HOW TERRORISM IS REVOLUTIONISING PSYCHOLOGY OF SOLDIER.

- Lt Col Dr Samir Rawat
Chief Operating Psychologist
Military MIND Academy, India
INTRODUCTION

- Western world first shaken up by anaconda of terrorism when 9/11 happened in 2001 (Stout, 2002; Wessels, 2002) - led to passing of UN Security Council Resolution No 1373(2001), a counter terrorism measure as a global response.

- US policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan reiterated use of complete National power available to defeat terrorism (Obama, 2009) and “dismantle, eradicate and defeat terror outfits responsible for 9/11 (Clinton, 2009).
India had its own 9/11 unfortunate moment when Lashkar-e-Toiba (LET) terrorists began a series of gun attacks and bombings in multiple locations on 26/11 ten years ago, back in 2008 in Mumbai with control by their handlers based in Pakistan.

For US as well as India, these unprecedented terrorist attacks were warlike and as such, popular and political opinion demanded a military response (Hughes, 2012).
Overview

- **Relevance** of the topic in the backdrop of terrorism, counterterrorism and ethical aspects when soldiers put themselves in harm’s way to undertake the preordained task of neutralising terrorists on behalf of and protecting the society they serve from frenzied and inhuman terror attacks.
- Discuss changing dynamics of motivation and intent of terrorism for a better understanding of terrorists
- Analyse on whose lap does the problem of dealing with terror attacks finally land into anyways?
- Camaraderie in the military in context of neutralising terrorists
Overview

- Need to understand soul of the soldier who is better able to see ‘close quarter battle task’ at hand as well as ‘larger picture’ from barrel of his gun - interaction with 20 Capt/Major using semi structured interview.
- Discussion focuses on intermittent terror attacks on military bases in India targeting soldiers, their families and children as well as military hardware as physical targets, and vulnerability of entire Nation and the world as psychological targets as intended audience of these attacks.
- Finally, the paper concludes with possible directions that these terror attacks are taking us and options available to us as a society and deployment of soldiers as saviours to society and to effectively deal with this global menace.
RELEVANCE

- Studies are carried out on psychology of terrorists and their brand of terrorism (Banks & James, 2007; Betts, 2002; Bonger et al., 2007; Breed, 2002; Davis, 2002; Hughes, 2012; Stout, 2002).

- While many studies have concluded that psychological research has important role in understanding of terrorism (Brandon & Silke, 2007; Breckenridge & Zimbardo, 2007; Lederach, 1995; Reich, 1998; Rouhana & Kelman, 1994; Stout, 2002), not many studies have been carried out to understand the impact of terrorism on the psychology of the soldier (Rawat, 2016).
DEFINING TERRORISM, COUNTER TERRORISM & MILITARY ETHICS

- According to Sinclair (2003), former Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stated, “There is no good terrorism or bad terrorism. There is only terrorism”.
- “Deliberate and systemic assault to inspire fear for political ends” (Netanyahu, 1995) and Walzer (2006) defined it as “the random killing of innocent people in the hope of creating pervasive fear”.
- “Unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives” (NATO, 2002)
Many different definitions of terrorism and till there is a consensus, we will operationally define terrorism as “an act intended to intimidate and instil fear by use of violence for political purposes to extort, intimidate or coerce others into modifying their behaviour (Rawat, 2017).

Horn (2009) collated core components of terrorism from various definitions to arrive at its essential features:

- It is unlawful
- It is politically and ideologically motivated (not for personal financial gain)
- It is premeditated and not an impulsive act of rage
- It is directed against innocent, unsuspecting targets
- It is meant to cause fear and terror
- The violence is actually directed to impact others (i.e., not specifically victims)
- Its actions are decided outside accepted limits imposed on the force in warfare (i.e., the targeting of non-combatants).
According to Attali (1991), ability to manage violence is capacity to change culture of choice from managing violence earlier through religion and then through military force and now largely by economic power; while religion and military may continue to persist, especially in developing countries, – the central organising principle of future will be economic.

On the other hand, Annan (2001), recommends a UN framework to counter terrorism which includes, among others, extradition and prosecution of terrorists and suppression of money laundering to stall terror funding.
Researchers have reported four principles that eschews terrorism and underlines an adaptive counter terrorism strategy (Clarke, 2010; Daily & Webb, 2006; Taillon, 2009). These principles are:

- Prevent emergence of new terrorist threats
- Isolate terrorist threats that have emerged from their respective support bases
- Defeat isolated terrorist threats and
- Prevent the re-emergence of terrorist threats that have already been defeated.
Chin (2009) spells out **British counterterrorism strategy (CONTEST)** to reduce risk of citizens so that they can go about their lives freely and with confidence, the approach to counterterrorism involves:

- Prevention of terrorism by tackling its causes
- Pursuit of terrorists and their sponsors
- Protection of public and essential services and
- Preparation to respond and mitigate consequences of terrorist attack
Military actions to counter terrorism would largely focus on early and rapid deployment and concentrating on innovative tactics and strategies to enhance mission breadth and operational effectiveness through strengthening and empowering the soldier to diligently carry out tasks entrusted to him – save human lives by neutralisation of terrorist with minimum collateral damages (Rawat, 2017).
Innovative tactics and strategies

ITS ARMY v/s CIVILIANS AFTER MAJOR NITIN GOGOI'S CONTROVERSIAL ACTION OF USING A CIVILIAN AS HUMAN SHIELD IN KASHMIR!
According to researchers (Buchanan & Keohane, 2004; Bellamy, 2005; Kasher, 2008; Lagace –Roy & Horn, 2008; Penny, 2007), *military ethics is a model code of conduct and expected norms of behaviour in pursuance of military activities. It includes behaviour in a professional manner which includes expression of camaraderie towards other soldiers and an acceptable adherence to military values and norms.*

When faced with terror attacks, the state quickly deploys the military to deal with terrorists since they are easily deployable and expected to be effective as only they have the required competencies and military training to deal with terrorists in a professional manner.
In context of counter-terrorism, the principle of legitimate authority, just cause, good intention and last resort apply to the soldier sent to neutralise a terrorist attack, the same may be preventive as well. In a hostile environment, these principles do not (and should not) impose restrictions on the tactical aspects of military operations.

Accordingly, the best way to reduce the threat of terrorism is to take the offensive and adopt a proactive strategy of prevention (Beauchamp, 2002; Bellamy & French, 2008; Rawat, 2016; Waler, 2007).
UNDERSTANDING TERRORIST MOTIVATION

- Individuals become terrorists for many different reasons and in many different ways (Cordes, 1987; Kasher, 2008; McCaulay, 2002, 2007; McCaulay & Segal, 1987; Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Solomon, 1997).

- Contrary to stereotype beliefs and media depictions of terrorists coming from poor broken homes, economic hardships and abject poverty, or being crazy psychopaths, terrorists emerge out of normal psychology of emotional commitments to their cause and comrades (ingroup love) as well as expression of hatred, anger, group frustration and material deprivation (outgroup hatred) which are normal psychology responses (Brewers, 2001; Frank, 1988; Friedman, 2002; Hoffman, 1998; Hunter, String & Watson, 1991; McCauley, 1991; Sageman, 2006; Zillmer, 2006).
Researchers who have studied terrorists have concluded that there is no terrorist personality per se, the type of person drawn and radicalised into a terrorist subculture is unique to the particular political and social context (Gerwehr & Hubbard, 2007; Jager, Schmidtchen & Sullwold, 1981; Merari, 2000; Zillmer, 2006).
UNDERSTANDING TERRORISM INTENT

- Terrorism is not a cause, it is a tool, an instrument, a tactic to achieve specific objectives by creating fear and uncertainty within a population and among counter terrorism force, it is also used to garner media attention for image building within the theatre of operation and worldwide (Bongar, 2007; Crenshaw, 1990; Horn, 2009; Rubin & Friedland, 1986; Stern, 1999).

- A central **aim** of terrorism is **disruption of status quo**; terrorists seek to gain awareness of their political aims and aspirations as well as coerce governments into following a particular course (Feldman, 2002).
When terrorists attacks on military cantonments take place, their intent is not merely to inflict heavy casualties, death and destruction of military personnel and resources, it is to create a fear psychosis and large number of psychological casualties among the civilian population who are made to feel that if well guarded and fortified cantonments are vulnerable, they (the civilian population) are just like ‘sitting ducks’ (Rawat, 2016).

Their aim is to incite fear and disrupt society by shattering sense of community safety. These terrorist attacks provide perpetrators with tremendous free publicity (from ever obliging media seeking sensationalising breaking news’), a sense of personal martyrdom and heroism for terrorists and admiration and respect from their followers and sympathisers (Feldman, 2002; Merari, 2007; Rawat, 2017).
According to Rabasa (2009), terrorist attacks are intended to cause fear, but also to **inspire other terrorist constituencies and attract recruits**.

Given the legitimacy that many in Pakistan assign to the Kashmir dispute, terror outfits like LeT is not likely to experience recruitment difficulties in the near future, but if the group is to achieve its objectives in India, it will need more capable domestic recruits by threats to their families, lure of money, coercion and kidnapping young boys for indoctrination and radicalisation (Rawat, 2016).
Embry (2007) reported that terrorism aims not just at any fear, it works best from a strategic perspective if the very symbols of everyday life become classically conditioned fear and anxiety stimuli, which then render stronger opponent strategically wounded.

In context, Rawat (2016) asserts that Indian military is seen as a strong iconic symbol of the rising economic growth of India and given that Pakistan does not have the capacity to fight a conventional war with India, it makes use of asymmetric warfare as a major exporter of terror through use of state sponsored terrorists to bleed India ‘with a thousand cuts’ strategy by sporadic, intermittent terrorist attacks on military bases.
WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT ANYWAYS?

- Although a Nation may use its military to protect its citizens, the **application of military means in counterterrorism** depends on whether the terrorist threat is a domestic or an international one, the lethality of the groups concerned, and the threat they pose to National security and stability; there would be situations in which countries would have no option but to adopt a military response to terrorism (Bedi, 2009; Cronin, 2009; Hughes, 2012; Rawat, 2016).

- Furthermore, the **involvement of armed forces in counterterrorism can be problematic as disapproval and criticism expressed by members of opposition parties** (who at times, compromise National security to gain political mileage), human rights activists, journalists, foreign governments, and academics regarding the treatment of terror suspects and their sympathisers.
Current operations in India, Syria, and Afghanistan have repeatedly shown that whenever military tackles irregular adversaries that conceal themselves within a civilian population that may have their sympathizers, it is both ethically important and strategically sound to employ force with precision, and in such a manner as to minimize casualties and collateral damage among the wider population. Members of the armed forces are also required to be accountable for their actions and to ensure that their operations are coordinated with those of civilian governmental agencies.
In sum, as a last resort to safeguard its citizens, countries may be forced to undertake its obligation to protect their citizens from the threat of terrorism by launching its military as the last line of defence that it has at its disposal. Under such circumstances, the problem is now best left to the soldier to resolve and the tactical and strategic initiatives that he takes to achieve desired outcomes need to be entrusted to the military leadership across all verticals.
Soldiers compare characteristics of their unit/sub unit and develop a strong bond of positive identity. This camaraderie is the attachment to the unit/sub unit that comes from two different kinds of interdependence, one of common goals, status and congeniality and the other, more importantly, arising from the need for certainty that can only be assured from consensus of others.

Agreement with those who matter and significant others around us is the only source of certainty about questions of values, beliefs, good and bad, and what is worth living for, working for and dying for (McCauley, 1998, 2001; Stouffer & Lumsdaine, 1949; Turner et al, 1987).
Research has shown that in times of terror attacks, patriotism and national identification is raised because of heightened awareness of shared threats and social components of self–concept become more prominent and important than individual components; the unit/sub unit is viewed as homogenous and soldiers’ willing to protect each other at all costs, even to the peril of their lives (Duckett, 1989; Kosterman & Freshback, 1989; McCauley, 2001; Rawat, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987).
Need to Understand Soul of Soldier

- Psychology of soldier well grounded in group dynamics and team building that are ingrained in formative years of military training rather than the sense of individual patriotism that one would like to believe.
- Need for ensuring high standard of collective training during peace time when preparing for military operations.
- All individual and collected training is not just about physical fitness, it is about honing one’s mental skills and competencies so as to be able to meaningfully contribute to the team effort directed towards mission success.
TERRORIST ATTACKS ON MILITARY BASES IN INDIA - Testing times

- Given the fact that Pakistan does not have the capacity to fight a conventional war against India, the two sides are unlikely to fight a conventional war as Pakistan can never field a military force that is even remotely comparable in sheer numbers, military hardware and equipment, or training when objectively evaluated in comparison to military in India (Rawat, 2017).

- Hence, covert and intermittent attempts by Pakistan to overcome the force disparity by state-sponsored terrorism from across the line of control is an effort to “bleed India with a thousand cuts” and leverage cross border terrorism to create disproportionate effects.
Surgical Strikes

With the recent orchestrated terrorist attacks in Gurdaspur, Pathankot Uri, Baramulla, Handwara and Pampore, to name a few, Pakistan Army has pushed the terrorism envelope too far and forced the Indian Army to respond in a befitting manner.
Pre-emptive strikes on terrorist camps across the LoC in the wake of Uri attack provides us with an appreciation and understanding of how soldiering outcomes influences and is influenced by the interdependence between soldiers, senior military leaders, bureaucrats, politicians, media as well as society at large.

This operation provides a setting that cannot be replicated in civilian life and provides a case that while the focal point for mission success is the soldier, yet victory can be claimed by all and sundry or denied to the soldier by rogue politicians seeking proof of operations to further their political gains.

Somebody must pay for the lives of the soldiers and if it has to be the terrorists – so much the better.
CONCLUSIONS

While use of military means to fight terrorist organisations may have clear drawbacks and debatable outcomes, deploying Armed forces essential when all other instruments of state have been unable to deal with terrorism, especially when it is state sponsored as proxy war from across the border.

In specific situations requiring response to terrorist attacks, it is only military that has means to contain threat that terrorism poses to society.
A CNN reporter while interviewing a Marine sniper asked, “What do you feel when you shoot a terrorist?” The Marine shrugged and curtly replied, “Recoil!”.

In essence, this sums up the professional approach of a soldier who has been entrusted with the onerous task of protecting his countrymen from insidious terrorist attacks that have led to unacceptable loss of innocent lives. What is important for military leaders is the need to recognise and understand the psychological dynamics of terrorism for both the soldier and his adversary, and the various options available in terms of tactics and strategies to effectively deal with the menace of terrorism.
War on terrorism involving an enemy that is difficult to find and identify, yet in the absence of anything else that works as yet, military response is the most viable alternative.

To conclude, dealing with terrorists and their handlers from across the border and their sympathisers’ who seek economic gain from the terror industry is not the job of a soldier, yet, only soldiers can do it. ... and when they do, let’s not undermine their credibility and capability by seeking proof of performance in surgical strikes on terrorist camps across Line of Control or else we will soon have a very high price to pay.

Just as the US did post Vietnam as returning soldiers realised were fighting a battle not acknowledged back home as their own, a new war of words that they had to deal with for which they were neither prepared nor trained –resulting in nearly 40% PTSD.
As one young major put it across to a media journalist, “I am trained to kill to protect my countrymen at all costs – I fire for effect as it’s the taxpayer’s money that goes into each round pumped into a terrorist. Let me eliminate the terrorists while you attempt to pursue the utopian goal of eliminating terrorism. The question isn’t who is going to let me chase and neutralise my target, it’s who is going to stop me. That’s what I am here for in the first place.”
Soldiers cannot be stopped by terrorists; they can only be restrained by their leaders.

- Trust his ability to assess where to draw the line beyond which his brand of counter terrorism may have the potential to unleash greater harm than he set out to rid the world of.
- While there are many complex and stimulating issues relating to ethical responses to terrorism by soldiers that may not be adequately addressed by the Just War Doctrine, this paper only scratched tip of the iceberg.
• We need to focus more on the impact of terrorism on the soldier and important issues relating to it that may require prior attention including legitimacy of preemptive military strikes on terrorists and terror camps, just methods of containing a threat by innovative techniques adapted by junior leaders.

• Last but not the least, protection of soldiers from being tied up in court cases for performance of military duties in vulnerable clean up following terror attacks.
‘The only power Terrorism has is to further bind and transform society; it also has the power to weaken our self imposed restraint as a powerful, well trained and disciplined, fighting Army’.
- Lt Col Dr Samir Rawat, Combat Veteran, India
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

QUESTIONS?