

Is there no difference between terrorists and freedom fighters?



ONE of the consequences of the September 11 attacks on the US in 2001 is that the distinction between freedom fighters and terrorists has disappeared. Prior to September 11, freedom fighters were called "separatists or secessionists". Now those terms have disappeared from vocabulary of most of political leaders. Even it is not rare that ordinary criminal gangs were called "terrorists".

This means that all who resist government authorities, even for legitimate causes are currently called "terrorists" because the term suits most of the political leaders to pursue their political agenda. Many political observers and human rights activists believe that political leaders are conveniently using the term "terrorists" indiscriminately to every one including those who fight for liberation from foreign occupation of their land.

Who are terrorists?
A US Army manual defined terrorism as "the calculated use of violence or threat of violence to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological in nature... through intimidation, coercion or instilling fear". America's foremost intellectual activist, Professor Noam Chomsky of MIT, has interpreted the definition as follows: "It is a common practice that allows for the conventional thesis that terror is a weapon of the weak. Another problem with the official definitions of terror is that it follows from them that the US is a leading terrorist state" (Hegemony or Survival: America's quest for global dominance, 2nd edition, 2004, Allen & Unwin).

Terrorism per se is an act of senseless violence by one or more individuals to create an atmosphere of fear and helplessness. At one level it is argued that some terrorists may be individuals with personality disorder looking for a cause. At another level a sense of alternative ideology motivate them

to change the prevailing world order.

Terrorism is a tactic to achieve a goal but this tactic should not be employed because no one can force another person to believe in something which that person does not want to believe in voluntarily. Terrorists have undermined the cause of freedom or resistance fighters who want to liberate their lands from foreign rule.

Many believe that terrorists do not fight for the independence of their lands but fight for an extreme ideology to succeed. The September 11 attacks on the US were motivated not to free their lands but by ideological reasons. That is why terrorist elements could spread over 60 countries. Ideological fight is not winnable easily because it is based on commitment to a misconceived faith. The fight against terrorism is for a long haul because one can easily defeat a conventional enemy but not an idea.

When distorted ideology leads them to take recourse to violently killing innocent people they become terrorists. And terrorists are to be condemned and eliminated because they are a danger to peaceful society. An ideology cannot be imposed by force. It is only through persuasion or practice that one can succeed.

In the name of Islam, some orthodox fundamentalists, such as Osama Bin Laden through his wide network Al-Qaeda, have begun terrorist acts. The use of terrorism contravenes the core teachings of Islam. The term "jihad" should not be misused and should not be misinterpreted to justify terrorism. In fact such acts serve only to tarnish the image of Islam. Islam abhors such violence against innocent people. Such terrorist acts provide benefit to no one. It should be totally discarded.

State terrorism

Interestingly, when government troops kill innocent civilians in pretext of claim of terrorists, they do not become terrorists simply because their activities are sanctioned by government. What Israel is doing against innocent Palestinian civilians, women and children is nothing but state-terrorism. Since big powers are on the same boat like Israel, no one condemns Sharon. The root cause of Palestinian anger including suicide bombers is the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands since 1967, contrary to the UN Security Council resolution 242 of November 1967. Many government troops have been causing deaths to innocent

civilians on claims of fighting terrorism. Some of the people who howl "terrorist" most loudly admit that they use the term as an attempt to shut down a debate on the subject. Richard Perle, a neo-conservative guru of the US simply says: "Any attempt to discuss the roots of terrorism is an attempt to justify it".

Who are freedom fighters?

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad sought to draw the distinction between terrorists and freedom fighters at the 2002 Islamic Summit. He said: "We need to distinguish a freedom fighter and a terrorist. Otherwise we will deprive people wishing to

Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, who is also the chairman of the 57-nation Organisation of Islamic Conference expressed similar opinion on September 23, in Kuala Lumpur. He said that "Malaysia will work to convince the countries of the West in particular to reassess and change their policies in the Middle East. Their stand on the Palestinian issue and their actions in contravening international law, such as the invasion of Iraq are factors that fuel acts of terror".

Historically all struggle for freedom begins initially with revolt or by commission of some violent acts. The American Revo-

lution in the 18th century started against the British rule with the "Boston Tea Party" in 1773 when protesters threw crates of British tea into the sea. The first phase of Indian independence movement started in 1857, although the British ruler called it "Sepoy Mutiny". In 1920s and 30s, many Indian individuals had committed violent acts towards British personnel as a part of resistance movement. Many of the Indians were arrested and hanged. The question is: Is Khudiram who was hanged by the British a terrorist or a freedom fighter?

In the 30s and 40s, the Jewish underground organisation killed

many British officials and even one UN Swedish official in 1948. Two of the Israeli Prime Ministers (Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir) were terrorists in the eyes of the British administration. In 1971, Bangladeshi valiant freedom fighters waged armed struggle against the brute Pakistani Army and the Pakistani authorities called them "miscreants". Under the current situation, the brave Bangladeshi freedom fighters would have been called "terrorists".

In the 1980s, President Reagan invited the bearded Afghan Mujahedeen (freedom fighters) in the White House because they were fighting against Russian called terrorists. However the authorities have labeled them as "terrorists".

ian law and therefore they cannot be called "terrorists".

Many believe that once the proper grievances have been dealt with through political dialogue, some of the terrorist activities will cease and the Islamic fundamentalists will be left in the lurch. In that situation, it will be very hard and difficult for Al Qaeda to recruit a new generation of supporters.

Fighting terrorism

Another matter that merits attention is that fighting terrorism is more than soldiers and weapons. Some say that if the parties are serious about terrorism, they have to address global poverty and thus win the hearts and minds of poor and frustrated youths. In 2003, the US spent almost US\$400 billion on defence budget but very little on aid, the lowest of any industrialised country. Over six billion people live on this planet. One billion own 80 percent of the wealth. Another billion live in dire poverty on less than a dollar per day. In the sub-Saharan Africa, the number of poor people has doubled since 1980.

President of the World Bank James Wolfensohn continually emphasises that economic and social deprivation fuel civil wars and terrorism and a 6 percent per cent reduction in arms budgets among industrialised countries (G-8) would fund a 100 percent increase in foreign aid. Does any leader of the rich countries listen to him?

The controversy between freedom fighters and terrorists has led to failure to define as to what constitutes terrorism in the UN, Islamic Conference and even within SAARC nations. Every one including the UN Security Council condemns terrorism but as regarding its definition, many countries

want to draw a clear distinction between freedom fighters and terrorists. And there is no consensus as yet.

Even the US and Britain do not see eye to eye with Russia on the treatment of Chechens. Two former Chechen leaders have successfully obtained asylum in these countries. Russia now accuses US and Britain of maintaining a double standard policy on terrorists.

Conclusion

In this age, political spin is characterised by the choice of words and language tend to be peppered with misleading connotations. When freedom means "occupation", when democracy means "ignoring public opinion", when reform means "economic deprivation and job loss" and peacekeeping means "killing people in a foreign country", words have lost their original meanings. The same distortion has occurred with the word "terrorist".

The old adage "one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist" holds true even today. A freedom fighter becomes a terrorist in the context of a given political situation. One stark example is that Osama Bin Laden who was known to train Afghan freedom fighters with CIA assistance in the 80s is now number one terrorist to the US, with a bounty of US\$25 million on his head.

It reminds me of what Lord Palmerston, a former British Prime Minister and a strong advocate of gun-boat diplomacy in the 19th century said: "We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and these interests it is our duty to follow".

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

BOTTOM LINE

The old adage "one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist" holds true even today. A freedom fighter becomes a terrorist in the context of a given political situation. One stark example is that Osama Bin Laden who was known to train Afghan freedom fighters with CIA assistance in the 80s is now number one terrorist to the US, with a bounty of US\$25 million on his head.

free themselves from foreign occupation or terrorist governments of their right to fight for their own salvation.

However on 22nd September, President Musharraf, a close ally of the US in the war on terrorism said in his address to the UN General Assembly that an "iron curtain" was falling between the Islamic world and the West. He further said: "The major powers of the West have yet to show movement by seriously trying to resolve internationally recognised disputes affecting the Muslim world". This implies that he saw a clear distinction between terrorists and freedom fighters.

lution in the 18th century started against the British rule with the "Boston Tea Party" in 1773 when protesters threw crates of British tea into the sea. The first phase of Indian independence movement started in 1857, although the British ruler called it "Sepoy Mutiny". In 1920s and 30s, many Indian individuals had committed violent acts towards British personnel as a part of resistance movement. Many of the Indians were arrested and hanged. The question is: Is Khudiram who was hanged by the British a terrorist or a freedom fighter?

In the 30s and 40s, the Jewish underground organisation killed

occupation in Afghanistan, while to Russians, the Mujahedeen were terrorists. To Reagan, the Afghan freedom fighters were battling the "Evil Soviet Empire" with billions of dollars from the US. One of the leaders who trained the Afghan Mujahedeen was Osama Bin Laden, a friend of CIA agents.

Many observers argue that Palestinians, Kashmiris, Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, Irish Republic Army, Chechens, Chinese Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang province, Mexican Zapatistas and Acehese in Indonesia, among others, have been fighting what they call against foreign rule and they claim vigorously that they should not be

What Roy means that their fight is based on the right of self-determination and not on the basis of an ideology but on the basis of their right to choose their political destiny. They want to exercise the right of self-determination in terms of the 1966 UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 1 of the Covenant states: "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development". They further argue that what they fight for is recognised by the UN humanitar-

Containing munga in northern districts

MONZUR HOSSAIN

THE months of October and November are known as the "munga" period in Bangladesh when food stocks run out and job opportunities dry up in some northern districts before the main harvest season in December. As a result, thousands of poor people go without adequate food for weeks. Widespread flooding in July and August has intensified the problem this year. According to the World Food Program's estimation, 80 to 90 percent of these people are agricultural day labourers and they have not had much employment to speak of since the floods. These are the same people, 20 to 30 million, who are the most vulnerable ultra-poor, they simply do not have the access to food on the markets.

The government has initiated a programme to sell rice at subsidised price and provide relief through 'vulnerable group feeding' (VGF) programme. Some piecemeal private relief operations have also been going on to overcome the problem. But as is expected, the programmes couldn't keep pace with the massive need. WFP estimates that one million children in Bangladesh are at risk of acute malnutrition and 500,000 pregnant and nursing women also are extremely vulnerable.

How acute is the problem?
More or less, every year 'munga' occur in some northern districts especially Rangpur and Dinajpur districts. Munga is described as a 'near-famine' situation. The situation becomes worse if preceded by devastating flood. With this the poor become ultra-poor and those in the margin of poverty line again go back below the poverty line. The situation gets wide media coverage that ultimately falsifies all of our 'achievements' in eradicating poverty as well as gives negative signals on our target of achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of reducing the proportion of people below the poverty line by 50

percent within 2015.

Why this is happening in the same area at the same time of the year? Some reasons can be identified: (1) Overall poor economic condition of the area; (2) Less scope of employment opportunity; (3) Low degree of economic activities in this area; (4) Most of the migrated day

into accountability. It is a long-standing desire that there should be a regulatory body which can monitor and evaluate NGO activities. It is very surprising that these NGOs cannot take projects to overcome only two-month munga-period of a certain area, while they are running crore Taka projects in different

Revitalising rural banking activities: It is also widely discussed that our rural agricultural banking system is not so much effective in eradicating poverty through their loan-programmes. Since in most cases bank provide collateral-based loan, most of the poor-people cannot afford/obtain

business and bank staffs will monitor the production. After final product, profit and loss will be shared between the bank (lender) and farmer (recipient) according to the contract, at the same time bank will collect its loan.

Or, any other innovative programme a bank can undertake

non-government organisations. Pre- and post-munga measures are necessary. Post munga measures may include concessional loans for different income generating activities such as poultry-farming, vegetables and other crop production, handicrafts making, flower plantation, fishing etc. so that people can come out from poverty trap.

Some small and medium scale industries, agro-processing industries can be set up in these areas to reduce the unemployment situation. Besides these, there are many other ways to enhance economic activities in these areas.

It is expected that the government and non-government organizations will come forward with appropriate and effective planning to drive out "munga" from Bangladesh. It would be a one-step forward to alleviate poverty.

Manzur Hossain is a PhD candidate at National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Tokyo.

Pre- and post-munga measures are necessary. Post munga measures may include concessional loans for different income generating activities such as poultry-farming, vegetables and other crop production, handicrafts etc. Some small and medium scale industries, agro-processing industries can be set up in these areas to reduce the unemployment situation.

labourers of this area become jobless when other areas' harvesting is affected due to flood and other natural calamities; (5) Lack of income generation process for the poorest.

How can it be solved?
Both temporary and long-term measures are required to solve the problem.

Temporary solutions
Government programmes: The VGF 'Food for work' etc. are available to mitigate the problem. But it seems insufficient in response to the acuteness of the problems as well as the time of starting the programme seems inappropriate. Since the problem occurs almost every year, the government should have preparation for every year and the programmes should start from at least September.

Private relief operations: Private relief operations from different organisations and persons seem to be effective in dealing with the problem. Concerted private relief operations can be more effective in handling natural calamities in Bangladesh. If there is an acceptable coordinating body to manage the private relief operations, the volume of relief will increase as well as its efficient allocation and distribution can be ensured. Therefore, they can form a fund to operate relief operations in any future emergency such as munga. It would reduce our dependency on foreign donations and relief too.

Buy labour, sell loans: This can be a strategy of financial institutions and NGOs. Specialised financial institutions working in this region such as Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank, Gramen Bank, Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service etc. may take special development programmes in this area so that they can buy surplus labour for their special projects targeting Munga period. They can sell lump-sum loans to buy labour for the period, that is, people will pay back loan by giving labour.

Pre-cautionary measures from June: Some precautionary measures such as alerting people for that situation, motivating them for precautionary savings can be effective. Overall, high attention from government and non-government organisations are necessary to avoid this situation.

Long-term solutions
Strengthening NGO activities: Our NGOs are always claiming that they are contributing substantially to the development of the country. Their claim is now under question in the backdrop of munga. Various NGOs are now engaged in these areas with different projects. Since NGO activities do not have significant impact on income generations of the poor people of these areas, now time has come to bring the NGO activities

Department of Peace and Conflict Studies University of Dhaka, Dhaka Admission Notice

The Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Dhaka invites applications in prescribed forms for admission into the one year MSS Programme in Peace and Conflict Studies for the session 2002-2003

Those who have obtained an Honours or equivalent degree of 2001, 2002 and 2003 in Political Science, International Relations, Public Administration, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, History, Geography, Law, Philosophy, Social Welfare, Social Work, Mass Communication and Journalism, Islamic History and Environmental Science from any university are eligible to apply for admission. Students who have appeared in Honours or equivalent examination of 2002 and 2003 including 4th year Honours course final examination in any of the above subjects but results are yet to be published may also apply provided that their admission will be finalized if their Honours results are available before the publication of the admission test result. Master's Degree holders and students having third division/class in any examination will not be eligible for admission.

Application Forms for admission will be distributed and accepted by the office of the Chairman, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies (Room No-5003, Arts Building) in exchange of Tk. 400.00 (Taka four hundred) during the office hours in all working days from November 24, 2004 to December 23, 2004. The admission test will be held on 31.12.2004 from 12 to 1.30 pm at the Arts Building, Dhaka University.

Dr. Dalem Ch. Barman Professor and Chairman

ON GOING VACANCIES - ON GOING VACANCIES

FLEETS UNDER OUR MANAGEMENT IS EXPANDING

We have immediate requirement for following Sea-going professionals: Master, Chief Officer, 2nd Officer, 3rd Officer, Chief Engineer, 2nd Engineer, 3rd Engineer and Electrical Engineer for Bulk Carrier, Container, PCC and Tanker (Product & Chemical). Excellent remuneration package and bright career prospect.

Please contact (with all documents):

Capt. M. E. Hossain - GM
Tel : 031-710266 (Direct)
Mobile : 0171-720060

Capt. Shafiqul Islam - DGM
Tel : 031-727352 (Direct)
Mobile : 0171-720059

Capt. Shah Azimul Huq - DGM
Tel : 031-727358 (Direct)
Mobile : 0171-720325

HAQUE & SONS LIMITED

Shipping & Ship Manning Agents

Head Office: Chittagong:

Tel: 880-31-716214-6

Fax : 880-31-710530, 710288

E-mail : haqsonsetg@haqsons.com

Branch Office : Dhaka:

Tel : 880-2-8913905-07

Fax : 880-2-8912526, 8913045

E-mail : haqsonsdhk@haqsons.com

Visit us at <http://www.haqsons.com>

A warm welcome to the Eicher family.



Eicher Motors is happy to appoint

Runner Motors

as the authorized distributor of Eicher Light & Medium Range of trucks in Bangladesh.

Address : 222, New Eskaton, Dhaka-1000

Tel. : 8363751, 8363701 Fax : 9674800

OFFICE : EICHER MOTORS, Ahluwalia Chambers, 16-17, LSC, Pushp Vihar (Madangir), New Delhi -110 062, India. Tel : 91-11-26058400-8 Fax : 91-11-51649236.

EICHER MOTORS
(The CV Unit of Eicher Motors Ltd.)
Trucks • Buses • Built-ups