CHAPTER I

DEFINITIONAL PROBLEMS AND THE GROWTH OF NEW TERRORISM
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Definitional Problems

The main reason preventing international co-operation on action against terrorism is the lack of a universally accepted and comprehensive definition of the concept. Judging by the wide disagreements that exist on a number of counts, such a definition probably will never come into being. Another problem is the growing elasticity of the concept of terrorism, so much so that by the 1990s, there seemed to be virtually no limit to what could be described as terrorism. Between 1989 and 1991, some books with the following titles were published: Narcoterrorism; Western State Terrorism; Apartheid Terrorism: The Destabilization Report; and Pornography: The New Terrorism.\(^1\) An attempt by criminals to extort money from manufacturers by lacing jars of baby foods on supermarket shelves with broken glass, tacks, and other harmful objects was quickly labeled as ‘consumer terrorism’ by the media.\(^2\) In the United States the widely prevalent phenomenon of anonymous obscene phone calls was labeled as ‘telephone terrorism’.\(^3\)

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2 As in ‘Michael Winner’s True Crimes’, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Television I, 4\(^{th}\) August, 1991

3 On Larry King Live’, Cable News Network(CNN), 11\(^{th}\) September 1990
An academic text analysed rape as a ‘terrorist institution’.\(^4\) A day before the 1989 Argentenian Presidential elections in 1989, its finance minister described speculation against its currency as ‘economic terrorism’\(^5\) while the Iraqi ambassador to the United States used the same term in outlining the October 1990 allegations that Kuwait had sought to sabotage his country’s economy\(^6\). These instances should however be distinguished from the metaphorical use of the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ by the media, such as a British newspaper’s description of a breed of dog involved in a series of attacks on children as ‘a terrorist on four legs’.\(^7\)

The different and imaginative usage that the terms terrorism enjoys is in part a response to constant reference in the media to terrorism as a pervasive reality of today’s world. It is a rarity to read a newspaper or listen to a news bulletin that does not make a reference to terrorism or terrorists.\(^8\) Brian M. Jenkins, a terrorism expert, made a revealing comment on this situation. ‘At some point in this expanding use of the term’, he said, ‘terrorism can mean just what those who use the term (not the terrorists) want it to mean – almost any violent at by any opponent’.\(^9\) Jenkins did not anticipate that the

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\(^5\) *Financial Times* (London) 10 May 1989

\(^6\) *Headline News*, CNN, 31 October 1990

\(^7\) Simon de Bruxelles, ‘Terrorist on Four Legs’, *The Observer*, June 4, 1989


application of the terms would eventually extend even beyond even the notion of violence against an opponent.

The fact that terrorism has come to mean so many things to so many people is not just because of euphemistic reasons. The real reason is the lack of a proper definition of the subject and consequently the absence of coherent intellectual analysis. Though we are all aware of terrorism as a phenomenon in the contemporary world, we are less precise about what events deserve the perjorative label ‘terrorist’. Although it is by no means easy to isolate and differentiate the various meaning of terrorism, there seems to be an analytically useful distinction between normative and analytical definitions. Conor Cruise O’Brien give an example of the former type when he bases his interpretation on political values from which he derives rigorous standards for judging political action. He defines terrorism in terms of the political context in which it occurs, seeing terrorism as an unjustified violence against a democratic state that permits effective and peaceful forms of opposition. Thus a Black activist who bombs a police station in South Africa is not a terrorist; the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) bomber of British military barracks is. Identical acts performed in different situations do not fall under the same definition.

The danger inherent in the normative approach is that the definition verges on the polemical. If ‘terrorist’ is what one calls one’s opponents (whether or not one’s friend is a freedom fighter), then the word is more of an epithet or a debating stratagem than a label

10 Adrian Guelke, n.8, p.2.

that enables all who read it, irrespective of their ideological orientation, to know what terrorism is and what it is not.

The value of the normative approach is that it confronts squarely a critical problem in the analysis of terrorism, as also any form of political violence; the issue of legitimacy. Terrorists of the left deny the legitimacy of the state and claim that the use of violence is morally justified. Terrorists of the right deny the legitimacy of the opposition and hold that violence in the service of order is sanctioned by the values of the status quo.

But judgement has be to be replaced by a neutral descriptive and analytical definition to have a generally applicable meaning. Such a basic definition would include the following attributes: the systematic use of unorthodox political violence by small conspiratorial groups with the purpose of manipulating political attitudes rather than physically defeating an enemy. 12 The intent of terrorist violence is psychological and symbolic, not material. Terrorism is premeditated and purposeful violence, employed in a struggle for political power. As Harold Lasswell defined it: ‘Terrorists are participants in the political process who strive for political results by arousing acute anxieties’. 13

**Various definitions of terrorism**

Although a universally acceptable definition of terrorism still eludes policy planners and the academia alike, a number of formulations are widely used. Two of these that highlight the essential elements of terrorism and provide some basic pointers for decision-makers are listed here. The first defines terrorism as “a symbolic act designed to

12 ibid., p.2

influence political behaviour by extranormal means entailing the use or threat of violence.” The second asserts that terrorism is the “threat or use of violence for political purposes, when such action is intended to influence the attitude and behaviour of a target group other than its immediate victims and its ramifications transcend national boundaries”.14 The starting point of both these views is the fact that terrorism is violent political activity. There is no terrorism without violence or coercion. As many analysts comment, terrorism has become the continuation of politics by other means.

There is a wide polarity between the idea of that constitutes terrorism in the mindsets of the developed West and the underdeveloped Third World. The maxim that “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” only enhances the distance between these two positions. Third World and communist states have consistently argued that terrorism is not subversive to international order if it is directed towards the liberation of oppressed peoples. By definition, terrorism, to them, should only “cover acts committed for personal gains or out of caprice of non-political purposes.”15

Notwithstanding these ideological disparities, terrorism primarily can be said to comprise of the use of force directed against innocent third parties for essentially ideological, financial or psychological purposes.16 But it is highly surprising, even shocking, that though terrorism has been around for centuries, it has still not merited a comprehensive definition from any quarters. The International Encyclopaedia of Social

14 Lawrence Zelic Freedman and Yonah Alexander (eds.) Perspectives on Terrorism (Hindustan Publishing Corporations, New Delhi, 1985) p.169

15 Kerry L. Milte, “Prevention of Terrorism through the Development of Supranational Criminology” Journal of International Law and Economics 10(Aug-Dec,’75) p.522

Sciences does not even mention the term anywhere. The Oxford English Dictionary, is an ambiguous fashion defines a terrorist as “a member of a clandestine or expatriate organization aiming to coerce an established government by acts of violence against it or its subjects.” This definition excludes any reference to state terrorism and ‘open’ terrorism like the one exhibited by the JKLF in Jammu and Kashmir and the LTTE in Sri Lanka.

Between 1936 and 1984, 109 definitions of terrorism have come to light, half a dozen identical ones emanating from the US government alone. Walter Lacquer sums up the confusion thus:

“Most experts agree that terrorism is the use or threat of violence, a method of combat or a strategy to achieve certain goals, that its aim is to induce a state of fear in the victim, that it is ruthless and does not conform to humanitarian norm, and that publicity is an essential factor in terrorist strategy. Beyond this point, definitions differ…(Actually), it would be unrealistic to expect unanimity on a topic so close to us in time.”

Mentioned here are certain definitions that display a thread of consistency despite the inherent fluidity of the phenomenon. L.Z. Friedman defines terrorism as the use of violence when its most important result is not the physical and the mental damage of the direct victims, but the psychological effect produced on someone else. What distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence is the fact that in the case of


18 Walter Lacquer, Reflections on Terrorism, Foreign Affairs (New York, Fall 1986), pp86-88

19 Lawrence Zelic Friedman and Yonah Alexander, n.14, p.3
terrorism, the link between the victim and the third party is not direct, but symbolic. It is in this context that terrorism is defined as "a symbolic act designed to influence political behavior by extra normal means entailing the use or threat of violence".20

One noted lawyer has defined terrorism as acts which in themselves maybe classic forms of crime-murder, assassination, the use of explosives-but which differ from classical criminal acts in that they are executed with the deliberate intention of causing panic, disorder and terror within an organized society, in order to destroy social discipline, paralyze the forces of reaction of a society, and increase the misery and suffering of the community.21

A broader definition is given by two American scholars: "murder, assassination, sabotage and subversion, the destruction of public records, the spreading of rumour, the closing of churches, the sequestration of property, the breakdown of criminal law enforcement, the prostitution of the courts, the narcosis of the press - all these, as they contribute to a common end, to constitute terror.22

The problem faced at the interstate level originates from the lack of a universal and standard consensus on what precisely constitutes international terrorism. There are two hindrances in this endeavour. Primarily it is the technical problem of trying to include the various manifestations of international terrorism: bombings, assassinations,
hijackings, state sponsored terrorism etc. in one comprehensive definition. Secondly, different states have different perceptions on international terrorism. Charles W. Yost summed it up as—

"When the Nazis bombed Warsaw or Rotterdam or Coventry we call it terror bombing, but when we bomb North or South Vietnam we call it protective reaction: yet we are killing incomparably more people, including more wholly innocent civilians than Palestine terrorists have killed in all these years.

Understandable as they may be, can we justify and exclude from the definition of terrorism Israeli retaliatory raids against Palestinian camps in Lebanon and Syria last week which severely killed many wholly innocent people, which probably helped create a new crop of terrorists among their relatives and friends.... the fact is, of course, that there is a vast amount of hypocrisy on the subject of political terrorism. We all righteously condemn it except when we ourselves or friends of ours are engaging in it. Then we ignore it or gloss it over or attach to it gags like liberations or defence of the world or national honour to make it seem something other than what it is.23

The definitional disparity on terrorism also reconfirms the popular cliché of one man's terrorist being another man's freedom fighter. In the 80s, the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and the SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) were branded by some nations as terrorist outfits, while simultaneously being granted the status of legitimate international entities by the Third World nations. Such a subjectivity is also evident in the United Nations. While the United nations has condemned terrorism as a criminal act, the UN General Assembly Resolution (A/Res/40/61) of December 9,
1985, reaffirms the inalienable right of self determination and independence of peoples under colonial and racist regimes and other forms of alien domination, and upholds the legitimacy of their struggle, in particular, of national liberation movements, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter. On this basis, the PLO was accorded observer status in the General Assembly\(^\text{24}\) 

For definitional purposes, international terrorism must also be distinguished from other forms of political violence like guerrilla warfare, revolutionary movements and insurgency. A problem of distinction arises when insurgents take to terrorist ways and tactics. Urban guerrillas of Latin America have also resorted to terrorism at times. On the other hand, terrorism can and does occur without the existence of guerrilla warfare. 

Broadly, insurgency revolves around efforts for obtaining political goals by an organized and primarily indigenous group(s). These groups may take a resort to protracted, irregular warfare and related political techniques too. Unlike terrorists, insurgents do not kill civilians indiscriminately but target the government and its personnel. Thus the aim of insurgency is the overthrowing of a particular local government by military means. On the other hand, acts of international terrorism are undertaken more for the effect of striking terror in the minds of the population whereby it becomes easier to pressurize the government to submit to particular demands.

Guerrilla warfare involves groups operating primarily in rural or less urban – what is called rurban - areas of the state. Generally, guerrillas enjoy the support of an unfriendly state and thus usually have safe havens across borders. While terrorists target

\(^{23}\) Charles W. Yost, “Forms and Masks of Terrorism”, *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston) 14 September 1972

political figureheads, guerrillas seek to destroy state infrastructure by violet means. Governments usually tackle guerrilla movements with military means.

An encyclopaedia of sorts on guerrilla warfare was written by Carlos Marighella, leader of a Brazilian revolutionary group. His work, 'The Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla' contains an incisive analysis of guerrilla motivations and tactics. The methods advocated by him – bank robberies, hostage-taking etc – influenced the development of present day terrorism profoundly. This work has over the years, became of the Bible of every terrorist for its emphasis on not just tactical details but also the justifiability of guerrilla strategy  

Between terrorism and guerrilla warfare, Marighella has assigned a position of superiority to the latter. According to him terrorism is “action usually involving the placement of a bomb or fire explosions of great destructive power... It is an action the urban guerrilla must execute with the greatest cold-bloodedness, calmness and decision.” Inspite of this hierarchy of terror, in some instances, terrorism is potentially more effective from the viewpoint of a cost-benefit analysis, than traditional warfare  

It is on the basis of the difference between terrorism, insurgency and guerrilla warfare that an apt and working definition of what precisely constitutes terrorism can be arrived at. Brian M.Jenkins delivers the verdict by saying that “the threat of violence, individual acts of violence, or a campaign of violence, designed primarily to instill fear to


26 Carlos Marighella, “Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla” (reprinted in IISS Adelphi, p.70), p.36

terrorise – maybe called terrorism.” He goes on to add that it is not the nature of the terrorist act that defines terrorism, nor is it the identity of its perpetrators or the nature of their cause. “All terrorist acts involve violence or the threat of violence, often coupled with specific demands. The violence is directed mainly against civilian targets. The motives are political. The actions are carried out in a way that will achieve maximum publicity. The perpetrators are usually members of an organized group, and unlike other criminals, they often claim credit for the act. And finally the act is intended to produce effects beyond the immediate physical damage”  

In the United Nations however, much heat has been generated on this topic without actually reaching a consensus on it. The UN resolutions have cautiously sought to avoid the pitfall of vehement international disagreements on the topic by concentrating more on what acts can be considered terroristic in nature. The UN General Assembly sessions of the Ad Hoc Committees on Terrorism, held in 1973, 1977 and 1979, failed to produce any significant results as all attempts to work towards a common definition were drowned in the din of intense polarization over the motivations and compulsion of the actors. At the most resolution 2625, which is also endorsed by the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism requires that “each state should refrain from organizing, instigating, assisting or participating in acts of civil strife or terroristic acts in another state.” The SAARC Convention goes a step ahead and provides a safeguard against its

28 Brian M. Jenkins, The Study of Terrorism: Definitional Problems (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, Dec. 1980), pp. 2-3

29 The SAARC resolutions have also displayed the same focus on condemning specific acts listed by them as “terroristic”
misuse for suppressing legitimate political dissent in the name of terrorism-curbing. This region-specific conventions has been ratified by India.\textsuperscript{30}

International terrorist acts could also be sponsored by states and governments sponsored. State sponsored terrorism has come to stay as a bane institutionalized by weak or unfriendly nations who cannot afford to launch a full-scale attack on their adversaries. Yonah Alexander calls this “the deliberate employment of violence or the threat of use of violence by sovereign states to attain strategic and political objectives by acts in violation of law, intended to create overwhelming fear in a target population larger than the civilian or military victims attacked or threatened.”\textsuperscript{31}

Though the above definitions come pretty close to describing the concept and threat of terrorism, there still is no basic consensus on the topic among the international community. Until that happens, no effective deterrence can be arrived at against international terrorism.

**New Terrorism**

While the diplomatic deadlock on cooperation against terrorism and its definition continue, the situation on the ground is exacerbated by the growth of what has come to be called “New Terrorism.” The term refers to terrorism of the modern age and its unique characteristics that distinguish it from classical terroristic episodes.

Modern terrorism, which is used by rightist as well as leftist forces, and by nationalistic as well as ethnic groups is different from classical terrorism in many

\textsuperscript{30} Times of India (New Delhi), Aug 6, 1988

\textsuperscript{31} Yonah Alexander, (ed.), *The 1986 Annual on Terrorism* (Dordrecht, 1987), p.1
respects. The latter only aimed to demoralize the population, cause the collapse of public order and hasten the capitulation of the government. New terrorism occurs in the near absence of actual military confrontation and primarily aims at acquiring publicity for its cause. For the modern terrorist who enjoys and employs the development in communications and technology to his advantage, the whole world is a stage.

It is due to the essential differences between the old and new forms of terrorism that it becomes important to view the phenomenon of terrorism qua terrorism in its multiple aspects. This explains the keen Western desire to take into cognisance the new terrorist lore, and the new discipline of terrology. Since new developments in science and technology have sharpened the abilities of the terrorists, it becomes important to understand the raison d'être of terrorism, to see the envelope of conditions and contingencies that help create the terrorist personality, the terrorist ethos and the terrorist Weltanschauung or worldview.

Today's terrorism is thus the child of the times manifesting the zeitgeist or spirit of the times in the same manner as does abstract art. Robert Sole's comment in 'The Terrorist Challenge' that "political terrorism is the distinctive disorder of the modern world" is reflective of the nature of contemporary terrorism. Modern terrorism, as practised by terrorists in Kashmir, Sri Lanka or the Middle East expresses the temper of the technological age with its chemical and biological (and possibly, nuclear) weapons, chips and computers and space dreams. The many aspects in which technological revolution has assisted the terrorists are mentioned here. As a prelude to that, some vital differences between new and old forms of terrorism necessitate attention.

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32 Darshan Singh Maini, Cry the Beloved Punjab – A Harvest of Tragedy and Terrorism (New Delhi, 1987), p.134
New terrorism is different from classical terrorism in many ways. Unlike the old terrorist who had a well-defined ideology to fight against, the new terrorist presents a totally different picture. Recent studies suggest that over eighty percent of the terrorists in advanced countries come from reasonably affluent backgrounds. They are, to use Viktor Vitiuk’s expression, “the prodigal children of the middle bourgeiose”. This has also blurred the distinction between a terrorist and a terror-addict.

Darshan Singh Maini elaborates on the likelihood of modern terrorism with the theater of cruelty.\textsuperscript{33} The striking resemblances which liken terrorism to art include the desire to take the audience for a ride, to crack obscure and acidic jokes, to indulge in “gallows humour” at the expense of society and to fantasize the proceedings through a rhetoric of ambiguities.\textsuperscript{34}

Another point of differentiation between old and new terrorism is the availability of new weapons of lethality. These include rocket-launchers, Semtex and RDX explosives. Technological innovation, the most powerful engine of change in the modern world, is nowhere else as mixed a blessing as in the case of terrorism and low-intensity conflict. The blessings of modern technology have made easier the life and work of today’s technoterrorist. As Walter Lacquer noted, “One hundred fifty years ago, if someone wanted to put out all the lights in a village, he had to go from house to house and do it. Now he blows up one generator and all the lights in the city go out.”\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{33} ‘Theatre of Cruelty’ is a genre evolved by the French playwright Artrand

\textsuperscript{34} Darshan Singh Maini, n.32., p.143

The former President of the United States Lyndon B. Johnson once remarked that “today the problem is not of making miracles, but managing them.” In this connection one of the scientific truths of the modern world is that technology is a double-edged sword and that every scientific advance generally contains inherent dangers and problems which while not always immediately evident, are nonetheless there and require both diligence and careful management to ensure that they do not outweigh the anticipated benefits of technology. Called by some as the “law of unforeseen consequences”, it means that a careless moment, an instant’s distraction, or a single error of judgement by someone in command of precocious technologies can mean the difference between life and death, so narrow are the margins of safety in our complex, overbuilt, post-industrial societies. The plethora of soft-targets that the modern world offers to the terrorists has become a fact of modern life. The Bombay and New York blasts of 1993 are a case in point.

Not only does technological innovation enhance the arsenals available to terrorists, it also provides violence-prone actors with an almost limitless universe of targets and vulnerabilities to attack. Terrorists albeit slowly, are learning this fact, and while the modern world has so far escaped a major catastrophe produced by techno-terrorists striking at the epicenter of our technological civilization or employing some

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kind of hi-tech weapon of mass destruction, it is too much to believe that this situation will continue indefinitely.\textsuperscript{37}

As the world becomes even more urban and complex by the day we have correspondingly become even more vulnerable to the designs of small groups, or even single individuals, bent on disrupting the lives of or inflicting their will on the majority. Our slender lifelines of water, energy, transportation and communication are all at the mercy of sophisticated terrorists and saboteurs. Like a stone thrown into a quiet pond, the disruption of even one basic service or critical node ripples outward in ever widening circles to impact on other activities and vulnerabilities with a domino effect known as “cascading failures.”\textsuperscript{38}

The most longlasting impact of technological growth is perhaps on the availability of new weapons of unprecedented lethality to the terrorists. Due to ultra-sophisticated refinement in weapon systems, especially in the field of micro-miniaturization and advanced electronics, one man can command more killing technology than ever before. One individual in this age of technology is potentially the equal of an army in what Trevor N. Dupuy refers to as “the age of muscle” when the chief weapons of war were the sword, the bow and the spear.\textsuperscript{39} Thus with today’s weapons like .22 Calibre AM180,\textsuperscript{40}


\textsuperscript{38} ibid., p.138


\textsuperscript{40} It fires at the rate of 1800 rounds per minute or 25 per second and is capable of chewing up concrete blocks and even penetrating heavy metal sheets since so much fire power can be directed at a single spot
coupled with corresponding hi-tech advances in ammunition and overall ballistic capabilities, the terrorist’s armour is full. Virtually all terrorist organizations now have access to bulk explosives, automatic weapons, RPG-2 anti-tank missile launchers and vehicle bombs and this makes it just a matter of minutes to raze to the ground big portions of metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Cairo and New York, as in 1993. The car bomb, a typical IRA contribution to modern terrorism, has also been precursor of many other related things.41

Imagination is still the best weapon available to modern terrorists. Imaginative terrorists can turn any technology – however seemingly benign – into a weapon that can serve their purposes. For example, in March 1984, it was revealed that Libya had acquired a small fleet of remotely controlled speedboats that could be packed with high explosives and used in Kamikaze-style attacks on the U.S naval vessels and port facilities. In view of such developments, one can believe the threat behind the motto of Spanish terrorists who once said, “The worse, the better.”42

An allied fear is that of nuclear, chemical and biological terrorism. As Justice Arthur J. Goldberg said, “Modern terrorist, with sophisticated technological means at his disposal and the future possibility of access to biological and nuclear weapons presents a clear and present danger to the very existence of civilization itself.” To begin with, the human situation has undergone a radical transformation with the induction of nuclear arms and this alone give modern terrorism a push quite beyond the wildest dreams of the older anarchists. The very idea of the total annihilation of mankind as a

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41 Christopher Dobson and Robert Payne, The Terrorists: Their Weapons, Leaders and Tactics (New York, 1982), p.131

42 Neil C. Livingstone, n.37, p. 141
distinct possibility adds an altogether new dimension to terrorism’s lethal metaphysic.  

The dissolution of life on earth may not be an immediate threat, but the climate of desperation and despair thus created cannot but push the terrorist one step ahead in his encounter with society. As it is, with governments implementing stringent security measures to protect embassies and prevent hijackings and with the public becoming inured to standard terrorist fare, terrorists have taken to more and more spectacular incidents, employing increasingly sophisticated bombs to kill hundreds of victims on airplanes, in train stations and in other public places.  

It is in this context that nuclear terrorism – the explosion of a nuclear bomb, the use of fissionable material as a radioactive poison, the seizure and sabotage of nuclear facilities and the recent incidences of plutonium smuggling – have received greater attention. In the the late seventies, warnings to such effect were issued publicly across Europe and the U.S.A.

The easy availability of hi-tech targets and their vulnerability to terror acts compound the problem still further. Coupled with the problem of radiological weapons dispersal, the nuclear threat looms large over the unsuspecting public psyche. The March 1978 bombing of West Europe’s second largest plant in Lemoniz, Spain by the ETA, causing damage worth 98.1 million dollars and the May 1978 explosives attack on a

43 Darshan Singh Maini, n.32, p.136

private security firm at a nuclear works site at Kalkar, West Germany, by the German Revolutionary Cells, highlight the problems generated by nuclear terrorism.\textsuperscript{45}

The resort to chemical and biological weapons is more achievable than nuclear weapons. They are easier to obtain, their delivery systems are better manageable and their dispersal techniques much more efficient. The danger is compounded by the easy availability of related information and chemical toxins\textsuperscript{46} The availability of limitless options – poisoning of water systems, contamination of food supplies and dispersal of explosives aggravate things further.

A number of chemical terrorism cases have taken place worldwide. In 1975, German authorities received the threat that mustard gas, stolen from an ammunition bunker, would be used against the Stuttgart populace unless all political prisoners were granted immunity.\textsuperscript{47} In 1978, some terrorists poisoned Israeli citrus fruit with liquid mercury\textsuperscript{48}

An important revelation in this context comes from a former member of the East German secret police (the Stasi). He says that an East German terrorist camp had been teaching terrorists to use chemical and biological weapons against civilian targets.\textsuperscript{49} He said the motivation for the tactic lay in achieving the demoralizing effect on the

\textsuperscript{45} Yonah Alexander, “Terrorism and High – Technology Weapons”, in L.Z. Friedman and Yonah Alexander (eds.), n.14, pp.238-9

\textsuperscript{46} Chemical toxins like Cobalt-60 and TEPP insecticides are commercially available

\textsuperscript{47} “Terrorist use of gas feared”, Washington Post, 13 May, 1975

\textsuperscript{48} New York Times, 10 February, 1978

\textsuperscript{49} This was reported in a documentary directed by British journalist Gwynee Roberts, shown on January 30, 1991, on the British Channel 4, as part of the series ‘Dispatches’
population by terrorizing them and throwing them off balance, in addition to throwing into confusion the entire structure, in addition to throwing into confusion the entire structure of the security forces in these particular countries.\textsuperscript{50}

In January 1986, the Australian, British, Canadian and American embassies in Colombo, Sri Lanka, received letters purporting to be from a Tamil guerrilla group saying that tea destined for export had been poisoned with Potassium Cyanide\textsuperscript{51}

Though a large-scale use of chemical and biological weapons is going to be a counterproductive exercise in itself, what these weapons can do is to capture the world’s attention and create fear among possible victims. Saddam’s mere threat to use chemical weapons in the 1991 Gulf war caused thousands of people to evacuate Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, despite strong doubts that Iraq’s extended range, reduced payload Scuds could be used effectively to disseminate a chemical agent. With this capacity to fascinate and frighten, poisons maybe ideally suited for terrorists, for whom creating fear in the target population is more important than creating causalities per se.\textsuperscript{52} Despite much hype and much more threats, the CIA found only twenty-two incidents between 1968 to 1980 in which “exotic pollutants”, including biological, radiological and chemical materials were used. But these weapons will always appeal to terrorists precisely because of what

\textsuperscript{50} ibid.


\textsuperscript{52} Jessica, Eve Stern, n.44, p.393
Harvey Mc George calls the ‘aura of odium’ that surrounds them.\(^{53}\) The prime appeal of course lies in belief that these weapons might possess some of the transcendent terror of nuclear weapons, without presenting their formidable technical challenges. It is on the basis of all these developments that Brian M. Jenkins of the Rand Corporation calls terrorism “a new industry built on fear.”\(^{54}\)

**The role of media in promoting terrorism**

A prominent aspect of contemporary terrorism is its emergence as a ‘theatre’. Its tie up with the media takes it far beyond the parameters of yesterday’s terrorism and makes it an international fellowship of sorts.\(^{55}\) Through the various forms of the media and due to electronic technology refinement, society has an easier access to and an increased reliance on the media and this renders its psychological impact more pervasive and persuasive than in the past. This development has attracted the attention of those who resort to strategies of violence to attract media coverage that most effectively achieves their socio-political objectives.

In this context, the correlation between the escalation of global terror-violence in the past twenty years and the innovations in media technology has facilitated rapid dissemination of information to larger audiences. Thus Bassiouni believes that there exists a symbiotic relationship between the media and terrorism: the “terrorists” use the

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\(^{55}\) Darshan Singh Maini, n-32, p. 137
media to further their terror-inspiring goals, and the media use terrorist acts as rewarding news-items. According to him the mass media perform five basic functions. These are

- informational – by providing the masses with a steady flow of news.
- judgemental – by providing the masses with a judgemental standard, by selection and interpretation of information given
- educational – by transmitting social heritage and clarifying social goals and values
- interactional – by providing an open forum for the free exchange of ideas and opinions
- recreational – by providing amusement and relieving tension

Exploiting the above five functions of the mass media, the terrorist intends to produce an extensive psychological impact. As the mass media have the capacity to disseminate news regarding terrorist incidents, they have the capacity to create a social impact desired by the perpetrators. It is due to this reason that the media have captured the attention of terror perpetrators from the very beginning. In his ‘Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla’, the Brazilian terrorist Carlos Marighella expounds media manipulation thus’.

“The war of nerves or psychological war is an aggressive technique, based on the direct or indirect use of mass means of communication and news transmitted orally in order to demoralize the government. In psychological warfare, the government is always at a

56 M. Cherif Bassioni, “Problems in Media-coverage of Nonstate-sponsored Terror-violence incidents”, in L.Z. Friedman and Yonah Alexander, ed., n 14, p.177

disadvantage since it imposes censorship on the mass media and winds up in a defensive position by not allowing anything against it to filter through. At this point, it becomes desperate, is involved in greater contradictions and loses time and energy in an exhausting effort at control which is subject to being broken at any moment.”

Thus publicity is not only an end of terrorist activity, it is also a tool. The media, always inclined to give wide publicity and to sensationalize acts of violence, are the terrorists’ natural ally. As Walter Lacquer commented, “The media are the terrorists’ best friends”. He further says that the success of a terrorist operation “depends almost entirely on the amount of publicity it receives … in the final analysis, it is not the magnitude of the terrorist operation that counts but the publicity; and this rule applies not only to single operations but to whole campaigns.”

This causes people to “exaggerate the apparent strength of the terrorist movement and cause, which means that their strength is judged not by their actual numbers or violent accomplishments but by the effect these have on their audience.”

The terrorist’s publicity goals have been made much easier because modern communications ensures them a worldwide audience—satellite communications gives the terrorist an almost instant access to the world’s living rooms. As a J.Bowyer Bell aptly said, “It has become far more alluring for the frantic few to appear on the world stage of television than remain obscure guerillas of the bush.”

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58 Carlos Marighella, n25, p.30


60 Brian M. Jenkins, International Terrorism: A New Kind of Warfare (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, p – 5261, June 1974), p.4

61 J.Bowyer Bell, A Time of Terror (1978), p.1
of those who engage in terror-violence was captured by the national Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism, which stated:

"Acts of terrorism have gained immediacy and diffusion through television, which conveys the terrorist message to millions worldwide. The modern terrorist has been quick to exploit the medium in a way that shows government as a poor rival. Formerly in countries where free speech and communication were zealously guarded rights, it would have been unthinkable for violent subversives to have seized control of the organs of mass communications. Today it is the commonplace consequence of terrorist action. In many ways, the modern terrorist is the very creation of the mass media. He has been magnified, enlarged beyond his own powers by others."62

One of the best examples of the terrorists’ use and instrumentalization of the media was the Iranian seizure of the U.S. embassy in Teheran in October 1979. This was intended to focus maximum world attention on both the incident itself and the underlying motivations. The aim was not to kill the sixty three hostages, but to intimidate an entire world watching. As Brian M. Jenkins says, terrorists want “a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead.”63

To sum up the problems related to media coverage of terrorist incidents can be enumerated as follows. Firstly, such an avid reporting may encourage other terrorist groups to engage in such a conduct. Secondly, distortions in media coverage may enhance the climate of intimidation that the terrorist seek to generate. Thirdly, media

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62 National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Report of the Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism 9 (1976)

63 Brian M. Jenkins, International Terrorism’. The other World War (Santa Monica, Calif., Rand, 1985), p.25.
coverage may immunize or dull the general public’s sense of opprobrium and might even lead to a potential counter-effect. Fourthly, media reporting may endanger hostages’ lives and interfere with effective law enforcement response.\textsuperscript{64}

To conclude, one may say that with today’s double-edged technology, scientific innovation, complex life-styles and unforeseen threats, terrorism and counter terrorism have entered a hi-tech age. The intrinsically complicated threat arising from any sort of nuclear, chemical or biological terrorism, presents an ominous future reality. For protection against today’s superterrorism, emergency preparedness countermeasures including contingency planning and sound crisis-mangement policies at the governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental levels are the prime requirement. New terrorism also poses a unique question to democracies by asking them what price they are prepared to pay in terms of both expenditure and diminution of citizens’ conveniences and civil liberties. Since the ‘Carlos’ of the future may more likely be armed with an Apple II home computer rather than a Polish-made WZ 63 machine pistol, the challenge to democratic states lies in wresting the moral and technlogical initiative from today’s terrorist while defending new vulnerabilities at the same time. The prediction by American terrorism experts that terrorists may use “higher technology higher lethality.”\textsuperscript{65} ways over “macro-tactics”, \textsuperscript{66} undoubtedly complicates the problem

\textsuperscript{64} M. Cherif Bassioni, n. 56, p.183

\textsuperscript{65} For example, terrorists may resort to poisoning people in a small room filled with lethal toxins

\textsuperscript{66} Jessica Eve Stern, n. 44, p.405
further and drives home the need for an urgent international consensus on controlling the menace.

In the absence of a coherent international understanding and a carefully structured response, the threat of terror will continue to disrupt the lives and properties of people worldwide. Though the number of people killed in road accidents outnumbers the victims of terror any day, the phenomenon cannot be taken lightly. The modern society with its abundance of soft targets in the form of innocent noncombatants, economic zones, cyber corridors and closer contact among people of different nations of the world presents the terrorists with a target that is unenviably lucrative.

All these factors underscore how critical the need for stringent international cooperation on countermeasures has come to be. In the absence of this, terrorism will only thrive and do so well, and hit the morning headlines and the evening news with more vigour and vitality. It is time for the nations of the world to gauge this threat carefully and unitedly and thus make the world a safer place to live in.

Failing this kind of concerted action, the number and goriness of terrorist episodes can only go up. The problem of international terrorism thus needs to be addressed at the global level so that any difference whatsoever between different countries can be sorted out and the threat faced unitedly. Human life is equally important anywhere in the world and so is human liberty. In the absence of effective international understanding and co-ordination against terrorism, both human life and dignity will continue to be snatched away by the nefarious activities of the terrorists.
A concerted action is strongly called for against states that make the promotion of terrorism an instrument of their foreign policy. Unless that happens, terrorism will continue to be an 'export-industry' and countries like India will continue to face its brunt.