

The Dynamics  
of Terrorism in  
North East India

# India's Fragile Borderlands

303.625095416  
UPA  
006343  
ICSSR

I.B. TAURIS

ARCHANA UPADHYAY

**There is a danger in the West of viewing terrorism exclusively through the prism of 9/11. This ground-breaking examination of terrorism in North East India demonstrates how grave a mistake this is.**

The nature of terrorism is the subject of ever-increasing scrutiny and there are many lessons to be learned from India's borderlands. Terrorism, fostered at first by post-colonial resentments, took root in the region because of an increased sense of cultural identity and perceived discrimination and exclusion by the Indian state. This book examines the long-term effects of terrorism on the population of North East India – where the best-known conflict is the Naga tribe's ongoing campaign for a greater Nagaland – as well as its international consequences.

*India's Fragile Borderlands* traces the development of terrorist groups within the region from small domestic groups to internationally connected and financed organizations. This comprehensive and penetrating study examines three major components of terrorism: the causes of terrorism, in their national, global and historical context; the nature and manifestations of this phenomenon in India's north-eastern frontiers; and trends within counter-terrorism and security and their effectiveness, both within the region and internationally.

*India's Fragile Borderlands* offers a comprehensive study of the nature, origins and history of terrorism in India's North East within an international perspective. Sharing borders with China, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar (Burma) and Bhutan, the region abounds in nationalist, separatist and even religious organizations that have used terrorism as a strategy to achieve their aims. Archana Upadhyay explores the complex and specific ideologies of these groups while highlighting the cross-border links and connections with organized crime that fund the violence in the region. This important new book includes many insights into the nature of terrorism in India's north-eastern frontiers and will be invaluable for students of Politics, History and International Relations.

**Archana Upadhyay** is an Associate Professor in the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India). Previously she taught International Relations and Foreign Policy in the Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University, Assam (India). She has been a Commonwealth Visiting Fellow at the International Policy Institute of King's College, London, and received a Fulbright Visiting Lecturer Fellowship with affiliation to the School of Advanced International Relations at Johns Hopkins University. Her research interests include International Relations with special focus on South Asian, Central Asian and Russian issues, Political Violence, Insurgency and Terrorism, Conflict and Conflict Management. Her previous publications are *Multiparty System in the Russian Federation: Problems and Prospects* and a co-authored monograph on Human Rights.

Jacket image:

A Naga rebel stands guard during the 58th anniversary of the unilateral Day of Independence at Hebron Camp, the central headquarters of the NSCN (I-M) in the north-eastern Indian state of Nagaland, August 14, 2005. © REUTERS/Adnan Abidi

Design by Positive2

# INDIA'S FRAGILE BORDERLANDS

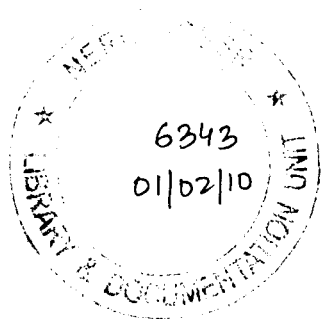
The Dynamics of Terrorism  
in North East India

ARCHANA UPADHYAY

**I.B. TAURIS**

LONDON • NEW YORK

303.65  
U72



Published in 2009 by I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.  
6 Salem Road, London W2 4BU  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010  
www.ibtauris.com

Distributed in the United States and Canada Exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010

**First South Asian Edition 2009**

Copyright © Archana Upadhyay, 2009

The right of Archana Upadhyay to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by the author in accordance with the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotation in a review, this book, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 978-1-84511-586-9

*This edition is licensed for sale in the Indian subcontinent only. Not for export elsewhere.*

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library.  
A full CIP record is available from the Library of Congress

Printed and bound in India by Brijbasi Art Press Ltd., New Delhi.

# CONTENTS

<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>Location Map: North East India</i>	xv
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
<i>Author's Note, November 2008</i>	xxi
<b>I     Theorizing Terrorism: Attempts and Pitfalls</b>	<b>1-26</b>
Introduction	3
Definitional Debate	4
Motivating Factors	10
Terrorism in Contemporary International Relations	15
Terrorism and Insurgency	18
<b>II    India's North Eastern Borderlands and       the Dynamics of Terrorism</b>	<b>27-80</b>
Background	29
The Nature of Terrorism in North East India	32
Conflicts in the North-East: An Overview	35
Cross-border Linkages	47
Arms Supply	55
Terrorism as Criminal Enterprise	58
Illegal Migration from Bangladesh and Islamic Militancy	62
The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983 (IMDT)	74
Border Management	76
Conclusion	79
<b>III   The Road Ahead</b>	<b>81-110</b>
Introduction	83
The State Response	84
Illusive Peace	88
'Eastward ho' diplomacy	93

Peace Processes	100
Towards a Comprehensive Regional Security Framework	105
Conclusion	108
<b>IV Appendices</b>	<b>111-228</b>
A. 10 Year Akbar Hydari Agreement: June 1947	113
B. The Shillong Agreement of 11 November, 1975	115
C. Manipur Merger Agreement, 1949	117
D. Assam Accord	120
E. Memorandum of Settlement on Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)	124
F. Memorandum of Understanding with TNV	131
G. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958	134
H. Disturbed Areas (Special Courts Act), 1976	137
I. The National Security Act, 1980	142
J. Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1984	148
K. Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987	157
L. Scheme for Surrender-Cum-Rehabilitation of Militants in the North East: Government of Assam	177
M. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002	182
N. The SAARC Convention (Suppression of Terrorism) Act, 1993	216
O. Additional Protocol to The SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism	218
<i>Notes</i>	229-274
<i>References</i>	275-296
<i>Index</i>	297-308

## Introduction

Terrorism in its multiple manifestations, has come to be accepted as a reality of political life in many parts of the world. Although in its modern guise, the phenomenon goes back to the French revolution, there clearly are many historical precursors. The urgency for the need to provide an analytical scheme by which to comprehend and come to grips with the complexities of the phenomenon, has thus been described by Paul Wilkinson: 'We live in a terroristic age. Few, even among the most favoured and secure, can fail to be haunted by the sights and ghastly dreams of terrorist murder, massacre and torture and the suffering of the innocent'.<sup>1</sup> The fact of the matter is that, terrorism today has not only increased in incidence and intensity, but has also impacted the framework of both national and international politics.

It goes without saying, that the task of defining contemporary variety of political terrorism is not without challenges. There is no unanimity among scholars on what kind of violence constitutes an act of terrorism. Over the years, hundreds of definitions have been developed and adopted by governments and private agencies. Academic experts have also proposed and analysed scores of definitional constructs. Commenting on the ongoing definitional debate, Laqueur says: 'Any definition of political terrorism venturing beyond noting the systematic use of murder, injury, and destruction or the threats of such acts towards achieving political ends is bound to lead to endless controversies'.<sup>2</sup> Scholars like Franck and Lockwood have suggested, that the concept itself is historically misleading. Referring to terrorism as a politically 'loaded' word, they point to the conceptual and ideological dissonance of the term.<sup>3</sup> There are other authors, who have argued that no commonly accepted definition is possible, as very often, states for a variety of reasons, rationalize even the killing of innocent people.<sup>4</sup> Attempts at building a 'transcendental' moral base to judge terrorism, has not been without risks of being open to charges of double standards. In this regard, clearly much depends upon 'who is in the saddle'.<sup>5</sup> Pointing at the inherent danger of using this word loosely, Whitbeck says:

It is no accident that there is no agreed definition of 'terrorism', since the word is so subjective as to be devoid of any inherent meaning. At the same time, the word is extremely dangerous, because people tend to believe that it does have meaning and to use and abuse the word by applying it to whatever they hate as a way of avoiding rational thought and discussion, and, frequently, excusing their own illegal and immoral behavior.<sup>6</sup>

Concluding that the word 'terrorism' is 'fundamentally an epithet and a term of abuse, with no intrinsic meaning', Whitbeck adds, 'perhaps the only honest and globally workable definition of "terrorism" is an explicitly subjective one – violence which I don't support'.<sup>7</sup>

It is noteworthy that within the larger discourse on violence and terrorism, there is a tendency to treat conflictual interactions in social and political life as 'abnormal'.<sup>8</sup> Normality, in this context acquires a physiological quality that denotes the 'health' of the polity. However, this kind of statistical and 'functional' normality does not correspond to reality, as in several parts of the world, particularly the developing world, violence and conflict clearly are the norm. Such an ideological bias, that ignores the role of violence in political processes, create an analytical discontinuity and consequently the analysis of the phenomenon of terrorism gets thoroughly hampered.

## Definitional Debate

Scholars have argued that the historical context – political, social and economic – profoundly impacts both the phenomenon of terrorism and conceptions of it.<sup>9</sup> However, no less important is an understanding of the subjective conditions. Considering the fact that there are rarely neutral terms in politics, it becomes necessary to recognize that an important aspect of terrorism is its social construction, which is relative to both time and place. According to Martha Crenshaw, within the discourse on terrorism, the political language adopted is significant, as it not only powerfully affects the perceptions of both the protagonists and audiences, it also impacts their expectations about the treatment that ought to be meted out to the problem.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, terrorism becomes both an organizing concept and a flexible label that depicts the phenomenon as it exists and offers a moral judgment.<sup>11</sup>

Defining terrorism and conceptualizations of the phenomenon is mainly an exercise driven by the researcher's perspective and world view. Definitional constructs, have thus ranged from those developed by governments, agencies within governments, private agencies and academics. Consequently, most perceptions on the dynamics of this complex phenomenon are the subject of personal opinion and academic debate.

Official definitions, have mainly emanated from those European countries that have endured terrorist campaigns. The *British* describe terrorism as 'the use of threat, for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause, of action which involves serious violence against a person or property'.<sup>12</sup> In the *Federal Republic of Germany*, terrorism has been defined as 'enduringly conducted struggle for political goals, which are intended to be achieved by means of assaults on the life and property of other persons, especially by means of severe crimes'.<sup>13</sup> The definition of the *European Interior Ministers* notes that, 'terrorism is ... the use, or the threatened use by a cohesive group of persons of violence short of warfare to effect political aims'.<sup>14</sup>

Government agencies of the United States, have opted for the legalistic approach to terrorism that clearly distinguishes the phenomenon from more common criminal behaviour. The *Federal Bureau of Investigation* defines terrorism as 'unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to

intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political and social objectives'.<sup>15</sup> The *Department of Defense* defines terrorism as 'the unlawful use of, or threatened use, of force or violence against individuals or property to coerce and intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives'.<sup>16</sup> According to the *State Department*, terrorism is 'premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience'.<sup>17</sup>

A study of the above definitions of terrorism, makes it evident, that the debate over an acceptable definition of terrorism is clearly 'the most confounding problem in the study of terrorism'.<sup>18</sup> However, despite the difficulties involved, the search for an acceptable definition of terrorism continues unabated. In this regard, Bruce Hoffman writes:

We come to appreciate that terrorism is ineluctably political in aims and motives; violent-or, equally important, threatens violence; designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target; conducted by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia); and perpetrated by a sub-national group or non-state entity. We may therefore now attempt to define terrorism as the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of change.<sup>19</sup>

Ted Gurr describes terrorism as 'the use of unexpected violence to intimidate or coerce people in the pursuit of political and social objectives'.<sup>20</sup> Gibbs describes the phenomenon as 'illegal threatened violence against human or nonhuman objects, so long as that violence meets additional criteria such as secretive features and unconventional warfare'.<sup>21</sup> Walter Reich defines terrorism as 'a strategy of violence designed to promote desired outcomes by instilling fear in the public at large'.<sup>22</sup> Charles Tilly's description portrays terrorism as 'asymmetrical deployment of threats and violence against enemies using means that fall outside the forms of political struggle routinely operating within some current regime'.<sup>23</sup> Austin T. Turk's definition describes the phenomenon as 'organized political violence, lethal or non-lethal, designed to deter opposition by maximizing fear, specifically by random targeting of people or sites'.<sup>24</sup> Commenting on the political dimension of terrorism, Harold Lasswell described terrorists as 'participants in the political process who strive for political results by amusing acute anxieties'.<sup>25</sup> Cindy C. Combs defines terrorism as 'a dramatization of the most proscribed kind of violence – that which is perpetrated on innocent victims'.<sup>26</sup>

Accounts of terrorism mainly fall into two categories: those that understand the phenomenon as a form of warfare, and those that do not. Robert Taber describes terrorism as 'urban guerrillaism' – a form of warfare

that is more humane than most other types of warfare.<sup>27</sup> In his words: 'terrorism, conventionally viewed with pious horror as political murder is far more humane being more selective, than most other types of warfare'.<sup>28</sup> Richard Clutterbuck interchangeably uses the term 'urban guerrilla warfare' and 'urban terrorism' and likewise 'rural guerrilla warfare' and 'rural terrorism'.<sup>29</sup>

These views vary from the traditional view of terrorism which is widely seen as an immoral way of waging war and hence a subject of revulsion. In contrast, guerrilla warfare is generally regarded as a legitimate form of conflict and guerrilla fighters, as described by Whittaker are: 'A numerically larger group of armed individuals who operate as a military unit, attack enemy military forces, and seize and hold territory, while also exercising some form of sovereignty or control over a defined geographical area and its population'.<sup>30</sup>

It is noteworthy, that despite the less indiscriminate and less destructive nature of terrorism than most other forms of warfare, there is a strong reluctance among many scholars to view it as a form of warfare. This clearly has much to do with the abhorrence that terrorist acts generate. In the words of Paul Wilkinson, 'terrorism is coercive intimidation. It is the systematic use of murder and destruction, and the threat of murder and destruction in order to terrorize individuals, groups, communities or governments into conceding to the terrorists' political demands'.<sup>31</sup> Highlighting the differences between terrorism and other forms of warfare, Ruth Linn observes:

When compared to terrorism, conventional war has clear norms: there is a neutral territory which is recognized by the fighting forces, the armed forces are identified, there is a restriction to certain arms in the battlefield and there is an awareness that the use of armed forces against civilians is exceptional or aberration. In contrast, terrorism is aimed at the destruction of established norms. Unlike guerrilla fighters who are not breaking the laws of war, who know who is their enemy and attack only the superior combatants, terrorists blur the combatant-non-combatant distinction by saying that 'WAR IS WAR and that any attempt to define ethical limits to war is futile'.<sup>32</sup>

Linn, further opines: 'When no distinction is made between combatant and non-combatant, nor in regard to the proportion of damage done, terrorism takes the entire free society as its field of combat, though, paradoxically, very often demands a treatment with respect given to legitimate warfare'.<sup>33</sup>

Linn's observation however, has been subjected to criticism. Terrorists, it is argued, are ill equipped to fight conventional wars as they lack both manpower and industrial resources. Thus in an unequal battle, acts of terrorism work as equalizers. It is also pointed out that much like modern day nuclear war, where the distinction between combatants and noncombatants gets completely blurred, terrorism comfortably fits within the heritage of total

war.<sup>34</sup> In this regard, it is noteworthy that scholars like Schmid make a strong case for bringing terror acts within the purview of war crimes. He points out:

What makes them different from soldiers ... is that they do not carry their arms openly and they do not discriminate between armed adversaries and non-combatants. Since they do not fight by the rules of war they turn themselves into war criminals. Terrorism distinguishes itself from conventional and to some extent also from guerrilla warfare through the disregard for the principles of chivalry and humanity contained in the Hague Regulations and Geneva Conventions.<sup>35</sup>

In this regard, Wheeler notes that even conventional armies break rules of war with impunity and contemporary terrorists in preferring civilian targets merely emulate the heritage of modern total war.<sup>36</sup> Paul Wilkinson recognizes this paradox when he admits, 'it is in practice extremely difficult to draw boundaries between war and terror'.<sup>37</sup>

In their seminal book *Political Terrorism*, Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman after scrutinizing the observations of researchers and analysts in the field, identified more than 100 definitions of terrorism.<sup>38</sup> While eighty-three per cent of a sample of 109 definitions agreed that violence was a defining feature of terrorism, only 5 per cent were willing to label such violence as criminal, and just 30 per cent could view such violence in martial terms. For the majority, terrorism was unmistakably a kind of political violence. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the issue of *state terrorism* – terrorist acts of government towards its own citizens – figured significantly in several of these definitions. Another interesting revelation was that, while there was a willingness to include state terrorism within the ambit of terrorism, there was a clear reluctance to view terrorism as warfare. However, the inclusion of state terrorism within the broader discourse of terrorism marks a clear departure from the past. Terms like 'wholesale' and 'retail', suggestive of the distinction between state terrorism and oppositional terrorism, have also gained currency and it is argued that the 'retail' terrorism of oppositional groups is provoked by the 'wholesale' terrorism of the state.<sup>39</sup>

Scholars like Newman and Lynch, point at the fundamental difference between terrorism and other forms of violence. In their words, 'the one feature that distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence is an established, often elaborate ideology that is used to justify the act or acts of violence'.<sup>40</sup> The existence of such ideology is significant and is mainly derived from theories that explain human, social and political conditions. Implicit is the conviction that terrorism has a *morality*, that raises serious questions and articulates deep beliefs such as: 'One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter'; 'Kill one, terrorize a thousand'; 'Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice'; and 'It became necessary to destroy the town to save it'.<sup>41</sup> These quotations, clearly represent an uncompromising belief in the righteousness of the espoused

cause, while simultaneously justifying and glorifying the hardships that violence may inflict on both perceived enemies and members of the terror outfits. According to Paul Wilkinson, what differentiates terrorism from other forms of organized violence are the features of amorality. In his words:

What fundamentally distinguishes terrorism from other forms of organized violence is not simply its severity, but its features of amorality and antinomianism. Terrorists either profess indifference to existing moral codes or else claim exemption from all such obligations. Political terror, if it is waged consciously and deliberately, is implicitly prepared to sacrifice all moral and humanitarian consideration for the sake of some political end.<sup>42</sup>

Taking this debate further, Jeff Goodwin differentiates terrorism from both guerilla warfare and state terrorism. He introduces the concept of 'revolutionary terrorism', which is described as strategic use of violence and threats of violence by a revolutionary movement against civilians or noncombatants, aimed at influencing several audiences. The 'revolutionary movement', he points out, can be any organization or network that seeks to alter the political and in some cases the socio-economic order in fundamental ways.<sup>43</sup> More often than not, these groups are oppositional political groups, which view terrorism as a political strategy. Goodwin further differentiates between 'selective' or 'individualized' terrorism and 'categorical terrorism'. 'Selective' or 'individualized' terrorism is essentially a strategy of 'targeted assassination', directed against noncombatants singled out on account of their individual identities and are generally identified as government collaborators. They may include politicians, state officials, political activists, unsympathetic intellectuals, journalists and others.<sup>44</sup> Categorical terrorism, on the other hand, is defined as 'the strategic use of violence and threats of violence, usually intended to influence several audiences, by oppositional political groups against civilians or noncombatants who belong to a specific ethnicity, religious or national group, social class or some other collectivity without regard to their individual identity or role'.<sup>45</sup> The victims of the categorical terrorist assault are described as 'complicitous civilians', who routinely benefit from aggressive state policies against the revolutionaries and their presumed constituents.<sup>46</sup>

While there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism, it is abundantly clear, that it is the interplay of different factors that shape perspectives of the participants in a terrorist environment. Regardless of the official and scholarly definitions crafted, participants have a tendency to draw their own conclusions that is often coloured by factors such as individual experiences, group identity, culture and history. For the practitioners and patrons of terrorist violence, terrorists are revered freedom fighters and terror acts are no more than unfortunate consequences of a just war against an oppressive powerful opponent. The broad audience to the terrorist incident,

would predictably react differently. While direct audiences in all likelihood would easily connect with the physical victims of violence, indirect audiences, being far removed from the immediate theatre by virtue of physical distance as well as their identities, would be more of spectators. Analysts too, as interpreters of incidents, shape perspectives and thus emerge as key participants. Two assumptions, however are central to the understanding of the phenomenon of terrorism. *First*, is the acceptance that violence, which in general is understood as behaviour that disrupts values and expectations, is an integral part of the political process and is aimed at maximizing uncertainty<sup>47</sup> and power, particularly in its psychological dimension, increases with uncertainty.<sup>48</sup> *Second*, is the understanding that the maximization of uncertainty results in conditions of extreme fear and anxiety and is considered as an achievement of great power. In the words of David Fromkin: 'the threat of violence and the use of fear to coerce, persuade or gain public attention aims at one psychological result: to increase the probability of compliance'.<sup>49</sup> Terrorism, thus is 'a form of behaviour which is not susceptible to a single definition; that it is a type of behaviour, policy, tool or instrument used by individuals, groups and nations, attests to the fact that its definition depends on the perspective from which it is viewed'.<sup>50</sup>

Clearly, the prevalent definitions of terrorism entail conceptual and syntactical difficulties and this partly explains why alternative concepts with more positive connotations – guerrilla movements, underground movements, national liberation movements, separatists, rebels and so forth – are preferred to both describe and characterize terrorist outfits. The choice of concepts is significant and is mainly aimed at providing acceptability to such outfits, by glossing over the brutalities of terrorism.

The focus for the purpose of this analysis, is specifically on political terrorism, as a strategy of violence within a broader political context. Political terrorism in this sense, would mean the 'systematic use of murder and destruction, and the threat of murder and destruction to terrorize individuals, groups, communities or governments into conceding to the terrorists' political aims'.<sup>51</sup> It is significant, that although within the larger discourse on terrorism there are several areas of divergence over pertinent questions, such as who can practice terrorism, under what circumstances and with what consequences, some common features in most formal definitions clearly stand out. These may be thus enumerated:

- **Terrorism is exemplary.** Terrorist acts are selective and often pre-emptive enforcement of compellence or deterrent postures that serves to obtain both compliance and modification of collective behaviour patterns.<sup>52</sup>
- **Terrorism is unpredictable.** Extreme uncertainty and lack of anticipation on the part of the victim serve to enhance the aggressor's

power and thereby impact the adversary's ability to both anticipate and react.<sup>53</sup>

- **More often than not, 'Targets' are of a non-military nature.** Contemporary acts of terrorism are mostly of an indiscriminate variety, with the victims being normally accessible and unexpected targets. As in non-conventional warfare, the distinction between the frontline and the 'civilian population' is barely there. The anonymity of the victim, serves as a warning to the population at large about the likelihood of each individual being a potential target. To use the terminology of nuclear warfare, terrorism is 'counter value' rather than 'counter force'.<sup>54</sup>
- **There is an apparent consensus at the 'moral' unacceptability of terrorism.** Across differing ideologies and regimes, there is the official rejection of terrorism as a 'legitimate' means for achieving political aims. What is lacking however, is a global consensus on 'whose' terrorism and what kinds of terror are to be eradicated through concerted global action.
- **Terrorism, mainly though not exclusively, is a tactic in the struggle of the weak against the strong.** Acts of extreme violence are sometimes committed to 'even up' the balance of forces in an unequal political and military battle.
- **Terrorism is a dramatic symbol of hostility involving a symbolic selection of 'targets'.** 'Targets' tend to get selected because of their association to a certain social, economic, ethnic or political category. Inanimate objects symbolizing a government's power, often get targeted.
- **The relatively low use of force adds to the attractiveness of terrorism as a favoured strategy among both state and non-state actors.** The low cost and relatively high yield technique of terrorism, makes it an attractive tactical option for both established governments and non-state groups looking for flexible responses and 'limited war' strategies. Consequently, terrorism has become an immoral surrogate for general war.<sup>55</sup>
- **Terrorism is a form of costly signaling.** Terrorism in this sense would mean the 'purposeful use of violence by the precipitator against an instrumental target in order to communicate to a primary target a threat of violence so as to coerce the primary target into behaviour or attitudes through intense fear or anxiety in connection with a demanded power outcome'.<sup>56</sup> Signaling in terrorist campaigns would include: attrition, intimidation, provocation, spoiling and outbidding.<sup>57</sup>

## Motivating Factors

The understanding of the complexities of terrorism entails the identification

of both non-psychological and psychological instrumental bases of terrorist actions. According to Martha Crenshaw, motivations behind terrorism are driven by numerous factors, ranging from the socialization of individuals who become 'terrorists' to its purpose, continuity with other nonviolent forms of political action and also availability of opportunities.<sup>58</sup> Typical explanations for terrorism in much public discourse, revolve either around *grievances* or on the theories of *political order*. Grievances, in this regard, are believed to be the outcome of social disorganization witnessed in traditional societies experiencing sudden economic transformations. In such societies, it is pointed out, that growing inequalities, presence of non-locals, erosion of social norms coinciding with the planting of new institutions, encourage disquiet which subsequently results in the creation of ideal recruiting environment for terrorist outfits.<sup>59</sup> The theories of *political order*, on the other hand, argue that the semi-open nature of quasi-authoritarian and partial democracies, make them more prone to internal armed conflicts and civil wars by creating opportunities for dissident mobilization. Inadequate fiscal and administrative capacities in many of these states, clearly work in favour of terrorists.<sup>60</sup>

#### *Terrorism as a strategic option*

Scholars who subscribe to the *non-psychological perspective*, believe that terror activity is a calculated response to circumstances and is opted by its practitioners from a range of perceived alternatives, the relative effectiveness of which is assessed through observation and experience. Terrorism, thus cannot be dismissed as pathological or inexplicable and is an outcome of intentional choice, involving regularized decision making processes. The goals pursued, clearly aim at changing the status quo and consequently preserving threatened privileges. In this, terrorist groups are quick to learn from the experiences of other similar outfits and this explains patterns of contagion in terrorist incidents.<sup>61</sup>

Terrorism, appears to be the preferred tactic of small and weak organizations in their quest to compensate for what they lack in numbers. In the words of Martha Crenshaw:

The observation that terrorism is a weapon of the weak is hackneyed but apt. At least when initially adopted, terrorism is the strategy of a minority that by its own judgment lacks other means. When the group perceives its options are limited, terrorism is attractive because it is a relatively inexpensive and simple alternative, and because it's potential reward is high.<sup>62</sup>

The lack of numbers can be attributed to several factors. One possibility may be the lack of appeal among the masses, for the extreme ideological position taken by the challengers of the regime. Failure to mobilize support may also be attributed to the inability or unwillingness of the cadres to devote time to organizational work. In this regard, it is noteworthy that no matter how widespread popular dissatisfaction is, mobilization is imperative for the masses

to rise.<sup>63</sup> Fear of negative sanctions from the regime, coupled with the misreading of the ground situation in regard to the presumed strength of the rebels, are other factors that deter people from coming out in open support for the insurgent cause. Turk, emphatically argues that terrorism need not always be the weapon of the weak. In his words: 'Because any group may adopt terror tactics, it is misleading to assume either that "terrorism is the weapon of the weak" or that terrorists are always small groups of outsiders – or at most a "lunatic fringe" ... Terror is organized violence, but the nature of the organization cannot be specified in defining terror'.<sup>64</sup> Clearly, there are very good reasons why rebel groups employ or reject a strategy of terrorism.

*Time factor* is crucial in the choice of terrorist means. External factors, both psychological and organizational, have the potential to trigger immediate action. A change in the ground situation may offer opportunities to organizations to compensate for its inferiority *viz-à-viz* the government. This may be due to the regimes' inability to protect the life and property of its citizens, or it may be because the regime has made itself morally and politically susceptible by adopting excessive force against its own people. Government repression is known to work in two ways: it may discourage dissent and may also ignite a moral backlash.<sup>65</sup>

International environment is no less critical a factor. If global opinion goes against the legitimacy of the targeted regime, rebels are encouraged to act aggressively, hoping that their cause would get greater visibility and support. Factors like, personalities of leaders, competition among rivals within the organization and pressure from followers, also have a bearing on the decision to use terror tactics.

Availability of new resources, often impact the situation to the advantage of the challengers. These assets may be secured through an alliance with a foreign government or through linkages with more established outfits or through criminal means such as extortions, robberies and kidnapping for ransom. This is imperative, because supporting full-time terrorist activities require uninterrupted funding. Efforts towards this end get augmented by strategic innovations. Careful selection of targets considered taboo, and locales where violence is unexpected such as schools, hospitals and places of worship are clear examples of such innovations.<sup>66</sup>

The *cost and benefit calculation* is central to the decision to use terrorist methods. Terrorism is both defensive as well as opportunistic, determined by calculations of resources and opportunities. Occasional violence is known to serve useful purpose. Not only does it give the outfit greater visibility, it also results in the consolidation of its power base. And at times, given the urgency of the situation, superior government resources and the likelihood of other methods not being able to make a desired impact, terrorism becomes the only workable option. However, the use of terrorism is not without a cost. As a domestic strategy, it invariably invites punitive government reaction, fear of

which may weaken the fervour for confrontation. Indiscriminate terrorist violence also holds the risk of provoking a moral outrage that may result in the distancing of the citizenry. However, in ethnically divided societies, the risk of popular alienation is minimum, as in such societies the government of the majority appears illegal to the challenging minority and hence commands little support.<sup>67</sup>

There are obvious *advantages* of terrorism that the terrorist organizations fully recognize. The agenda setting function clearly stands out. By skillfully articulating the compulsions to resort to violence, terrorism powerfully puts the issue of political change in the public imagination. The ensuing disarray, not only poses a serious challenge to the authority of the government, but also has the potential to deflate its administrative institutions – its police, military and the courts. Terrorist success serves another useful purpose. In a potent way, it maintains the confidence and zeal of the supporters and sympathizers of the terrorist cause. These gains however, are subject to two factors: the lengths to which the government is willing to go to reclaim its authority and on the population's forbearance to insecurity and suppression.<sup>68</sup>

Terrorism's constituencies are diverse and are central to its changing dynamics. Besides sympathizers, antagonists and 'neutrals', a host of other actors such as the government, the political parties, churches, trade unions, intellectuals, social movements and also the mass media are a component of this matrix. These actors are a part of an interactive process, where they not only react to one another's decisions but even anticipate them. Terrorism thus, as Michel Wieviorka points out, fits into a set of relations that can be subjected to a synchronic or structural analysis.<sup>69</sup>

#### *Terrorism as an offshoot of psychological behaviour*

Scholars who subscribe to this view, attribute a special psycho-logic to rationalize violent acts that terrorists are psychologically compelled to commit. This special logic gets clearly reflected in the polarizing and absolutist 'us versus them' rhetoric that defines most of their violent acts. In this regard, the striking uniformity of the rhetoric, despite the diversity of causes that terrorists espouse, is clearly revealing. While 'they', denote the establishment and in the psycho-logic reasoning of the terrorists are responsible for all discord and hence deserve to be exterminated, 'us' are the freedom fighters whose just and moral acts are the outcome of justified rage.<sup>70</sup> Crenshaw attempts an explanation of the terrorist psychology:

The actions of terrorist organizations are based on a subjective interpretation of the world rather than objective reality. Perceptions of the political and social environment are filtered through beliefs and attitudes. It is clearly mistaken, however, to assume that terrorist act in terms of a consistent rationality based on accurate representation of reality. In fact, one of the aims of the terrorist organizations is to convince

skeptical audiences to see the world in between governments and terrorists concerns for the definition of the conflict.<sup>71</sup>

Although people with diverse backgrounds are known to tread the terrorist path, it is pointed out, that individuals with certain kind of personality attributes are dis-proportionately oriented towards a career in terrorism. By all indication, excitement seeking, action-oriented and aggressive people are more likely to choose this path. In this regard, the psychological mechanism of 'externalization' and 'splitting' that characterize individuals with narcissistic and borderline personality disturbances, assumes significance.<sup>72</sup> 'Splitting' is a personality trait, that is an outcome of a particular type of psychological damage inflicted during childhood. The resultant narcissistic wounds, lead to the development of what clinicians describe as 'the injured self'.<sup>73</sup> An individual with such personality assemblage, displays a behaviour pattern that obsessively centres around his idealized self and projects onto others, all the devalued weaknesses within him. Such individuals, instinctively connect with the polarizing and absolutist ideologies of terrorism, as it provides a powerful explanation for what has gone wrong in their lives, besides helping them chart out a path for establishing an identity for themselves.

Studies on the lives of terrorists have also revealed linkages between the demographic characteristics of a society, levels of employment and terrorism. Rapid population growth is known to redistribute resources, resulting in economic grievances. Consequently, there is a tendency for unattached, unemployed youth with free time, high energy levels and a zeal for adventure to get attracted to radical causes.<sup>74</sup> Membership of such groups prove to be comforting, as it powerfully contributes to the consolidation of a psychosocial identity at a time of great societal flux. Even educated youth tend to get drawn towards radical causes. This is particularly evident in developing societies, where students in formal education find themselves culturally caught between two worlds, one traditional and the other modern.

Although each terrorist group operates in a unique historical setting and cannot be studied in isolation from its national cultural milieu, available data does provide interesting insights into the psychology of the terrorist mind, particularly in regard to group membership. In a very powerful way, group membership help members overcome personal feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Submergence and allegiance could be to an individual, an organization, a divine force, real or imaginary motherland, conscience or even a psychic compulsion. In exchange of such submergence, the individual experiences an elevated sense of pride, confidence and also a sense of self worth and security – both physical as well as security against the torture of doubt.<sup>75</sup> Within the group, however, there are two opposing forces in play. Forces that Bion persuasively describes as – the *work group* and the *basic assumption group*. While the work group is goal oriented, the basic assumption group suffers from three identifiable psychological symptoms: the *fight-fight*, the

*dependency* and the *pairing* symptoms.<sup>76</sup> Within the assumption group, the *fight-fight* group delineates itself in relation to the outside world, which both justifies and threatens its existence. The *dependency* group looks up to an all-powerful leader for guidance and the *pairing* group awaits the arrival of a messiah for salvation. In varying degrees, terrorist groups are known to manifest all three psychological symptoms.<sup>77</sup>

Within the group environment, doubters are dealt with absolute firmness.<sup>78</sup> Particularly so in case of underground organizations, where the group becomes the ultimate interpreter of ideology, the sole source of information and confirmation, and in the face of external threats, the only dependable refuge.<sup>79</sup> Consequently, what emerges is a group mind that exerts tremendous pressure on the group to commit acts of violence. The rationalist and the psychological line of reasoning attribute different reasons for the pressure. While the rationalists argue that political violence is clearly a tactic to achieve the group's political goals, the psychological line of reasoning points at the risks and dangers of inaction for action driven people. They argue that periodic violence is imperative to *justify the existence of terrorist groups*. Janis describes it as a manifestation of 'group think', which clearly is based on the one dimensional perception of the enemy as evil. This coupled with illusions of invulnerability, not only leads to excessive optimism but also excessive risk taking, that often manifest in the form of brutal violent acts.<sup>80</sup> Terrorists, whose only sense of significance comes from being terrorists, have a compelling reason to wage what Ferracuti describes as 'fantasy war' – a war that is real only in the mind of the terrorist.<sup>81</sup> Ironically, success to the espoused cause is not entirely welcomed, as it holds the risk of making the group irrelevant.

## **Terrorism in Contemporary International Relations**

The phenomenon of terrorism underwent drastic transformation after the Second World War, and as a result emerged a new type of terrorism that was international in character. International terrorism came to be understood as 'acts of violence across national boundaries, or with clear international repercussions, often within the territory or involving the citizens of a third party to a dispute'.<sup>82</sup> Scholars have identified following characteristics of the contemporary 'strain' of terrorism:<sup>83</sup>

- There is a clear movement towards the 'transnationalization' of terror, resulting in a shift from vertical forms of organization to horizontal networking structures.
- A clear shift in strategy from calculated to random murder, that often gets manifested in terrorist operations away from the immediate theatre of conflict, in areas understood as 'neutral territory'.
- Broad co-ordination among widely disparate groups, coupled with the opportunities provided by the privatization of violence and its

instruments, contributes to the success of the technique. Diaspora support has emerged as an important factor in the support structure of terrorist outfits.

- Another noteworthy feature of cotemporary terrorism, is its ability to effectively undercut the state's monopoly of violence and acquire greater visibility, by successfully availing opportunities created by technological globalization.

Mary Kaldor uses the term 'regressive globalization' to describe the character of the new terrorist groups.<sup>84</sup> She argues that many of these groups have emerged in reaction to the upheavals generated by globalization, as well as, due to disenchantment with the secular ideologies of the state. The opportunities created by globalization, in the form of increased funding from transnational criminal groups and diaspora and also through the media, give a fillip to these groups to aggressively espouse their chosen cause. A noteworthy feature, is that these groups, differ significantly from classical terrorist groups in ideology, tactics and organization. What characterizes them is the pursuit of modern political agenda with anti-modern symbols and their acts are justified as a part of a great war against the 'other'. In case of religious groups, it is a 'cosmic war' against 'evil' and in case of nationalist groups, it is all about avenging historic injustices.<sup>85</sup>

In the fabric of contemporary international relations, terrorism has come to be recognized as a significant factor, severely threatening national sovereignty by undermining the 'territorial function' of the nation state.<sup>86</sup> Such recognition, clearly is an outcome of a number of profound and mutually reinforcing changes in the global order. 'Trans-nationalization' of economic relations, elites and communications, evidently are some such factors. Another factor is the 'globalization' of military alliances, that clearly has resulted in the erosion of the traditional concept of 'neutrality'. The accentuation of the nuclear stalemate, is believed to be another compelling factor that encourages the development of non-conventional forms of warfare. In this setting, terrorism as a general phenomenon, skillfully adapts to the new transnational conditions and emerges as a potent political weapon that much like the transnational corporations, has the ability to 'shop' for jurisdiction. In this regard, Barry Buzan makes insightful observations, within the prevalent set of theories on international relations, on the implications of the phenomenon on international relations.<sup>87</sup>

The *neorealist* perspective, according to him is state-centric and is driven by the argument that an understanding of the changes effected on the global power structure, resulting from the end of bipolarism, is critical to the understanding of the international security environment. The discourse mainly centres around the distribution of material power in the global political structure, and its interplay with the balance of power logic.<sup>88</sup> Neorealists would argue, that events like the 11 September, 2001 attack on the US, are

the direct outcome of unipolarism and the response to it being an instance of the unipolar power structure in action. The most obvious impact of 9/11, was the repositioning of relationships amongst the great powers and the intensification of territorial politics, manifested in the form of increased security controls and a general upgrading of the state's right to surveillance.<sup>89</sup> It is further argued, that the reality of global terrorism brings into focus three major staples of the realist/security studies agenda – the issue of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs); security challenges emerging on account of the revolution in military affairs and; the controversial idea that the world is all set for a clash of civilization, defined in cultural and civilizational terms.<sup>90</sup> These factors have not only widened the gulf between the capability of the sole superpower and all other actors in the system, but have also generated a scenario, where the weak are being pushed, either towards 'submission' or 'pursuit' of alternative military means. Both terrorism and WMDs are thus options, that get explored.<sup>91</sup>

The *Globalists* argue, that with the de-territorialization of world politics, globalization's clearest guiding theme is the independent role of both transnational entities – corporations, non-governmental social and political organizations – and intergovernmental organizations and regimes.<sup>92</sup> Consequently, the network of interactions involving varied actors at different levels, has been dramatically impacted and the state is merely one of the players with little control over the outcome of these interactions. Globalization, thus has complicated the security debate by focusing on its two interrelated aspects, the first highlighting the unequal, exploitative and coercive aspects of the centre-periphery relationship and the second acknowledging the effectiveness of globalization as the most effective and swiftest way to overcome the same.<sup>93</sup> Globalists argue, that cracks in the global Westphalian political fabric, evident in the form of failed states, has created spaces for non-state actors on the murky side of world society to operate aggressively, and what has emerged can be understood as the subaltern variant to the notion of *globalization from below*. It involves the cementing of ties amongst 'dubious groups' and escalation of 'shadowy activities', ranging from smuggling of commodities, illicit production and trading of small weapons and drugs, money laundering, trafficking in human and other illegal activities, that steer across national, ethnic and even religious associations.<sup>94</sup> Global terrorism, according to globalists, is clearly a powerful manifestation of the subaltern non-state successfully organizing and reproducing its acts at the global level.

The *regionalist* perspective argues that with the transformation of great powers into 'lite powers', in the aftermath of the Cold War, there is a discernible reduction in the ability of global powers to have a sustained interest in the affairs of the world. It is the pulls and pressures of domestic policy, that is dictating their foreign policy choices and also impacting their ability to strategically and militarily engage in world trouble spots. The changed scenario

provides ample space to local states, to engage in military-political interactions, in their respective regions with less outside interference.<sup>95</sup> The regionalist perspective, emphatically holds that barring few exceptions in history, regional security dynamics have always been vital to the overall security constellation in the international system.<sup>96</sup> In the context of global terrorism, regionalists argue that although cotemporary terrorist organizations manifest themselves as de-territorialized transnational players, they are intimately connected with the political dynamics of their respective regions, and their motives, organizational goals and pattern of operation have to be understood within the regional context. The study of regionalism, thus has to take into account, the cultural, the functional and the structural variants in the contexts to be examined.<sup>97</sup> A noteworthy feather in the context of regionalism, according to Bozeman, is the institutionalization of violent regional conflicts that clearly is a complex mixture of intra-national, intra-regional and extra-regional conflicts. This provides sufficient scope for regionally different ways of managing tensions. In his words:

Studies of the world's numerous strife-torn regions show conclusively that moral, intellectual, social, or political conflicts are experienced in greatly varying ways: that levels of conflict tolerance are not convergent; and the allowance must be made, therefore, for culturally or regionally different ways of managing tensions and disputes.<sup>98</sup>

A related perspective by Buzan on *regional security complexes*, powerfully supports the observation on the complexity of regional conflicts. Buzan defines such a complex as 'a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another. Security complexes tend to be durable, but they are neither permanent nor internally rigid'.<sup>99</sup> However, in the context of regional conflicts, it needs to be stated that the nature of borders have an impact on war propensity. Although every state aims at wielding effective control within its territory, peripheral societies present peculiar challenges to state control. The heterogeneous nature of such societies in almost every sense – ethnic, linguistic, religious and ideological – creates pressures to establish new autonomous units and consequently the world's peripheries witness cycles of violence and counter violence.

## Insurgency and Terrorism

Both semantically and conceptually, insurgency and terrorism denote different situations. However, in the context of violence against the state, with most of the insurgent groups opting to use systematic terror in pursuit of their goals, the line separating the two stands clearly blurred. The Oxford English Dictionary describes insurgency as 'a heaving or rising; an upheaval; the action of rising against authority; a revolt'.<sup>100</sup> Two facts stand out from its dictionary

meaning that sets it apart from other related concepts – it is a *revolt* directed against a political authority with an unwavering will to *change* the status quo. Terror, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, in an apparent reference to ‘the reign of terror’ in France, is ‘government by intimidation as directed and carried out by the party in power in France during the revolution of 1784-1794’. It is ‘a policy intended to strike with terror those against whom it is adopted; the employment of methods of intimidation; the fact of terrorizing or condition of being terrorized’.<sup>101</sup> While insurgency, mainly understood as a ‘rise in revolt against an established authority’, indicates an objective, terrorism is more of a strategy geared towards the achievement of certain objectives. Insurgents may or may not adopt terrorism as a strategy. Another noteworthy difference between the two terms is that, while insurgent acts are always against a political authority, terror as a strategy may be used either by a political authority or against it. It is noteworthy, that in either case, scholars have failed to evolve universally acceptable definitions and hence both these concepts are plagued by definitional controversies.

To comprehend most terrorism, it becomes imperative to understand insurgency. Often understood as a political legitimacy crisis, insurgency mainly gets manifested as a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities. In the ensuing struggle, the non-ruling group willfully uses political resources and violence to demolish, reformulate or uphold the basis of legitimacy of those aspects of politics that are sacrosanct to one or the other warring side. With a lot being at stake for the warring parties, the struggles often take the form of protracted conflicts. This is particularly evident in the Third World, where the mismatch between political and cultural boundaries are particularly glaring.<sup>102</sup> Even in societies where the legitimacy of the political community is not an issue, there are other grounds for internal conflicts, centring around the legitimacy of salient values that steer and limit the making and execution of binding decisions in the political system.<sup>103</sup> Insurgency also gets viewed as a ‘little’ revolution. This is mainly because, almost all aspects of a revolution – theory, ideology and tactics – are present in it, though the proportion varies from group to group.

Terror, on the other hand ‘entails the threat or use of symbolic violent acts aimed at influencing political behaviour’.<sup>104</sup> In the words of Walter Laqueur, terrorism is:

the use of covert violence by a group for political ends, is usually directed against a government, but it is also used against other ethnic groups, classes or parties. The aims may vary from the redress of specific grievances to the overthrow of a government and the seizure of power, or to the liberation of a country from foreign rule. Terrorists seek to cause a political, social and economic disruption and for this purpose frequently engage in planned or indiscriminate murder ... It has been waged by national and religious groups, by the left and by the right, by

national as well as internationalist movements and it has been state sponsored.<sup>105</sup>

Attempts at defining insurgency and terrorism have not been without challenges. Since 1970, when the General Assembly adopted the declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Cooperation Among States, the international community has been struggling to define these two terms within the ambit of the aims and objectives of the United Nations (UN) Charter, which states:

Every State has the duty to refrain from organizing, assisting or participating in acts of civil strife or terrorist acts in another State or acquiescing in organized activities within its territory directed towards the commission of such acts, when the acts referred to in the present paragraph involve a threat of use of forces.

However, it is noteworthy that the Principle of Equal Rights and Self-determination of Peoples, expressed in the later part of the same UN declaration, creates an ambivalence. The Principle states:

Every state has the duty to refrain from any forcible action which deprives people referred to above, in the elaboration of the present principles of their right to self-determination and freedom and independence. In their actions against, and resistance to such forcible action in pursuit of the exercise of their right to self-determination, such peoples are entitled to seek and receive support in accordance with the purpose and principles of the charter.<sup>106</sup>

The Adhoc Committee on International Terrorism, set up by the UN in 1973, added to the existing ambivalence by unambiguously stating that every instance of insurgency was not an act of terrorism. Exemptions were provided to activities that derived from:

... the inalienable right to self-determine and independence of all peoples under colonial and racist regime and other forms of alien domination and the legitimacy of their struggle, in particular the struggle of national liberation movements, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the charter and the relevant resolutions of the organs of the United Nations.<sup>107</sup>

In 1974, in the context of aggression, the UN General Assembly once again made attempts to define terrorism. Article 3(g) of the declaration states:

The sending by or on behalf of a State of armed bands, groups, irregulars and mercenaries, which carry out acts of armed force against another State of such gravity as to amount to the acts listed above, or its substantial involvement therein.<sup>108</sup>

However, Article 7 of the same declaration compounds the ambivalence by expressing desire to protect both, a state against subversive aggression from

another, and also citizens and social groups from terror of the state. The declaration states:

Nothing in this definition, and in particular Article 3 (inventory of acts that qualify as aggression) could in any way prejudice the right to self-determination, freedom and independence, as derived from the Charter, of peoples forcibly deprived of that right and referred to in the Declaration of Principles of International Law concerning friendly relations and cooperation among States in accordance with Charter of the United Nations, particularly people under colonial and racist regimes or other forms of alien domination; nor the rights of these people to struggle to that end and to seek and receive support, in accordance with the principles of the Charter and in conformity with the above mentioned Declaration.<sup>109</sup>

It is noteworthy that it was only on 9 December 1985, that the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution condemning all acts of terrorism as criminal. However, the issue is far from resolved with little consensus on what acts actually constitute terrorism. In this regard, it is significant that way back in 1937, the League of Nations made attempts to come up with a definition of terrorism. A convention (that never came into existence) was drafted describing terrorism as: 'All criminal acts directed against a state and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons or a group of persons or the general public.'<sup>110</sup>

Clearly, both insurgency and terrorism are multi-dimensional phenomenon and hence evolving a commonly agreed definition for them is fraught with difficulties. However, two very apparent dimensions of the phenomenon are political and security, to which may also be added an international dimension. This is particularly in regard to the tendency of some states, to use insurgency and terrorism as instruments of state policy in its war against rival countries. In case of Third World countries, insurgencies mainly take the form of internal ethnic wars and clearly are serious hostile events, largely revolving around the issues of nation building and economic undevelopment. Socio-economic, religious and ideological dimensions add to the complexities of the phenomenon. This is particularly evident in fractured societies, where there is a clear disinclination to transcend parochial loyalties.<sup>111</sup> In such societies, there is little ambiguity in regard to the competing goals of the participants – structural change versus maintenance of status quo, establishment of a separate political system versus reinforcement the existing one, and changing the incumbent political authority versus continuing with the same.<sup>112</sup>

The violent aspect of insurgencies get manifested in different forms of warfare, such as terrorism, guerrilla war and conventional warfare.<sup>113</sup> With insurgent movements frequently undergoing goal transformations, categorizing insurgencies is not without challenges. However, the goals fluctuate between long-term, intermediate and short-term goals. While the long term goals are

clearly geared towards changing the political system, the intermediate goals aim at eroding, both internally and externally, the government's psychological support base.<sup>114</sup> The proximate objectives are situational and may vary according to the demands of the circumstances. These often manifest in the form of occasional violence, mainly aimed at extracting political concessions from a demoralized government, in an environment of widespread disarray. Need for greater visibility, coupled with power struggle among specific factions within an insurgent organization, may also provoke insurgents to act violently.<sup>115</sup> What is obvious is the belief in 'propaganda by deed'.<sup>116</sup> This clearly involves a deep understanding of the psychology of fear and its likely impact on the society. The outcome of such fear, in the words of an observer 'destroys the solidarity, cooperation and interdependence on which social functioning is based, and substitutes insecurity and distrust'.<sup>117</sup> This clearly generates suspicion, against the government and its capacity to fulfill primary security functions for its citizens. Consequently, it results in a level of disorientation, where the source of the victims fear lies outside his field of experience.<sup>118</sup>

A striking feature of insurgency driven conflicts is the power asymmetry between the warring sides. The legal asymmetry between the legitimate sovereign government, with access to enormous resources to prosecute the war, and the rebels is particularly profound.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, an understanding of the dynamics of insurgency environment, both in its physical and human dimension, is critical to its evaluation. In regard to physical environment, A. H. Shollom makes an interesting observation. In his words:

One of the main factors contributing to the development of a partisan movement was the presence of suitable terrain in which to operate. We include in such terrain: swamps, mountains and forests where mobility is limited to movement on foot and in light vehicles. The fact that the partisan operates in such terrain will be to his advantage, for in an environment of this nature, the regular forces lose the use of their vehicles and artillery as well as the ability to mass superior members. In essence, the terrain reduces the better equipped, better trained, and better-armed regular force to a level where the partisan is its equal.<sup>120</sup>

Added to the physical setting and the societal cleavages is the perception of relative deprivation, as manifested in the form of institutionalized discrimination against certain groups in relation to socio-economic benefits. The relative deprivation theory gives explanations of the socio-economic dimension of political violence and has been expanded from the frustration-aggression theory, expounded in 1939 by John Dollard of USA.<sup>121</sup> According to this theory, a sense of deprivation or injustice, real or perceived is often a major precondition for political violence. Wilkinson argues: 'collective rage and violence are not necessarily a rumination of individual frustrations but may, in large part, be a function of changing ideologies, beliefs and historical

conditions which so materially affect social conceptions of justice and legitimacy',<sup>122</sup>

The role of determined leaders, capable of politically and militarily mobilizing domestic and external support, remains a critical factor in the emergence and sustenance of insurgencies. In this, the role of intellectuals in providing strategic vision and contextualizing perceived social, economic and political injustices, is particularly crucial. In the words of Gurr: 'discontent people act aggressively only when they become aware of the supposed source of frustration or someone with whom they associate frustration'.<sup>123</sup> He further states, that men's susceptibility to beliefs that rationalize violence is mainly a function of their discontent.<sup>124</sup>

Popular support, both in its passive and active form, is thus significant for the sustenance and success of insurgencies. In this regard, the Vietminh manual on guerrilla war aptly sums:

Without the "popular antennae" we would be without information; without the protection of the people we could neither keep our secrets nor execute quick movement; without the people the guerrillas could neither attack the enemy nor replenish their forces and, in consequence, they could not accomplish their mission with ardour and speed .... The population helps us fight the enemy by giving information, suggesting ruses and plans, helping us to overcome difficulties due to lack of arms, and providing us with guides. It also supplies liaison agents, hides and protects us, assists our actions near posts, feeds us and looks after our wounded .... Cooperating with guerrillas, it has participated in sabotage acts, in diversionary actions, in encircling the enemy, and in applying the scorched earth policy .... On several occasions and in cooperation with guerrillas, it has taken part in combat.<sup>125</sup>

External patron support, in the form of sanctuaries, weapon supply, financial assistance, training and so forth, is mainly motivated by instrumental factors such as strategic interests or enhancement of regional and global clout.<sup>126</sup> Such support may come from sympathetic neighbours, other insurgent groups or from organizations and institutions based outside the country. In regard to the role of sanctuaries, Bernard B. Fall makes a significant observation. In his words: 'in brutal fact, the success or failure of all rebellions since World War II depended entirely on whether the active sanctuary was willing and able to perform its role'.<sup>127</sup> Cross border linkages ensure a steady supply of resources that facilitate weapons' procurement, political and propaganda support, besides opportunities for training, recruiting and trafficking in illegal commodities.<sup>128</sup> Evidently, countries with weak institutional capacities are more likely to emerge as potential safe havens.

A chronology of armed conflicts in the post 1945 period, reveal a global upsurge in insurgencies, mostly intrastate in nature, waged by entirely disparate groups over the question of state versus nation.<sup>129</sup> A major characteristic of

these insurgencies is the widespread use of terror, both by the insurgents and by the military and paramilitary forces pitted against them. It is noteworthy, that front lines in such wars get blurred and there is little regard for the Geneva conventions.<sup>130</sup> Another defining feature of these conflicts, is that, it is of a low-intensity variety. Low Intensity Conflict (LIC), for the purpose of the present study may be defined as:

... a politico-military confrontation between the established authority (state) and organized group(s) of people with or without external assistance, beyond the scope of legitimate, route, peaceful contest/ agitation. Being on the low end of the conflict spectrum, it imposes an undefined restraint on the execution of military operations.<sup>131</sup>

Mary Kaldor describes these conflicts as 'New Wars'. Although most of these new wars appear to be localized, they involve innumerable transnational connections. Consequently, the distinction between internal and external, aggression and repression and even between local and global gets blurred. A defining feather of most of these wars, is the centrality of identity politics with criminality, corruption and inefficiency being other factors impacting its dynamics.<sup>132</sup> Another defining characteristic of these 'new wars', are its linkages with poverty.<sup>133</sup> Consequently, the affected countries become incubators for virtually every type of transnational threat – infectious disease, environmental degradation, international crime and drug syndicates, arms proliferation and terrorism.

The empirical focus of this book is on the dynamics of terrorism in North East India – a region of great differences and complexities. The region, comprising the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura represents much diversity, ethnically, linguistically, culturally, economically and even topographically. However, the imperatives of geography and history so impact this heterogeneous periphery of India, that the fallouts of events in one part of the region powerfully resonate in the other. This is particularly so in case of conflicts. The conflicts, spread across a wide canvas, have engulfed almost the entire region, mainly manifesting as multiple insurgencies with terrorism as its defining feature. It is noteworthy, that conflicts of varying intensity exist in almost every state of the region. The geo-strategic location of the region – between what is now Bangladesh, Tibet, Burma and Bhutan – creates a context in which the multiplicity of ethno-territorial identities achieve political salience. This is mainly due to the fact, that in most cases, the political boundaries do not coincide with the social boundaries. Concepts such as uneven development, differential modernization, regional deprivation, lack of assimilation, internal colonialism and cultural oppression, only partially explain the nature of the ethnic turmoil. However, in the context of comprehending the trajectory of the terrorist phenomenon in the region, there are glaring similarities in the

pattern of insurgent politics, that warrants a holistic understanding of the phenomenon in all its dimensions. With most of the insurgent groups, across the spectrum, increasingly adopting terrorist techniques, the fine line separating insurgency and terrorism stands erased. A primary feature underlying terrorist behaviour in the region is political extremism, which clearly implies: 'taking a political idea to its limits, regardless of unfortunate repercussions, impracticalities, arguments, and feelings to the contrary, and with the intention not only to confront, but to eliminate opposition .... intolerance toward all views other than one's own'.<sup>134</sup> Actors taking recourse to terrorism, consider themselves as champions of groups within society, defending and preserving an identity which otherwise stands the risk of being assimilated.

The analysis of terrorism in North East India, is mainly concerned with non-state groups having an unambiguous agenda of confronting the state. The objectives mainly oscillate between extracting significant political concessions from the state – moral, legal or material – to replacing the state itself. They are primarily linked to national bases and are thus examples of *domestic political terrorism*, although many of them have strong cross-border linkages. While ethnicity remains the primary paradigm around which conflicts revolve in the region, its linkages to organized crime, drug trafficking and proliferation of small arms is well established. It goes without saying, that given the porous nature of the international borders and also the present context of globalization, internal conflicts in the region are no longer localized. The internationalization of these local insurgencies has serious national security ramifications. The following two sections of the book will delve into the pertinent issues, that dominate the security landscape of India's fragile North Eastern borderlands, and profoundly impacts the internal and foreign policy choices of the Indian State.