

Rab's revised list

Make sure innocent people are not in it

THE Rab has revised the list of missing persons, where the number of such individuals has been reduced to 68 from the previous 265. While we are relieved by this drastic fall in number yet the question persists: Is this the right number?

While we are glad that the number of listed militants has dropped to 68, there is no doubt that even this is quite a formidable number assuming these individuals are well-trained and fanatical in their belief in killing and self-destruction. It is therefore crucial that our law enforcement and other security forces use all their resources and intelligence to trace these suspects as we have seen in the recent operation that successfully neutralised nine militants and captured one alive. Such endeavours have to be accelerated and based on accurate information which makes having an authentic list of suspected militants, all the more important.

That said we must also point out that whether we like it or not, there still exists a significant distance between the public and the police in terms of credibility. Terrorism can only be fought if the public and the police work together and for that mutual trust and respect are essential. So the law enforcement agencies must be very conscious of the fact that apart from matters that are classified for security reasons, whatever they say to the public must be beyond reproach and the truth which has not been always the case in the past.

Teenage girls need more attention

Remove the barriers to their wellbeing

TEENAGE brings a whole gamut of problems in girls that range from child marriage, sexual harassment to deprivation of education.

According to the Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey 2014, nearly a third of girls aged 15-19 are pregnant with their first child and nearly 60 percent girls get married before the age of 18. Early marriage remains a major social problem and a health hazard for girls who get pregnant at such a young age. The problems associated with teen pregnancy manifest themselves in many ways. It leads to maternal and child deaths, underweight babies. Many pregnancies occur due to poor knowledge of reproductive health. We see a very a large percentage of the female population drop out of the schooling system due to various factors, child marriage being a primary reason as well as sexual harassment. In a country where roughly half the population are female, this means the country is deprived of a large pool of future workers.

A joint roundtable of the UNFPA and The Daily Star has brought these issues to light and come up with some valuable suggestions. These include introducing student counsellors in secondary schools, being more proactive in preventing child marriages, showing zero tolerance for sexual harassment, providing teenaged girls with vocational training and engaging them in sports. Most of all, teenaged girls, who are at a very sensitive stage in life, must be treated with respect, caring and sympathy towards their needs. Effecting societal beliefs requires long-term engagement with parents and the education system to make sure our girls can acquire the confidence and skills to reach their full potential.

COMMENTS

"9 militants killed in Dhaka hideout"

(July 27, 2016)

MD Hussain Zavier

Great job; cordial thanks to the security forces.

Marjanul Fattah Ibne Aziz

They shouldn't have been killed. They should have been brought to the court to disclose before the nation who they were and why they were doing this. If we continue to kill them like this, this problem will never be solved.

STRANGER THAN FICTION



TAJ HASHMI

POLITICIANS and law-enforcers in Bangladesh, from time to time, hype up both panic and complacency by publicizing the following: "terrorists everywhere" or "no terrorists anywhere", in the country. The ambivalence is counterproductive to counterterrorism (CT) operation. The first and foremost requirement for effective CT is understanding of terrorism per se,

that terrorists are not mindless robots programmed to kill innocent people just for the sake of killing. Terrorism is ideology-driven violence, different from violent crime and warfare. Most terrorists, globally, have been well-to-do engineers and technocrats, not poverty-stricken madrassa-educated people.

Terrorism is a deviation, something out of the ordinary; there's no ordinariness about it like crime, epidemic, floods, or earthquake. It's a symptom of the disease, not the disease itself. A society or nation creates it, as studies on terrorism have revealed, through various unwise socio-political, and economic decisions. Very similar to cholera or malaria, terrorism spreads through certain germs or bacteria; it just doesn't drop from the heavens. It's noteworthy, terrorist outfits representing minority communities often fizzle out – such as the IRA and LTTE – but those who are well-entrenched among the main stream of the population, remain formidable adversaries for years, if not decades.

The primary responsibility for the spread of terrorism in any country lies with the country itself; there is no room for blaming others. I give the example of the ten-year-old American boy, who seconds after the second plane had hit the Twin Towers on 9/11 screamed: "Why are they killing us? We must have done something wrong to some people somewhere". What this little boy understood that terrorists don't attack just for the sake of attacking, the American Administration refuses to admit that terrorist attacks are either retaliatory or preemptive by nature. Bangladeshis must also search as to why terrorism is present in their country. Any denial is costly, and counterproductive to effective CT operation.

CT experts in Bangladesh must understand the problem of terrorism has deeper roots than alienation of some rich kids. Is there any problem of mass alienation of people from society, politics, and state – which they consider corrupt, cruel, and lacking in legitimacy? The problem may be political, and "political" has a very broad definition. It's all about human relations in power perspective; it's about people's aspirations, honour, dignity, livelihood, family, and freedom in local, national, and global perspectives. And what's local is global, and global is local.

In the wake of the latest terror attacks at Gulshan and Sholakia, the question is, are Bangladeshi leaders and law-enforcers still going to be in the denial mode? The stance that there is no ISIS in Bangladesh and that terrorists here are all homegrown locals seems to have

become irrelevant. In fact, they should rather worry more about the homegrown elements than the foreign ones, who are relatively easier to track down than the locals. They should understand terrorism is also globalised like the McDonald's franchise; you don't need American chefs to prepare their burgers in distant Bangladesh.

An effective CT doesn't require more troops or policemen, it requires: a) the admission by politicians and police that terrorists do exist in Bangladesh; b) no bragging about actual or elusive success in CT operation; c) no blame game against each other; and d) good governance and fair distribution of prosperity and opportunities to all. Imperatively, mainstream religions or political parties never nurture terrorism. Cults or secret religious or political clans surreptitiously mobilize support for terrorism by systematic brainwashing of people through manipulation of facts and ideologies. The upshot is a tiny minority of angry, marginalised people start believing what's apparently right is actually wrong, and vice versa.

Bangladesh should use the globally recognised CT-COIN Manual, for example the one developed by the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), which is all about intrastate and interstate cooperation to contain and defeat terrorist-insurgencies in various countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Bangladesh.

According to the Home Minister, since only a handful of people are terrorists, the Government can overpower them in no time. The Police Chief is even more complacent: "Militancy has decreased in the country due to law enforcers' efforts Some have been killed in 'crossfire' incidents". Interestingly, only 19 terrorists destroyed the Twin Towers on 9/11, killed around 3,000 people, inflicting a loss of more than a trillion dollars to American economy; and al Qaeda spent less than \$500,000 for the attacks. The punch line is 20 terrorists can kill 20,000.

Global CT operators have learnt that there are three different types of politically inspired violence: a) terrorism b) insurgency and c) insurgent-terrorism. The fine line between terrorism and insurgency often remains blurred. While al Qaeda is primarily terrorist, the ISIS champions global insurgencies against all governments across the world. Hence it's the most dangerous destabilizing force in the world.

As terrorism is often part of broader insurgencies – the terrorist JMB in Bangladesh is a surrogate to the global insurgency called ISIS – CT operators must apply counterinsurgency (COIN) methods as well. David Galula, the guru of COIN operators in the world

After #Chexit: Do nothing?

JOHN NERY



THE Philippine Left has a gift for mischievous phrase making, and last week's coinage was both obvious and effective. #Chexit, with the now-obligatory hashtag, quickly made the rounds. Inspired by the tumultuous campaign to consider Britain's exit from the

European Union, the new catch phrase was code for the legal campaign to force China to "exit" the South China Sea.

On July 12, an arbitral tribunal - provided for under the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea, convened by the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, and hosted by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague - obliged. The five judges hearing the case the Philippines filed against China ruled sweepingly in the Philippines' favour.

What now?

A solemn-faced Perfecto Yasay Jr., the new Philippine foreign secretary, responded to the ruling, or "award," with a call for "all those concerned to exercise restraint and sobriety". Unpopular as it was in a country suddenly swept up in a David-versus-Goliath victory, the appeal was probably the most reasonable course of action to take. All those concerned should, at least for the next several weeks, do nothing.

The appeal applies 'do nothing' as much to Filipinos raring to return to Scarborough Shoal (or Bajo de Masinloc as it was known during the Spanish colonial regime) to fish, as to Chinese netizens raring to sound the war drums or, as a continuation of martial fervour

by other means, at least to boycott Philippine mangoes. It also applies to American sailors, Japanese pilots, Indonesian coast guard personnel, Vietnamese fishermen.

Let all those concerned allow the implications of a landmark ruling to sink in. This will necessarily take time.

Consider: In what was likely a first instance, China was haled before the patchwork system of international courts, and lost badly. It has of course refused to recognise the tribunal, which it calls "law-abusing", or the award, which it calls "ill-founded". Chinese President Xi Jinping's first response to the ruling was to reiterate Chinese sovereignty over most of the South China Sea. And various government and quasi-government institutions have, since July 12, described the award as absurd or illegitimate or non-binding.

And yet the ruling has the potential to change, if not the conversation itself, then at least the terms of the conversation. That is, Manila and Beijing will continue to make conflicting claims, but on the question of rock or island, on the problem of fishing rights, on the fundamental issue of China's so-called nine-dash line, the definitions have shifted; the terms, now, are the tribunal's.

One thing Filipinos will watch out for is the rhetoric that will come out of Beijing. It is good that calls for war are being censored. It is not unexpected that Chinese officials will repeat the standard line about "ancient rights" and "indisputable sovereignty". It is only logical to expect the new Chinese facilities, built on reclaimed land in the Spratlys, to remain in place, and for Beijing to defend their presence and purpose as civilian in nature. It is entirely likely that China will once again raise the possibility of imposing an Air Defence Identification Zone, or take the United States to task for conducting naval patrols in or near disputed areas.

But as long as the language we've heard before is the same language we will hear in the next several weeks,

(although this French expert came from the losing side of the War in Algeria), believes CT-COIN is "eighty percent political, and twenty percent military". CT-COIN operators in Bangladesh must apply the concerted civil, military, paramilitary, political, economic, and psychological forces to counter terrorism.

Then again, CT-COIN operators mustn't follow security studies manuals, blindly. One military historian has pointed out, most CT-COIN operations have failed to achieve anything as the losing side has written "99 percent" of their manuals. Hence the desirability of innovation or creativity! Again civil-military cooperation is an essential pre-condition for the success of any CT-COIN operation, so goes General David Petraeus's Counterinsurgency Field Manual.

The line between terrorists and insurgents is getting blurred, very fast. In countries where terrorists and insurgents come from the main stream of the populations, there's no guarantee about the success of any CT-COIN operations in those places. There's no alternative to addressing the socio-political, and economic issues to resolve the problem of terrorism-insurgency in those countries. We know terrorism isn't a law-and-order problem, and as such there's no quick fix or police and military solutions to the problem. However, this information is a bitter pill to swallow for most government agencies in Bangladesh, and elsewhere.

Another stumbling bloc to successful CT-COIN operation is some politicians' and law-enforcers' disrespect for human rights, human dignity, and privacy of suspects having links with terrorists and insurgents in general. They simply don't understand extra-judicial killings of suspects and criminals – through the proverbial "encounter" or "cross-fire" – further aggravate the problem of terrorism-insurgency.

To conclude, Bangladesh should use the globally recognised CT-COIN Manual, for example the one developed by the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), which is all about intrastate and interstate cooperation to contain and defeat terrorist-insurgencies in various countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Bangladesh. While the Comprehensive Security Response to Terrorism (CSRT) method stresses the importance of intrastate civil-military and inter-agency cooperation, including intelligence sharing, the Advanced Security Cooperation (ASC) suggests interstate cooperation among civil-military and intelligence agencies at the international level.

Again, both the CSRT and ASC methods stress the importance of good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights as antidotes to terrorism and insurgency. CT-COIN operators in Bangladesh should learn, there's no substitute for good governance, which is transparent and accountable, and ensures democracy, the freedom of expression, human rights and dignity. In sum, there's no police or military solution to the problem of terrorism and insurgency.

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the Philippines will see this as encouraging. It is the nearest equivalent to China doing nothing.

Perhaps Beijing's hosting of the Group of 20 Summit in September will be the appropriate time for China to announce a definite response to the post-July 12 situation.

As for the Philippines, elation should turn to purposeful patience. The new Duterte administration may not have wanted or anticipated such an overwhelming diplomatic victory, but it is not unimportant that the extraordinary case against Beijing is supported overwhelmingly by the Philippine public.

Last March, a Social Weather Stations survey found that 78 per cent of voting-age Filipinos agreed with the legal strategy. Only 8 per cent disagreed. The proportion of Filipinos who were aware of the maritime dispute between the Philippines and China was about the same: 80 per cent, up from 73 per cent in 2013, the year the case was filed.

In a country which counts millions of Chinese-Filipinos among its citizens, whose culture carries the deep imprint of Chinese tradition and sensibility, and where the Chinese economic miracle remains an object of admiration, the depth of public support for the government's case is a measure of Chinese bullying. The relationship between strong public support for the government case and the unwelcome assertiveness and unreasonable expansiveness of the Chinese claims to almost all of the South China Sea is directly proportional.

Now that the arbitral tribunal has confirmed that bullying has indeed taken place, the new administration seems determined not to provoke the bully. That seems like a necessary thing: it is the Philippine equivalent of doing nothing. But it is not enough.

The writer, editor in chief of INQUIRER.net, represents the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* in the Asia News Network (ANN). This is part of a series of columns by editors from the ANN and published in member newspapers across the region.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Rab should have been more sincere

According to reports, the previous missing persons' list prepared by Rab contained mistakes like including the same person's name twice and including someone who had never been missing at all. This is totally unacceptable. Though Rab has immediately rectified the mistakes and published a modified and updated list, they should have been more careful in the first place.

Maria Khan
Dhaka

"Police for fencing diplomatic zone"

This is in reference to the above titled report published in The Daily Star on July 26, 2016. We appreciate the law enforcers' move to tighten security measures around the diplomatic area for ensuring security after the recent terrorist attacks. But at the same time, they should make sure that the measures are implemented in such a way that the daily lives of people are not affected.

Naima Hasan
Rampura, Dhaka

Worsening flood situation

The flood situation in northern and northeastern areas of the country has worsened further due to the onrush of upstream water in the Teesta, Brahmaputra, Dharla, and Surma rivers. Thousands of people in those areas are marooned and many of them were forced to leave their homes.

The rise of water level of the major rivers deteriorated the flood situation in Kurigram, Bogra, Lalmonirhat and Sunamganj. In some areas, river erosions have taken a serious turn,



PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

forcing people to move their valuables to other places.

Many people are spending sleepless nights at makeshift camps built on the embankments. Many said their houses were washed away as rivers were devouring new areas. The government should immediately send sufficient relief to the affected people. Strong dams should be built in those areas to prevent flooding.

Dina Habib
On e-mail