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CHANGING NATURE AND THE ROLE OF ACTORS IN CONFRONTING TERRORISM

Abstract

The September 11, 2001 terrorist incidents shocked the global community and changed the perspectives on both the threat of terrorism and the tools or preparedness required to prevent it. Over the years, approaches towards confronting terrorism have changed. Along with the state actors, the world is also witnessing an increased involvement of non-state actors in this area. The paper takes an endeavour in reviewing the changing nature of confronting terrorism by state and non-state apparatus. It also attempts to view the interplay of the actors in this particular area. The findings suggest that the global community is witnessing a major transformation in the nature of confronting terrorism. It is also viewed that while the states are still playing the leading role in confronting terrorism, the non-state actors are complementing states' efforts in various ways.

Keywords: Terrorism, Counter-terrorism, Al-Qaeda, Islamic State (IS), State Actors, Non-state Actors.

1. Introduction

The September 11, 2001 (popularly known as 9/11) terrorist attacks brought a massive breakthrough in the post-Cold War global politics. Never before had the world witnessed the capacity of a networked terrorist organisation to carry out such coordinated and sophisticated attacks.¹ The new terrorist groups are global and seem to have no negotiable targets and no goal other than hurting their adversaries.² Since the 9/11 attacks, there has also been a sharp increase in the number of terrorist attacks in Muslim majority countries, with regions such as South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.³

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¹ Chiran Jung Thapa, "Counter-terrorism and Regional Cooperation in South Asia" in Anand Kumar (ed.), *The Terror Challenge in South Asia and Prospect of Regional Cooperation*, New Delhi: Pentagon Security International, 2012, p. 130.

² Jonathan Stevenson, "Pragmatic Counter Terrorism", *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2001, p. 35.

³ Meagan Smith and Sean M. Zeigler, "Terrorism Before And After 9/11 – A More Dangerous World?", *Research and Politics*, Vol.8, October-December, 2017, p. 2.

Mainly after the end of the Cold War, the emergence of terrorist groups has changed the global security discourse, forcing analysts to rethink warfare. When George W. Bush declared global “War on Terrorism” in 2001, it was the first war declared against the non-state entity. George W. Bush’s counter-terrorism strategy was to pre-emptively attack the countries where terrorists had a strong foothold.⁴ However, the attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan were criticised by many, even it has been said that those attacks helped in the rise of further terrorism.⁵ Countering terrorism is different than any other kind of warfare; because unlike traditional warfare, enemies are not as defined as a state. Nor can it be separated by state boundaries. Even when terrorism is characterized as domestic terrorism it may still have transnational character (as exemplified, by Boston Bombing in 2013 and its link with Chechnya).⁶ The new terrorists are extremely motivated and proficient in using information technology. The rise of the lone wolf terrorists made it evident that without fighting the ideology/root causes that fuel the violence, terrorism cannot be defeated completely. As terrorism continued to evolve, so did the ways of countering terrorism. Although it is extremely important to use military approaches, it is not possible to combat terrorism by simply using hard military power. Approaches in fighting terrorism have also changed as new ideas such as Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) have emerged. Thus, in the current world, the roles of the non-state actors are deemed as just as important as the state actors.

Although quite a good number of scholarly works have shed lights on the causes and consequences of terrorism, less effort has been given to assess how the state and non-state actors respond to incidents of terrorism. Therefore, it is critical to study the effectiveness of counter-terrorism; knowing how the state and non-state actors react, under what conditions they act strongly (militarily or coercively) and in which circumstance they act softly (diplomatically or with economic incentives or persuasion). Such a study will help in reviewing the changing pattern of counter-terrorism strategies, carefully understanding the relative role each of actors tends to play. With the changing pattern of terrorism, the counter-terrorism strategies by state and non-state actors are also taking a new shape in contemporary international relations. After about two decades of 9/11 incident, the nature of cross-border terrorism shows no sign of abating, and the changing nature of the threat from terrorism calls for new counter-terrorism approaches.

The objective of this paper is to review the changing nature of countering terrorism and also view the role of state and non-state actors in combating terrorism.

⁴ Chiran Jung Thapa, op. cit.

⁵ Patrick Wintour, “Intelligence files support claims Iraq invasion helped spawn ISIS”, *The Guardian*, 06 July 2016.

⁶ “After Boston Bombing, A New Focus on Chechnya”, *National Public Radio*, available at <https://www.npr.org/2013/04/22/178411752/after-boston-bombing-a-new-focus-on-chechnya>, accessed on 20 April 2018.

To that end, this paper seeks to answer some questions: has there been any change in combating terrorism from the past to present? what are the various concepts of confronting terrorism? and how the dominant actors (state and non-state) play a role in combating terrorism?

Since counter-terrorism is a broad issue, the article focuses primarily on the counter-terrorism approaches since 9/11 in order to keep the discussion focused and consolidated. In this article, the roles of state and non-state actors in countering terrorism have been discussed. As the Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) play a major role in combating terrorism and since they are working with states, the role of IGOs has also been discussed briefly along with the role of states. The non-state actors' role in confronting terrorism will be limited to the actions taken by the academia, civil society, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

The paper employs data collected from several primary and secondary sources. As a primary source, selected experts on the issue were interviewed. The paper also benefits from secondary data sources such as books, journal articles, newspaper reports and online reports. Including the introduction and conclusion, the paper is divided into five different sections. The second section deals with the conceptual understanding of the paper. The third section discusses the changing nature of combating terrorism. The fourth section is on the interplay between state and non-state actors in combating terrorism.

2. Conceptual Understanding

No discussion on countering/combating terrorism can be comprehensive or holistic without properly defining terrorism. However, it is to note that there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. The challenge in assigning a comprehensive definition of terrorism lies in the fact that it is a difficult task to be specific when targets, motives, and methods differ so broadly from case to case. Hence, the broader concept is the probability of different definitions and interpretation of the term increases. Ihekwoaba Onwudiwe states that different studies on terrorism focus on different sub concerns. Thus, each identifies a different problem as the most important one.⁷ Although it is commonly believed that terrorism is a kind of political violence, Alex Peter Schmid identifies that there are different types, manifestations, and forms of political violence. He identified twenty types of categories of political violence other than terrorism. He, therefore, suggests that it would be easier to restrict the term terrorism to a particular type of political violence which targets non-combatants and civilians

⁷ Ihekwoaba D. Onwudiwe, *The Globalization of Terrorism*, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2001, p. 30.

rather than using it indiscriminately ignoring the issue who or what is the target.⁸ Over the years, many scholars have defined terrorism in different ways. Friedlander defines terrorism as the “use of force, violence or threats of violence to attain political goals through fear, intimidation, or coercion”.⁹ On the other hand, Walter Enders and Todd Sandler defined terrorism as, “premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through intimidation of large audience beyond that of immediate victims”.¹⁰

Other than scholars, the states and agencies also have various definitions of terrorism. The United Nations Security Council defines terrorism as, “criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organisation to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitutes offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature”.¹¹ Despite the wide variation of the definition, there are some key characteristics of terrorism:

- a) It aims to generate fear and intimidate the population through symbolic violence. It is often noted that terrorism is the weapon of weak against the strong. Terror as a means is used to overcome seemingly insuperable odds by terrorists if they aim to pursue their cause with conventional military means.¹²
- b) Terrorists usually tend to target non-combatants. They tend to deliberately attack the non-combatants. Usually, non-combatants do not use lethal weapons and, therefore, are innocents. In this regard, terrorism is distinguished from other modes of organized political violence in that it targets the non-combatant.¹³

⁸ Alex Peter Schmid, *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, New York: Routledge , 2011, pp. 6-7.

⁹ Walter Endersw and Todd Sandler, *The Political Economy of Terrorism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 3.

¹⁰ Ibid

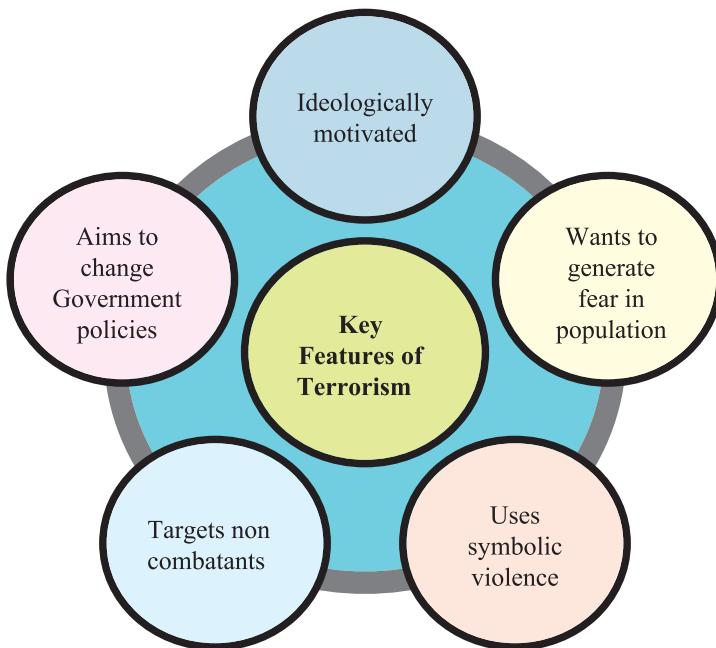
¹¹ United Nations Security Council, “United Nations Security Council Resolution 1566”, 2004, available at <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/n0454282.pdf>, accessed on 05 March 2018.

¹² Matthew J. Littleton, “Information Age Terrorism: Toward Cyberterror”, US Naval Postgraduate School, December 1995, available at <https://fas.org/irp/threat/cyber/docs/npgs/ch3.htm#Chap3>, accessed on 02 February 2020.

¹³ “The Problem of Defining Terrorism”, *Counterterrorism Ethics*, available at <http://counterterrorismethics.com/the-problem-of-defining-terrorism-part-1/>, accessed on 05 February 2020.

- c) They often aim at manipulating government policies. Often they try to compel a government or an international organisation to abstain from doing particular tasks.
- d) They are ideologically motivated (political, religious or otherwise). Often ideology is used to attract and retain recruits as supporters, members and sympathizers. Contemporary terrorist groups recruit followers from a cross-section of the society, the poor, the rich, the educated and the less educated. Ideology is disseminated to the larger audience in the form of propaganda or information using speeches, lectures, writings, pronouncements etc.
- e) Terrorists tend to generate fear in the population. To generate widespread fear, terrorist groups engage in violent, dramatic and high-profile attacks. They also tend to engage in different other methods to penetrate fear among mass including kidnapping, hijacking, car bombings and even suicide bombings.

Figure 1: Few Key Characteristics of Terrorism



Source: Compiled by the authors.

This paper views terrorism as a tactic or method which is deployed against the non-combatants or indiscriminately targeted against the civilians. There are groups who aim to fulfil certain political objectives, but if they use violence or targets the civilians, then their acts will be considered as terrorist activities.¹⁴ However, based on the nature of the terrorist acts those are happening around the world, it is evident that if a terrorist incident occurs in any part of the globe, has international ramifications. Similarly, any terrorist incident occurring outside the state boundary has implications at the local level. It has to be noted that in today's interconnected world, the line between what is international and what is local is very much blurred and the distinction between the two categories may be false.¹⁵ Even in the case of homegrown or lone-wolf terrorism, the inspiration for radicalisation may come from outside of the country of origin through social media. Therefore, terrorism is viewed as a global incident carrying implications at the local level. With the same token, counter-terrorism effort must be undertaken in an international venture because of the transnational character of the terrorist groups regarding their ideological and political support, financial funding, and armaments and strategies.

Though the definition of terrorism is broad, the concept of counter-terrorism has more or less a general understanding. Oxford dictionary defines counter-terrorism as, "political or military activities designed to prevent or thwart terrorism".¹⁶ The US Armed forces defined counter-terrorism as "activities and operations are taken to neutralise terrorists, their organisations, and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instil fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals."¹⁷ In a nutshell, counter-terrorism refers to the practices, tactics, techniques, and strategies that governments, militaries, police departments and corporations adopt in responding to terrorist threats and acts, both real and imputed. Countering terrorism has to follow the identification-location and elimination strategy.¹⁸ Much of the counter-terrorism strategy was focused on the security aspects of the problem, such as choosing to combat and control terrorists through means of violence. Thus, the states and the various organisations that work with the armed forces were the primary focus of the counter-terrorism.

¹⁴ US Department of State, "Foreign Terrorist Organizations", available at <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>, accessed on 01 March 2018.

¹⁵ James M. Lutz and Brenda Lutz, *Global Terrorism*, London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 10-14.

¹⁶ "Counter-terrorism", UK dictionary, available at <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/counterterrorism>, accessed on 01 March 2018.

¹⁷ "Counterterrorism", *Joint Publications of the US' Department of the Army, Department of the Navy, Department of the Air Force and United States Coast Guard*, 24 October 2014, available at http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_26.pdf, accessed on 12 April 2018.

¹⁸ Interview with Professor Dr. Rasheduzzaman, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, Interview taken on 03 March 2018.

Over time, it is increasingly being acknowledged that terrorism and other forms of violent extremism are social issues rather than simple matters of security. Therefore, there has been a transition from solely focusing on counter-terrorism to CVE. Compared to counter-terrorism, CVE provides a more holistic approach towards tackling terrorism, focuses on multi-dimensional issues and targets the social aspects that give way to various kinds of violent extremism.¹⁹ CVE is a realm of policy, programmes, and interventions designed to prevent individuals from engaging in violence associated with radical political, social, cultural, and religious ideologies and groups.²⁰ This is the approach that involves issues that have to involve multiple actors, including states, IGOs, civil society, NGOs, the private sector and media.

The PVE has emerged as a new approach to fighting terrorism. Unlike the CVE approach, which focuses on the radicalisation process after the incident happens and often targets vulnerable societies, the PVE approach aims to prevent radicalisation from happening before it starts. The government of Switzerland describes PVE as “depriving violent extremism of its breeding ground by enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to resist it”.²¹ On the other hand, The UN defines PVE as “systematic preventive measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism” in its 2015 “plan of action to Prevent Violent Extremism”.²² In general, the PVE is the approach which aims to address the root causes without using coercive methods.

A recent development in the field of confronting violent extremism methods is bringing together the ideas of PVE and CVE to the single banner of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE).²³ Overall, the focus is not only on identifying a set of tools and approaches that prevent those dynamics from giving rise to violent extremism but also on ensuring that responses taken by the actors to prevent terrorism do not create an effect that aggravates further radicalisation.²⁴ It has been understood that violent extremism is a problem that can not be solved by a

¹⁹ Anne-Marie Balbi, “The Influence of Non-State Actors on Global Politics”, *Australian Institute of International Affairs*, available at <http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-influence-of-non-state-actors-on-global-politics/>, accessed on 01 March 2018.

²⁰ Georgia Holmer, “Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective”, United States Institute of Peace, *Special Report 336*, September 2013.

²¹ Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, “Switzerland’s Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism”, Berne: Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2016, p.6.

²² United Nations General Assembly, “Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism”, 2015, available at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/675, accessed on 11 February 2019.

²³ European Commission, “Operational Guidelines on the Preparation and Implementation of EU Financed Actions Specific to Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Third Countries”, Luxembourg, 2017.

²⁴ Lena Slachmuisjlder, *Transforming Violent Extremism: A peace builder’s guide*, Washington, DC.: Search for Common Ground, 2017, pp. 4-6.

single approach of the counter-terrorism, CVE or PVE. Thus, the attempt is to ensure that the problem is approached from a diverse point of action.

The nature of contemporary terrorism is different than previous conflicts. During the previous conflicts, particularly during the Cold War period, the West knew the nature of the threat and could draw an appropriate response. On the contrary, contemporary terrorism is easy to spread and is international in scope. It crosses national boundaries and also can create new boundaries like the Islamic State (IS) aims to do. Therefore, the state-centric theories of international relations like realism and liberalism face difficulties in explaining contemporary terrorism. Even realist scholar John Mearsheimer has noted that realism has very little to say about terrorism as relations among states remain the main subject area of realism.²⁵ However, critical theory fills the gap to a great extent. The critical theory approach to terrorism studies does not reject the state as a legitimate entity for providing security. The difference of the critical theory with the traditional theories is that in critical theory, state is not automatically taken as the natural unit to provide security and thus to secure, and rather it is judged how well it provides security to citizens. A critical approach to terrorism similarly scrutinizes the role of non-state actors in terms of their contribution in providing security of humans. To be specific, the central task of the critical theory in terrorism studies is to ‘denaturalize’ both the state and non-state actors and to explore how both can combinely respond to the threat of terrorism.²⁶ For this paper, the critical approach to terrorism and counter-terrorism studies helped in constructing the arguments and analysis.

3. Changing Nature of Combating Terrorism

The fight against terrorism has changed significantly over the last few decades. Before the event of 9/11, the nature of fighting terrorism was completely different than what the global community sees right now. Just as 9/11 is seen as a point for the changing nature of terrorism, it is also a point of turn for the changing nature of combating terrorism. Before that time, terrorism was countered depending on the nature of it. Traditional terrorist organisations such as the separationist movements were handled by the law enforcing agencies and the intelligence community. Sometimes if the situation required it, the military was also involved. But the use of the military in the counter-terrorism was fairly limited in nature.²⁷ Examples of such

²⁵ Amenah Khalid and Mohamed Sofwan, “A Constructivist Response to Islamophobia and Counter Terrorism”, 2018, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327361460_A_constructivist_response_to_Islamophobia_and_counter_terrorism, accessed on 20 February 2020.

²⁶ Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth and Jeroen Gunning, *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*, London and New York : Routledge, 2009, p. 94.

²⁷ Timothy Naftali, “US Counterterrorism before Bin Laden”, *International Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 1, 2005, p. 27.

tactics in fighting terrorism can be seen in the handling of domestic terrorist attacks. Here, it should be noted that this type of terrorism was usually done as a tactic to gain a goal, which is, comparing to the terrorism that the world is facing currently, straight forward in nature.

However, the 9/11 event gave rise to a new type of terrorism. A major change in this type of terrorism is that this kind of terrorism is not negotiable, unlike the previous terrorist groups, Al-Qaeda does not make any amenable political demand. Naturally, the way to address them was changed significantly. Another major change is how terrorism was being viewed by governments. US president Gorge W. Bush, by declaring that the global ‘war on terror’ changed the nature of fighting terrorism. The world entered into an era for the first time in history when a state declared war against a non-state entity. The military became the main fighting force against terrorism. At the same time, maintaining coherence between domestic and efforts in fighting terrorism became more important than ever. Coordination between multiple agencies of a state was given priority, while international cooperation of counter-terrorism got prevalence as well. However, following the trend of pre-9/11 period, the fight against terrorism was seen as government only affair; the role of the NGOs or the academia was fairly limited; even though counter-terrorism became a hot topic of discussion in the academia.

On the contrary, a major change was felt by the NGOs, especially the INGOs. Following the attack, a number of counter-terrorism legislation and regulations came into place to control legal identities, permitted activities, and access to resources of the NGOs. These regulations made it harder for NGOs to work. Some NGOs chose to oppose the government while others worked with the political institution to change the regulations.²⁸ At the same time, NGOs and human rights groups started protesting against counter-terrorism activities that were deemed violating human rights and privacy rights. Especially the “PATRIOT act” by the US and the treatment of prisoners in the Guantanamo Bay prison sparked controversy all over the world.

It was only in 2006, in the ‘UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy’, that the role of civil society and non-governmental organisations were mentioned formally. This led to increased involvement of the non-state actors in the counter-terrorism process. Security Council’s counter-terrorism related subsidiary bodies and expert groups became more willing to draw on the analysis provided by think tanks and cooperate with them. Even in the Afghan war, the role of civil society became more prominent once the countries went to rebuild Iraq as intense fighting subsidised.

²⁸ Elizabeth A. Bloodgood and Joannie Tremblay-Boire, “NGO Responses to Counterterrorism Regulations After September 11th”, *The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, Vol.12, No. 4, November 2010.

During the Obama period, the US had a clear understanding that civil society had an important role to play in facilitating that engagement and helping the government “win hearts and minds.” of people.²⁹ The NGOs were used in the US’ CVE efforts including to stop the spreading of the extremist messages. As early as in 2015, the US policymakers were asking themselves why there was a failure in combating the violent extremist ideology. They realized that it was important to combat not only the homegrown terrorism but foreign ideologies that were influencing them. The solution according to many scholars was to look at the foreign influence on the ideology of the youths, in which NGOs would play a huge role. This focus on the root causes of terrorism marks the transition from traditional counter-terrorism approaches to more broader CVE approach. As the focus was on ideology and counter messages, the role of NGOs, civil society and academia in producing and spreading that counter-message became more prominent.

However, the CVE approach had its own criticism as well. It came into the forefront by various scholars who claimed that the approaches to CVE had extended the security-agenda into the realms of care, social work, and education.³⁰ There were also criticisms that the CVE was focused on the Muslim community thus alienating them further.³¹ Mainly because of these criticisms, the PVE approach arrived.

As a broader approach, the PVE aims to stop violent extremism before it can take place. As a result, the initiatives by the PVE incorporates more actors than the law enforcing agencies and military. The role played by local authorities, local NGOs and even school teachers and religious figures are considered more important than ever. A major part of the process is de-radicalization where similarly, the role of the NGOs has been considered to be necessary. Most of the new strategies for preventing and countering violent extremism now talk about the partnership with other actors, including the NGOs.³² After the adoption of the UN Secretary-General’s 2016 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the UN has encouraged its

²⁹ Diana Medaglia, “Civil Society and Fighting Terrorism Through the UN”, *Global Policy Forum*, available at <https://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/ngos-and-the-un/48562-civil-society-and-fighting-terrorism-through-the-un.html>, accessed on 23 November 2019.

³⁰ Charlotte Heath-Kelly, “Counter-Terrorism and the Counterfactual: Producing the ‘Radicalisation’ Discourse and the UK Prevent Strategy,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 201, p. 394–415; Arun Kundani, *Spooked! How Not to Prevent Violent Extremism*, London, London: Institute of Race Relations, 2009; Bob McDonald and Yaser Mir, “Al-Qaida Influenced Violent Extremism, UK Government Prevention Policy and Community Engagement,” *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* 3, No. 1, 2011, pp. 32–44, available at 10.5042/jacpr.2011.0020, accessed on 10 October 2019.

³¹ Sahar F. Aziz, “Losing the ‘War of Ideas’: A Critique of Countering Violent Extremism Programs”, *Research Paper No.17-22*, Texas A&M University School of Law Legal Studies, 2017.

³² The Danish Government, “Prevention of radicalisation and extremism Action Plan”, September 2014, available at <https://www.justitsministeriet.dk/sites/default/files/media/Pressemeddelelser/pdf/2015/SJ20150422125507430%20%5BDOR1545530%5D.PDF>, accessed on 24 November 2019.

agencies along with the member states to exercise a more comprehensive approach in fighting terrorism, one that will engage both the drivers of violent extremism and its consequences.³³

In recent times, however, the nature of combating terrorism is changing again. This is largely due to two factors. One is the rise of the IS, which is different from the kind of religious terrorism that has been witnessed in the past. IS aimed at controlling their own territory and starting a new civilization of their own. Despite being a terrorist organisation, their aim of taking control over territories made them more suitable for combating through traditional military forces; which has been successfully done.³⁴ However, the other factor, the large number of foreign nationals who left their country to join IS, remains a bigger challenge. At the same time, the rise of lone wolf terrorism and self-radicalised youths has raised the question of how those can be prevented. While they pose a challenge for the law enforcement and intelligence agencies, it can not be denied that the societal factors play a role in the radicalisation process and thus the need to fight them through non- military means is also required.

Due to various factors including globalisation, the rapid growth of information and communication technologies, global agenda of different extremist groups, and presence of international financial institutions, terrorism has penetrated many countries which previously were not affected by it before. As such, the efforts in fighting terrorism has become more vigilant and take approaches that help countries prepare for the risk of terrorism. The introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has created new paradoxical opportunities as well as challenges of its own. It has been noted that new technologies and computer algorithms are not only being used to thwart terrorist plots on a quantitative basis (by gathering more data than before) but they also provide new qualitative ways to analyse the intelligence data available. One such example is systematically monitoring Facebook and other social media platforms for ‘high risk individuals’ to anticipate potential lone wolf attackers. Although this might give the state some ability to thwart some attacks, it also raises that question of falsely labelling certain persons as “potential attackers”.³⁵ The debate of privacy and human rights vs protection and security is still very much relevant in today’s world.

³³ International Peace Institute, “Preventing Violent Extremism While Promoting Human Rights: Toward a Clarified UN Approach”, July 2019, available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/1907_PVE-While-Promoting-Human-Rights.pdf, accessed on 12 February 2020.

³⁴ “Islamic State group defeated as final territory lost, US-backed forces say”, *BBC*, 23 March 2019, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-47678157>, accessed on 05 October 2019.

³⁵ Yonah Jeremy Bob, “The future of AI in warfare and counterterrorism”, *The Jerusalem Post*, available at <https://www.jpost.com/Jpost-Tech/The-future-of-AI-in-warfare-and-counterterrorism-615112>, accessed on 20 December 2019.

On the side of the spectrum, combating terrorism is also being viewed as an essential part of the overall development process that helps build a peaceful society. The new global development goals, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include “Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions,” which includes combating terrorism in one of its targets.³⁶ It becomes clear that combating terrorism is no longer limited to the law enforcing agencies as it was in the past, rather, it has become an overarching issue that needs to be handled by various actors, institutions and means. A violent extremist is seen as the product and often a symptom of deeper-seated issues, the idea is to strengthen cohesion in society and help local actors reinforce their resilience to conflict and division.³⁷ This has led to a renewed importance being on the role that can be played by the international and regional organisations in fighting terrorism, who are incorporating peacebuilding, PVE and overall development in a new transformative and comprehensive approach towards fighting terrorism.

4. The Interplay of State and Non-state Actors in Confronting Terrorism

In order to understand the changing nature of confronting terrorism, it is important to understand how the actors both state and non-state, have been working to prevent terrorism. Generally, countering terrorism has been an area of the state actors. Several state actors like the US and the UK have actively spearheaded in counter-terrorism campaigns after 9/11, but the importance of involving NGOs and civil society in a comprehensive and multi-dimensional response to the threat of terrorism has been stressed over time. The paper evaluates the role of the various actors in confronting terrorism, which dividing their actions into four main areas: law enforcement; military efforts; diplomacy and coalition; prevention and containment. It should be mentioned that none of the actions can confront terrorism alone, rather the mix of all approaches is required for that purpose. Often the actions can also overlap with one another.

4.1 Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is one of the fundamental tenets of fighting terrorism. Domestically, it is the police and other law enforcing agencies that are in charge of providing security of the citizens and preventing any terrorist attacks taking place within its territory. They are also responsible for capturing the terrorists and ensuring their trial and punishment. Tasks such as surveillance, intelligence gathering, capture

³⁶ United Nations in India, “SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”, available at <https://in.one.un.org/page/sustainable-development-goals/sdg-16/>, accessed on 02 October 2019.

³⁷ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, “A Way Forward in Transforming Violent Extremism: De-Islamisation, De-Securitisation, and De-Religionisation”, *Berghof Foundation*, 2018.

and conviction of the terrorists and terrorist groups are handled by state actors. Thus, it is state actors who have a key role in the law enforcement part of fighting terrorism. However, when it comes to intelligence sharing among the states, International Organisations (IOs) play an important role. For example, the Interpol has an important role to play beside the UN office of counter terrorism.

The non-state actors such as civil society and NGOs, on the other hand, have the responsibility to explain to the state actors that human rights are useful framework for developing effective counter-terrorism strategies rather than an impediment. Civil society and NGOs may enter into partnerships with law enforcement bodies to develop targeted programmes of co-operation, focusing on increasing awareness and understanding of issues such as human rights, the diversity of communities and the internal working of a society where terrorists are active. An interesting example of good practice in this respect is a project in the US where the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee co-operated with the Office for Civil Liberties of the US Department of Homeland Security in developing a training DVD for federal law enforcement officials.³⁸

4.2 *Military Efforts*

Use of military means as a counter-terrorism strategy is a common phenomenon. Since the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US, the military response gained unprecedented public prominence. Soon after the 9/11 incident, the US deployed its energy towards disrupting and eliminating the terrorists who were believed to be responsible for the 2001 attack. The US war in Iraq and Afghanistan are the biggest examples of military campaigns in the post 9/11 era. The US has been at war in Afghanistan for eighteen years and been fighting another one in Iraq for sixteen years. Chapter VII, Article 51 of the UN Charter provides the mandate to the US and other countries to take military actions against terrorist groups. It asserts that “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.”³⁹

³⁸ Christopher Michaelsen, “The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Combating Terrorism”, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at University of Hamburg (eds.), *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Yearbook 2007*, Buden-Badan: Nomos, 2008, pp. 341-42.

³⁹ United Nations, “Chapter VII-Action with Respect to Threats to The Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression”, available at <http://legal.un.org/repertory/art51.shtml>, accessed on 24 September 2019.

Although the US's "War on Terror" received some sort of support during the early days, over the years it faced several criticisms. Despite that, it is still one of the effective ways of fighting terrorism. The recent ongoing military intervention against the IS has shown that war is still a necessary means to combat terrorism. As is expected, the state actors are the main actors in war. However, international organisations and military alliances also can play a role in this aspect. Recently, the US has declared that it will seek help from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to prevent the resurgence of IS.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the UN peacekeeping forces are also often faced with terrorist groups in their missions, which adds another dimension in the involvement of international organisations in war. For example, the UN stabilisation mission in Mali (MINUSMA), has been the target of terrorist attacks from a number of different groups.⁴¹ This has prompted the UN to mandate the UN Security Council to take "direct action" to mitigate and respond to the asymmetric threats that the terrorist groups represent.⁴²

4.3 *Diplomacy and Coalition*

The transnational character of the terrorist groups makes it difficult for states to fight and defeat them. Such a character necessitates coordination of diplomatic efforts of key global actors in the fight against terrorism. Diplomacy and cooperation between state actors in bilateral, regional and international level in combating terrorism have been at key features of it. Even before 9/11, diplomatic efforts and cooperation existed in various forms including exchange of intelligence and training facilities, mutual and legal assistance for investigation and prosecution of terrorism-related cases, etc. However, often those were in a discreet and half-hearted manner.⁴³ But following the event of 9/11, the importance of such cooperation has increased and this was reflected in the UN Security Council Resolution No. 1373 and in the individual and collective actions of the states to confront invisible opponents through coordinated efforts in matters such as collecting and sharing intelligence and the identification of the terrorists, denial of their funding, arrest and prosecution. This is the section where international organisations and state actors have worked hand in hand.

⁴⁰ Robert Burns, "US to seek more help from NATO to counter Islamic State", *The Associated Press*, 11 February 2020, available at <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/02/12/us-to-seek-more-help-from-nato-to-counter-islamic-state/>, accessed on 18 February 2020.

⁴¹ John Karlsrud, "UN Peace Operations, Terrorism, and Violent Extremism", in Cedric de Coning Mateja Peter (eds.), *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 153-166.

⁴² United Nations, "United Nations Security Council Resolution 2295", New York: United Nations, 2016.

⁴³ B Rahman, "Counter-Terrorism: India-China-Russia Cooperation", *China Report*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2004, p. 155.

Economic support or financing is like a lifeline for the terrorist groups. So, dismantling this lifeline is perceived as one of the key counter-terrorism activities of the US and other global actors. Diplomacy had a major role to play in this regard. In the Middle East, in response to the appeal of the US and the European Union (EU), several Middle East governments have frozen alleged financial assets of the terrorist groups.⁴⁴ IOs also can play a major role. For example, to prevent the financing of terrorists, the UN enacted an international convention in 1999. The convention requires nations to prevent the financing of terrorist groups and bring those people and organisations under the jurisdiction that provide such financing. Through this convention the UN wanted to exert that terrorist financing is a crime and simultaneously it declared that terrorism is a universal problem and it needs universal jurisdiction to eradicate terrorism from this world.⁴⁵ Along with the “International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism”, the resolution has influenced a great extent in counter-terrorism law and practice at the national level. Non-state actors can also play an important role in controlling terrorist financing. Formon argues that the private sectors can be brought into the first line of defence against the terrorist organisation that seeks to earn, move or store illicit funds and information can be gathered from the private sector companies, which is important for acting against terrorism.⁴⁶ Effective Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in this area can combat terrorist financing.

4.4 *Prevention and Containment*

It is understood that the terrorist groups use ethical and cultural factors to spread their propaganda to build a closer network with mass people and increase their legitimacy and soft power over people. Thus, it is important to understand those ethical and cultural factors that provide terrorism with its appeal that of the state. There are some issues that can lead to the rise of terrorism, such as ideology, beliefs and values, political grievances, sociological motivations etc.⁴⁷ If the state actors fail to connect with people and develop a force of attraction, it can lead to further spread of terrorist ideologies. Terrorism is increasingly being seen as a problem that has to be solved through perseverance and addressing its social context in which it evolves. Thus, states have started searching for new methods and tools to combat the threat and containment has become a major part of the PVE.

⁴⁴ Muhammad Zamir, “Fighting the tentacles of terrorism”, *Dhaka Courier*, 03 October 2003.

⁴⁵ Michael Lawless, “Terrorism: An International Crime”, *International Journal*, 2008, p. 143.

⁴⁶ Marcy M. Forman, “Combating Terrorist Financing and Other Financial Crimes through Private Sector Partnerships”, *Journal of Money laundering Control*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2006, pp. 112-118.

⁴⁷ Lena Slachmuis, *Transforming Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilder’s Guide*, Washington, DC.: Search for Common Ground, 2017, pp. 4-6.

Civil society and NGOs can help in the prevention of the root causes of terrorism, thus changing the enabling environment in which terrorism breeds. They can combat terrorism by undertaking various activities such as teaching the mass population about the demerits of terrorism, providing training to the religious and community leaders regarding this issue etc. On the other hand, undertaking various development activities can also help in improving the living condition of the population, thus helping to reduce the grievances those give rise to terrorism. In addition to creating counter-narratives, the civil society and the media have a critical part to play in terms of its value in creating awareness in the public minds against terrorists. In many cases, civil society plays a crucial role in a whole-of-society approach to countering and preventing radicalisation and violent extremism that lead to terrorism. On the other hand, to strengthen their cooperation with governments, civil society and NGOs can also acknowledge positive steps or measures taken by law enforcement officials and government where they occur,⁴⁸ helping the government in consolidating the legitimacy of the steps taken in the minds of the people.

Another important area where the non-state actors can contribute heavily in counter-terrorism research. Civil society and NGOs have the capacity of engaging with the mass population at a level that most state actors cannot do. Thus, civil society and NGOs may try to engage in dialogue with individuals and groups involved in perpetrating acts of violence and terrorism. They also have the ability to conduct high-quality research in the areas of terrorism, political violence, and the conditions which aid in the spread of terrorism. Active participation of the government and non-governmental organisations can make a real synergy in an effective counter-terrorism strategy.

Non-state actors also provide policy suggestions to the government/state actors. The non-state actors can help the government by providing useful policy suggestions based on their research. Importantly, civil society experts and NGOs may provide alternative appropriate language and terminology to public officials in addressing issues related to terrorism and security.⁴⁹ They can also suggest the government ways to develop an effective counter-terrorism narrative. Thus, civil society has a major role to play by facilitating dialogue, expressing views on security policy, monitoring the activities of the security forces, as well as providing policy advice.

Although over the years, states and international non-state actors are combating terrorism, it is still difficult to conclude that they have become successful in their efforts. Often asymmetric or divergent interests of the states were reflected in scattered responses in global counter-terrorism strategies. The US and other NATO member states are combating terrorism, there is scepticism behind the motives of those actors. Some

⁴⁸ Christopher Michaelsen, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

scholars argue that the US has a different interest in the Middle East which worked behind the US intervention in Iraq. Similarly, Russia and other actors who are fighting against the IS terrorist group are motivated by their respective national interests.⁵⁰ Thus, since the 9/11, a comprehensive approach has been absent in combating terrorism.

Arguably, the role of the non-state actors in counter-terrorism is relatively a new phenomenon. In the classical approach of counter-terrorism, the focus was on simply containing the terrorist activity through violent means. And as states are the only legitimate actor to propagate violence, the role of the non-state actors was limited. However, the current approach views terrorism as a challenge of ideology and propaganda.⁵¹ The states are now developing ‘containment strategies’ that aims at managing and marginalising the terrorism and it is an area where the NGOs have distinct advantages.⁵² That there is a need of having more than just the state actor in the confronting terrorism has been accepted by the states and international organisations. There are a number of reasons where civil society can play a complementary role vis-à-vis the state actors in preventing and countering violent extremism:

Civil society has the experience and capacity in working on various programmes which foster inclusive and peaceful societies and also mitigate the structural conditions which lead to the spread of violent extremism. NGOs and civil society have extensive knowledge of the local trends, dynamics and drivers of violent extremism, and also present the best “early warning” mechanisms for new and emerging threats. In most cases, civil society is locally rooted, has legitimacy, access and influence and also is driven by pragmatic concern for their communities’ wellbeing, safety and security. Non-state actors can be locally and internationally connected with a larger community of civil society actors and practitioners who work in relevant disciplines. They usually work with the marginalized segment of the society, promote their political participation and try to provide platforms for addressing their demand and grievances.⁵³

In fact, it has been demonstrated that the various actors have individual advantages and disadvantages when it comes to fighting terrorism. States are the key

⁵⁰ Interview with Professor Dr. Delwar Hossain, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, Interview taken on 06 March 2018.

⁵¹ Nick Sitter and Tom Parker, “Fighting Fire with Water: NGOs and Counterterrorism Policy Tools”, *Global Policy*, Vol. 5, Issue 2, 2014, pp. 159-160.

⁵² Nick Sitter and Tom Parker, “NGOs and the Containment Approach to Counter-Terrorism”, *The Big View*, May 2013, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259657045_NGOs_and_the_Containment_Approach_to_Counter-Terrorism_FP7_Global_Re-ordering_Evolution_through_European_Networks_The_Big_View-May_2013_NGOs_and_the_Containment_Approach_to_Counter-Terrorism, accessed on 17 April 2018.

⁵³ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, “The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism”, available at <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/400241?download=true>, accessed on 24 September 2019.

actors in fighting the war against terrorists and International Organisations (IOs) are important players of diplomacy. On the other hand, Non-state actors such as NGOs and civil society has a major role in the containment of terrorism, but can not play any major role in military efforts. Table 1 below shows how the different actors have a comparative advantage in different components of fighting terrorism.

Table 1: Comparative Advantages of States, IOs and NGOs in Terms of Approaches to Counter-terrorism and Policy Tools

Approaches	States	IOs	NGOs
Law enforcement	Legislate, monitor, prosecute, disrupt	Harmonise law, exchange information, extradition	Support victims, monitor law enforcement
War	Intelligence, combat operations, covert operations, foreign intervention	Coordination, legitimation, use of force	Limited role
Diplomacy	Negotiations, political change, amnesties	Arenas for negotiation, mediation, monitor agreements	Supporting role: public policy implementation
Containment	Local government, hard targets, crisis management, undermine support, propaganda	Policy coordination, EU law, direct expenditure, crisis management Ideational role: dominant discourse, use of language, credible information	Ideational role: dominant discourse, use of language, credible information

Source: Adopted from Nick Sitter and Tom Parker, “Fighting Fire with Water: NGOs and Counterterrorism Policy Tools”, *Global Policy*, Volume 5, Issue 2, 2014, p. 163.

However, the role played by actors in countering or preventing terrorism and violent extremism is not without challenges. It is alleged that in several countries, counter-terrorism strategies have eroded the rule of law, peeled away judicial controls, hampered individual freedom of expression and also exposed all citizens to unchecked surveillance from the respective governments.⁵⁴ The counter-terrorism campaign of the states face questions due to some debated incidents like torture or attacking the civilians. Example of such an incident can be drawn from the incident of torture in Abu Ghraib High-Security Prison.

Although various measures to stop terrorist financing have become successful on a larger scale, the countries could not totally halt the process. In recent years,

⁵⁴ “EU: Orwellian counter-terrorism laws stripping rights under guise of defending them”, *Amnesty International*, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/01/eu-orwellian-counter-terrorism-laws-stripping-rights-under-guise-of-defending-them/>, accessed on 05 March 2018.

although Al Qaeda and other terrorist group's ability to raise and move funds has been significantly diminished, terrorist groups still have access to various financial resources and that fact constitutes an ongoing threat to the global community.⁵⁵ States are yet to gain absolute success in defeating them through ideological means or culturally. Global and regional politics are mainly responsible for the state's failure in this regard. Because of a particular country's national and strategic interest, states are acting in a subjective manner in terrorism.⁵⁶

Finally, civil society institutions and NGOs face significant challenges in engaging and mobilising public opinion. These include a massive information gap in the area of terrorism and counter-terrorism, with large parts of the community lacking both an understanding of and access to relevant information.⁵⁷ It should also be noted that since there are no tools that can directly evaluate how a person's ideological leaning change, there are always questions raised on how effective the role of the non-states actor led advocacy campaigns are in combating terrorism.

6. Conclusion

The issue 'terrorism' received unprecedented global attention since 9/11 as a result of terrorist attacks in the US. Since then, the human civilisation is witnessing multiple actions related to terrorism and counter-terrorism. In fact, how the global key actors confront terrorism will determine the future course of international relations to a great extent. The war on terrorism has already changed the post-Cold War geopolitical setting. The boundary between local and global terrorism has been blurred with the rapid expansion of transnational terrorism.

The paper reveals that the mode of confronting terrorism has transformed a lot in the last two decades. While post 9/11 period mostly focused on fighting terrorism on military means and waging the global war on terrorism, it soon became clear that simply military means were not enough, and concepts of CVE and PVE emerged over time to find more comprehensive ways to fight terrorism. At present, the focus is on building societies that will be resilient against terrorism through the incorporation of development paradigm. At the same time, new technologies are being used to nullify terrorist attacks before they can happen.

⁵⁵ Maurice R. Greenberg and Mallory Factor, "Update on the Global Campaign Against Terrorist Financing", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 15 June 2004, available at https://backend-live.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/Terrorist%20Financing%20TFR%206-17-04.pdf, accessed on 18 September 2019.

⁵⁶ Interview with Professor Dr. Delwar Hossain, op.cit.

⁵⁷ Christopher Michaelsen, op. cit.

It is also evident that there are some key characteristics of counter-terrorism campaigns. First of all, there is an absence of concerted or comprehensive global effort in combating terrorism. Secondly, multilateral efforts suffer from inadequate compliance and legal mechanisms as well as a lack of enforcement instruments. Thirdly, there is an adherence of international legal regimes in combating terrorism. The non-state actors can play a major role in countering violent extremist ideology. However, due to some hindrances, they could not perform their expected role. Regardless, it has been noted that the role of non-state actors in combating terrorism is a complementary one and primarily effective with the help of state actors since they cannot tackle the terrorist groups through violence. Non-state actors cannot substitute the role of the states, rather they can play a supplementary role beside the states' initiatives in the counter-terrorism studies.

The paper reveals that terrorism cannot be completely contained by the actions of the state or the non-state actors only. Violent terrorist attacks are still a reality and when it comes to fighting with the truly global opponent like the IS, there is no alternative to use strong military actions which can only be done by the state actors. On the other hand, the non-state actors are better suited for creating counter-narratives against propaganda used by the terrorist groups. Furthermore, there is a rise in the idea of countering terrorism through development and governance. Since youth are the main targets of the terrorist organisation, projects are being undertaken to ensure that their grievances are addressed. There is little room for doubting that the transnational terrorist groups are not the same as traditional adversaries. Therefore, it is not possible to eradicate the threat with traditional wisdom. In the combat against terrorism, states are still main actors, but in order for the state policies to reach the local and grassroots level and to understand the ground realities better, they need to have the support of the non-state actors. So, an effective partnership between the state and the non-state actors and their complementary role can help to eradicate threats emanated from terrorism.