Dialogue is the best way to combat Terrorism

Terrorism involves the use of violence, force, and coercive measures to achieve a political goal. It does not have a legally binding definition. "The international community has never succeeded in developing an accepted comprehensive definition of terrorism. During the 1970s and 1980s, the United Nations attempted to define the term and floundered mainly due to differences of opinion between various members about the use of violence in the context of conflicts over national liberation and self-determination." It involves violent acts, which induce fear, hatred and are perpetrated for a religious, political or ideological goal. These acts are deliberately targeted to disregard the safety and wellbeing of the non-combatants. Terrorism is known to include acts of unlawful violence and war. Terrorism is a ubiquitous practice followed by most political parties to further their political objectives. Right wing and left wing political parties, nationalistic groups, religious groups, and revolutionaries, ruling governments, have undertaken it. Terrorism and its expansion have been explained through different perspectives and the foremost solution that has been extracted is that, the usage of dialogue is the best possible strategy in combating this menace. It is the most civilized and humane form to be used in order to obliterate this evil for once and for all.

There is meticulous need of check and balance of terrorism, its expansion, its Media, its sponsors and the performers. It has spread at an alarming rate and has attracted attention after the 9/11. Many people perceive it as big game, in which the states, as well
as non-state actors play a very destructive role. The other views include some sort of fundamentalist view with respect to Islam and Jihad. Many see this as politico-oriented Islamist movement of some sects, present in the different parts of the world that have gathered under a platform of hate and phobic elements.

Waging wars and undertaking military operations cannot contain terrorism. A peaceful remedy needs to be followed, so as to put an end to this monstrosity. So, if dialogue is the best solution then the question that needs to be asked is why only can dialogue resolve this issue? The answer lies somewhere in the past. It has been a decade since the start of War on Terror by her allies, against Al Qaida and Taliban and US. Terrorism can never be crushed completely with force. Most of the military operations in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan have not only proved unfruitful, but instead have also increased terrorism in the region. One of the biggest drawbacks of using force is that it increases radicalization. Drone attacks against Al-Qaida and Taliban in Pakistani tribal areas have not achieved much success. In fact they have increased civilian casualties more than those of the terrorists. Such actions have only aggravated the situation and have increased the rate of terror amongst the civilian population at the Pak Afghan border. There are people who argue that if America will stop the drone attack then the militants will give a tougher time to Pakistan, as the drones will divert their attention. There is no doubt that the drones are killing terrorists, but they are also killing innocent people along with the culprits. In short a drone might kill one or two terrorists and in turn produce a 100 new ones.

The UN has already passed a resolution that the American drone strikes are not justified and thus are illegitimate. The question, which arises, is then how can a case be presented to the UN in face of such adversity? One possibility would be to negotiate with the
terrorists within the boundaries, so that terrorism is ended. Similarly, the military actions of the Pakistani army in the FATA region has created anti Pakistan state terrorists’ i.e. TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan). The TTP has opened a new front of war within Pakistan. Global powers need to work in tandem to alleviate the prevailing conditions; reformation of the society is the need of the hour. Social shrewdness and awareness needs to be spread to curtail this malicious practice.

Terrorism in Western world is usually known with reference to Islam, the ideology behind these deadly deeds is narrated under the roof of Jihad, which is a totally wrong concept. Modern day missionaries and Muslim revolutionist organizations have played an optimistic role in this regard. The terrorism today is perceived as an inheritance of Muslim extremists like Osama Bin Laden and Aiman Al Zawahri etc. However in past, Osama Bin Laden was considered to be a major contributor in the groundbreaking victory for USA in the long-term cold war with USSR. It was the region of Afghanistan where the decline of Russian economy began, which led to the politico-economic collapse resulting in the split of the Soviet Union. Thus, Afghani rebels played a major role in defeating the soviet troops in Afghanistan by enlisting the support of USA via Pakistan. The terrorist ideology therefore originated from this era and the inception of organizations like Al Qaida took place.

People argue that if you try to negotiate or conduct dialogues with terrorists then the state would have to reconcile with every looter and plunderer in the world. Dialogue has not always proved to be fruitful. For instance in the case of India and Pakistan, there has been a cessation of dialogue and confidence building measures, which has brought both nations on the brink of war. Indian PM Manmohan Singh has repeated the old, baseless
allegations that Pakistan is the ‘epicenter of terrorism’ and that Islamabad should ‘end the infrastructure of terrorism’. New Delhi has always blackmailed Pakistan to take action against culprits of Mumbai carnage. The SAARC meeting in November 2010, 2011 and the bilateral talks have not achieved any results; the issue of state-sponsored terrorism is like an elephant in the room, still unresolved. Similarly due to the delaying tactics of the Indians major issues like The Kashmir dispute are unsettled to date as well.

Charles H. Keneddy in his article ‘The creation & development of Pakistan’s anti-terrorism regime, 1997-2002’, noted: “If the purposes of establishing an anti-terrorism regime are to lessen terrorism, punish terrorists, improve the efficiency of a legal system & dispense speedy justice. Pakistan’s anti-terrorism regime has been a complete failure. Conversely, if the purposes of an anti-terrorism regime are to improve one’s position relative to one’s domestic political opponents, or to improve public relations or to rehabilitate one’s standing with the International community, then Pakistan’s anti-terrorism regime has generally been a success.”

Deployment of military in any area always creates resentment, which can turn the masses against the military and some times even against the state. For example when the German forces entered the Russian territory people welcomed them, but with the passage of time clashes started between them. Similarly it was the same thing in the case of East Pakistan as well. People argue that in such a case what is the duty of a state, should it be a silent onlooker or should it take some action.

Two broad hypothetical models are presented to end the terrorism from Pakistan. Firstly there should be an elimination of the terrorist groups, just the way the Sri Lankan Government did against the protracted insurgency of the LTTE which took thousand of
lives besides, social, political & economic disruption of Srilanka from 1983 to 2009. Except reservations of the Tamil population, which suffered the most, generally there is peace prevalent in Srilanka. Pakistan supported this South Asian island country in this war; whereas the LTTE was fully supported by Srilanka’s neighbor i.e. India. It is worth mentioning that most of the insurgencies and terrorist networks in South Asian countries are financed and supported militarily by India. Another model is the dialogue process, the peaceful way of settling disputes. In history, many insurgencies have been resolved through dialogue between opposing parties. The most recent example is the political and negotiated settlement of Northern Ireland in 1998. IRA fought a long war against UK. The British government had announced huge bounties on the heads of IRA members. During the dialogue, the same members were negotiating with the British government and Her majesty to resolve the issue. Now there is peace and prosperity in Ireland. The most important aspect is that the LTTE was representing an ethnic group; the Tamils having an Indian origin, who wanted their separate identity vis-à-vis the majority Sinhalese in Srilanka.

If the TTP is compared to these groups, it can be seen that it does not represent an ethnic group nor any defined religious entity. They have no roots among the local populace and they are hated even in areas of forced influence. All counter terrorism strategies are pregnant with research methods and lessons readily available for analysis. Every insurgency has its own dynamic. While no counter terrorism situation is the same and there is no prescribed template for success, it is beneficial to look at successful measures from past counter insurgency operations and determine their applicability to Pakistan’s current situation. With a compilation of the lessons learnt their analyses and applicability
as a starting point, one can deduce four things. For a successful counterterrorism strategy, the utmost importance must be given to the security of the civilian populace and cultivation of a positive relationship with the local people. Successful counterinsurgencies require measures to deny insurgents the operating space. This includes logistics lines as well as territory to operate from. Successful counterterrorism strategy simultaneously embarks on socio-political development to take advantage of security gains. Projects like infrastructure, health, and education significantly improve the population’s association with state identity.

The most important long-term successful counter terrorism measure is to develop a “whole of government” integrated strategy to establish strategic stability through addressing root causes of insurgency. There is no defined counter terrorism strategy in practice in Pakistan. Indeed, it is the responsibility of the government to formulate a counter terrorism strategy to be implemented by the security forces. In the absence of such strategy, there is always ambiguity about what should be done. The question then is, will the military provide the final solution or the negotiation and dialogue be the alternative forward. In case of military operations, the security forces would clear an area from the terrorists, but what about its sustainability, the ultimate holding by the political and civil administration. The examples are there in the cases of Swat and SWA. A pragmatic counter terrorism strategy is required. Indecisiveness at state level will allow TTP more maneuvering space and enhanced strength. Therefore, the state should take steps to take their locals into confidence and try their best to protect the life and property, both in the case of dialogues and military deployment.

In the Musharraf regime Pakistan was embroiled in a new episode in its history by
assuming the role of the most allied nation of the US war on terror. In this role new
dimensions for Pakistan’s international relations came to light and significance in
International Politics was redefined. American invasion in Afghanistan and post 9/11
developments resulted in momentous changes in Pakistan’s domestic foreign policies;
changes that Pakistan was never ready for and therefore could not handle them thereafter.
It is high time to revisit foreign policy. Musharraf failed to tame India; he made
extraordinary efforts through confidence building measures and by giving a four point
agenda on Kashmir. But he couldn't please the Indian government enough and all the
political issues are unresolved to date. Besides he failed to convince the US and its allies
that Pakistan has made sincere efforts in war on terror and has extended every possible
support. Despite his overtures, Pakistan was incessantly asked to do more. Today the
world considers Pakistan as the most dangerous state; the monster of terrorism has not
been killed as yet.

The most important question for Pakistan is how to stay out of America’s war and fight
terrorism. Global or regional powers never endeavored to discuss peace options in
Afghanistan while engaging Pakistan as the most important stakeholder and Pakistan has
completely failed to get authentication of global stakeholders regarding its losses and
sacrifices in war on terror. Hence, Pakistan must carve out a strategy that best suits to
bring in peace and stability in Pakistan. The Nawaz government is bearing the brunt of
mistakes made in the past. Some say that the use of force is the most appropriate solution
to put a stop to terrorist attacks in the country. However, there is always a way out. Us is
going to leave Afghanistan in 2014 and that is without reason. They have turned the
country into rubble but the Taliban are still undefeated. Given these circumstances the
government must take measures to eradicate terrorism forever. If the government keeps making compromises with the terrorists and will keep performing according to the whims of international political players, it will be impossible to put Pakistan on the path to prosperity and peace.

If it is closely observed Pakistan follows the ‘security model approach’, which is closely related to the US practice. In Pakistan’s context, the difference is all the more relevant in formulating a foreign policy based on the rule of law and dictates of international law. Security model has it pitfalls; on the one hand, it is intrusive and presents the ‘war-like’ scenarios, on the other it is not consistent with all evolving international law on the point. Another view can be that in Pakistan’s case a hybrid model based on criminal approach primarily and security model as a complementary approach may be workable. Much can be said about the criminal justice model. From a philosophical viewpoint, the old axioms of Cicero may sound plausible. His saluspopulisupremaestlex (the safety of the people is the supreme law) is true today as it was in his time. Benjamin Franklin also endorsed Cicero’s philosophy when he said “ He who would put security before liberty deserves neither” News of both appear to proximate the theme of the rule. Likewise, religiously, Islam’s propensity towards peace is unequivocal, and in designing a foreign policy in which the ultimate enemy is not very obvious the safe course would be to go by the criminal justice system model.

The view expressed do not claim to be perfect; the only point being made is that a conscious choice be exercised after deliberating in detail on the subject from all stakeholders and the choice so exercised should be in consonance with international law and should be morally and religiously viable. Therefore, it is important that states should
combat terrorism by effective dialogue. The West is now tackling the issue of terrorism via dialogue. Peace jirgas are being established and the Taliban are being lured into this trap by using Economic aid of $500 million for instance. The Palestine/Israel issue is also being tackled through dialogue as using force is not the solution. Global powers need to work in tandem to alleviate the prevailing conditions. Reformation of the society is the need of the hour. Social shrewdness and awareness needs to be spread in order to obliterate this evil.

In order to combat this menace of terrorism we need to learn from the past experiences such as of World War II- Hiroshima & Nagasaki and the nuclear warfare on the world. The role of the UN and other major organizations such as SAARC and OIC are also very important. Rehabilitation and educational facilities in the war zone along with a multi pronged strategy needs to be implemented, so that terrorism can be wiped off completely. A joint effort to create peaceful alliances should be aimed for; dialogue is cost-effective, peaceful and sustainable. Another important aspect is the control of refugees through porous boundaries, such as in the case of Afghanistan. The fundamentalist religious philosophies need to be averted and composite dialogue needs to be established in order to curtail terrorism. Revising Madrassah education and curriculum would also be a positive step in combatting terrorism, as children are a product of this society. If more opportunities are created for the common man, then there can be a reduction in terrorism. Reduction in unemployment, overcoming shortages, arms detection, surveillance and protracted damages are myriad ways of curbing terrorism. If there is an end to the discrimination against Muslims, inter faith harmony and international co-operation then this will definitely go a long way in eliminating the evil called terrorism.
Terrorism can never completely be crushed through brute force; it results in the increase of radicalization. Drone attacks in Afghanistan against Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Pakistani tribal areas have not achieved much success; instead it has resulted in more casualties. A counter-terrorism policy needs to be adopted; peaceful negotiation and talks are the key and a way forward. Terrorism is a vicious cycle and there is no end to genocide, but to conduct peaceful negotiations, which might solve something as opposed to using force, which would only make matters worse.