major leaders of multiple terrorist organisations and avoiding any future terror attacks on the American Soil. Bush was reelected as President and of the most important factors no doubt had been his masculine commander image in fighting terrorism.(6) However there were criticisms , when Saddam Hussien was disposed in 2003 , The US foreign policy could not foresee the sectarian conflict which will plague the country ,it was also argued that the Global War on Terror scattered the Al-Qaeda groups and made it harder to trace them. It also fueled anti-american sentiment in the Muslim world.(5) Many believed that United states was more interested in establishing its own geopolitical interests in the region than fighting terrorism. Since the Global war of terror was carried out without the mandate of the United Nations , the legitimacy of international organisations was put in question. In academic circles debates opened up about the extent and intentions behind such Humanitarian Interventions. The criticism of war in Afghanistan and Iraq grew so much so among the American Public that Barack Obama, a staunch opposer to Bush's Foreign policy, was elected as the President of the United States with the promise of narrowing down the scope of United States military missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

India unfortunately had even less success in coping with Terrorism. Domestically the Indian Parliament passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) on 26 March, 2002, under the Bhartiya Janta Party led National Democratic Alliance. The bill was controversial enough that a joint session of the two houses was convened to pass the bill. The debate lasted for ten hours. In 2004 when the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance was elected, one of its first acts was to repeal POTA.(9) India was already dealing with internal insurgency in the State of Jammu and Kashmir since 1989.(7)

But from 2000-2010 there were series of attacks on mainland India starting from the Parliament attacks in 2001 , then on 22nd January 2002 attack on the American cultural centre, Kolkata , on 25th August 2005 Twin Blasts in Mumbai , On 24th September 2002 Akshardham Temple attack , on 29th October 2005 Blasts in New Delhi , on 28th of December 2005 attack on the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore , On 7th March 2006 Serial Blasts in Varanasi, On 11th July 2006 Mumbai Train blasts.(13) This is by no means an exhaustive list , not in mainland India nor in Kashmir.

The biggest attack in the history of Indian Democracy remains the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai. It began on November 26th and ended on November 29th after an intense operation lasting over sixty hours. The attack was carried out by 10 militants armed with advanced weapons at five prime locations in Mumbai, India's financial capital. Nearly 260 persons, from ten countries, were killed in the attack. "The attacks were with the expressed intention of destabilising India , wage war against the country , terrorise

its citizens , create financial loss and issue a warning to other countries whose citizens were also targeted, humiliated and cold bloody killed”(2)

The responsibility of the attack was taken by Pakistani security agency Inter Services Intelligence backed terrorist organization Lashkar-e-taiba. Pakistani establishment took seventy seven days to accept the involvement of its citizens. The plotters came from five different countries -United States of America, Canada, Italy ,Pakistan and India. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, arguably the most efficient security core in the world took more than a year to arrest some of the conspirators. The attack was not a vague suicide bombing which was the usual terror architecture in South Asia , it was a commando style military assault with a small team of highly trained ,heavily armed terrorists launching sustained attacks.(3)

These two terrorist attacks set the ground for India US engagement on counter terrorism , a brief look at the major Joint Statement/ Working Group/ Joint Exercise/Bilateral Dialogues between the two countries in the last decade. Starting from 2000, there was a India-US statement on Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism, the two sides had decided to share experiences, exchange information and coordinate approaches and action . In 2002 an initiative was undertaken against Cyberterrorism by the two countries. In 2006 The Indian Army and the US Marine Corps conducted “training in semi-urban terrain with a view to enhance interoperability at functional level and share experience of CT operations along with OOTW (Operations Other Than War) training and operations of an Infantry/Marine company as part of an Infantry Marine Battalion.” In 2010 a joint strategic dialogue took place between India and the United States where the latter assured India of its continued support in counter terrorist operation and extended full support to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks to justice. The last year saw two major conferences between India and united states one India–US Homeland Security Dialogue and the other India–US Counterterrorism Cooperation Initiative. In the first one , the two sides “decided to strengthen agency-to-agency engagement, including in the areas of intelligence exchange, information sharing, forensics and investigation, access and sharing of data relating to terrorism, security of infrastructure, transportation and trade, conducting joint needs assessments, combating counterfeit currency, countering illicit financing and transnational crime. They agreed that the two sides shall designate points of contact and establish protocols for engagement.” And in the second, Instituted cooperation towards “strengthening capabilities to effectively combat terrorism; promotion of exchanges regarding modernization of techniques; sharing of best practices on issues of mutual interest; development of investigative skills; promotion of cooperation between forensic science laboratories; establishment of procedures to provide mutual investigative assistance; enhancing capabilities to act against money laundering, counterfeit currency and financing of terrorism; exchanging best practices on mass transit and rail security; increasing exchanges between Coast Guards and Navy on maritime security; exchanging experience and expertise on port and border security; enhancing liaison and training between specialist Counter Terrorism Units including National Security Guard

with their US counterparts.”( Accessed from the Website of Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India)

In the context of combatting terrorism, one cannot understand the recent wave of terrorism in India, without the context of the year 1989. A serious insurgency erupted in Kashmir led by a bloc of Kashmiris seeking liberation from India known as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). This rebellion was aided and abetted by Pakistan, which was responsible for supplying arms and training in large quantities to individuals and organizations fighting in Kashmir. Drawing on the lessons of Afghanistan in the 1980s, when Pakistan acted as a base for US operations in Afghanistan, due to a growing Nuclear arsenal Pakistan did not believe that India would undertake a serious conventional retaliation operation in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. (2) This provided Pakistan with a sense of security against India's superior conventional war fighting capabilities. India's terrorism related concerns since then are limited to Pakistan-based organisations such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Hizbul U Mujahidin these organisations constantly challenge India's sovereignty and assertion in Kashmir valley by orchestrating terror attacks, inciting clashes, fueling communal tensions. For Indian Government the central issue remains Kashmir valley, as long as Pakistan keeps trying to challenge the status quo in the valley, insurgency would remain.

The focus of the United States of America has been on terror organisations relevant to the Global war on Terrorism effort in Afghanistan and Iraq, such as the al-Qaeda, and the Haqqani network or other transnational terror networks that are a threat to the US interest in multiple hotspots, such as the al-Shabaab, Jemaah Islamiya (JI) and Boko Haram. (5) From the above it can be concluded that the terrorist threat to India is limited to traditional security issues, for the United States there is more than meets the eye, the Global war on terror is more than just defending the principle of liberty or defending its freedom. (6) The United States of America is the only hegemony at the world stage and hence holds the military and diplomatic capacity to shape the world affairs to suit its own geopolitical and economic interests. It holds preeminence in the sense that it has the capacity of norm construction in the world forum as demonstrated by the coalition of the willing which went on without the United Nations mandate. (17)

So where does one find convergence? A turning point for India-US relationship came on second May 2011, Operation Neptune Spear the encounter of the founder of Al-Qaeda by US Navy seals. The fact was it took place in Abbottabad, a Pakistani city. Osama Bin Laden was hiding less than a mile away from Pakistan Military Academy. Pakistan, like in the 1980s, was a base for the United States in an offensive mission pertaining to the global war on terror. The operation took almost an entire fleet of SOAR helicopters and multiple drones. The fact that this was not detected by any Pakistani security agencies was a matter of national shame. This became a breaking point of Pak-US relationship. The Indian political leadership celebrated the killing of Laden and according to them it was a sign that the United States had finally drawn a

line in the sand and stopped backing up Pakistani's notorious ventures just because it served its own foreign policy interests.(11)

The present period seems to be as important as the moment when a succession of american administration from Clinton-Bush decided to de-hyphenate India-Pakistan from its South Asia Foreign policy ventures.(15) The second Obama Administration started paying more attention to India as a regional play in its pivot to Asia strategy where security threats such as the expansionist ventures of China , security of the Indian Ocean Regiona and countering terrorism. The idea of democratic peace in India-United States Relationship is emerging.(14) The ground for defense and security cooperation is covering the above stated issues however while India's major concern still remains infiltration from Pakistan US has shifted its focus to containing China as it seems to be wrapping up with Global war on terror.(16)

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