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## Paris Carnage – The Outreach of Terrorism

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By Bhaskar Roy

Paris, on November 13 evening, was nothing unusual. A concert with an American band from California performing. A friendly football match in the stadium between France and Germany. And people in bars and cafeterias enjoying themselves. Gay and Carefree Paris was impervious to a threat from Islamic State (IS) or Daesh, when all hell broke loose.

The IS had struck, leaving 129 dead and over 300 injured with 99 of them in critical state. Nine terrorists who took part in the killings were eliminated by the police or blew themselves up with explosive belts they were wearing (According to available reports, two are absconding).

This IS claimed responsibility for the carnage, and gave a warning that they had infiltrated into Europe in the guise of refugees. France swung into action and Belgium coordinated in almost simultaneous response as some of the perpetrators were also Belgian citizens. The support elements of the attackers are being hunted down. The French authorities believe the attack was planned outside France. At least one of the terrorists killed carried a Syrian passport and had entered as a refugee.

Since the attack on the French satirical magazine Charbie Heblo in January this year, French agencies had neutralised ten terrorist plots according to French officials, which were not made public. This was apparently done to avoid public anxiety and maintain the character of Paris and France – that of government and people who do not discriminate between religion, colour and creed. France has the largest Muslim population in Europe.

It is very important to note that the November 13 bloody killings did not provoke a public reaction against Muslims, unlike what happened in the USA following the “9/11” terrorist attacks. If the IS planned to divide France and Europe on religious lines and create chaos, they have

been frustrated. But elsewhere in Europe the repercussions may have been different, at least to an extent. The IS may have achieved a limited objective by raising questions over Muslim refugees desperately seeking asylum in Europe fleeing from these marauding terrorists like the IS and al-Nusra fronts.

Europe and the US must not fall into this IS trap because the consequences would be even worse. Other countries including India should take a lesson from the French resilience, and political and social philosophy. That these terrorists are a small lot who do not espouse the true Islam. The IS is anything but Muslim and Islamic. They have become a satanic cult. But the problem is cults also attract the undiscerning and the vulnerable.

It is well known that the IS does not espouse the core spirit of Islam, which is basically a balanced and peaceful religion. Of course, over the centuries Islam has been interpreted in many ways including perfecting the holy word 'Jihad' and upholding obscurantist conservatism like Wahabism and Salafism.

The IS has created its own ideology, targeting Shias, Ahmeddias, peaceful Sunni derivatives like Sufism and, of course, the Kafirs or non-believers.

IS, which was first noticed in Iraq around 2006 fighting against the US forces went underground after a series of defeats. It re emerged later as a tool in the hands of anti-Assad forces and regimes especially Saudi Arabia and UAE. With the Saudis and Iranians at each other's throats, the IS began playing an anti-Shia frontline fighter's role. There was no stopping this organisation after that. In 2014, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi declared a Caliphate over areas they controlled in Syria and Iraq and himself as the Caliph.

Meanwhile, for the US and other western powers who were bent on removing Syrian President Bashr Al Assad, any anti-Assad weapon was welcome. What goes around comes around. The Saudi royals are beginning to feel the IS heat. The IS caliphate does not recognise kings and emperors. The caliph derives his powers directly from Allah. It is no wonder that the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia issued a fatwa against the IS.

The horrific attack in Paris has jolted the west and the rest of the world. Containment of the IS will not work. The organisation must be rooted out and that can happen if all join together in a decisive war, dropping regime change in Syria and co-opting Russia, Iran and the Kurd Peshmergas fully. The West must concede that the best fighters against the IS have been Iranians and Peshmergas.

Can this really happen? It can perhaps be successful if a political solution in Syria can be arrived at with Russian and Iranian participation; if the Sunnis and Shias can come to a truce in the Middle East; and all terrorists and states sponsoring terrorism and addressed with fervour without political and strategic considerations. This is a very big task.

Russian President Vladimir Putin disclosed at the recently concluded G-20 summit in Turkey that they had intelligence that citizens of at least 40 countries were financing the IS by various means, these included some member countries of the G-20. Putin shared this information with members of this conclave.

Initial large funding for the IS came from the millions of dollars they looted from banks located in areas they took over. But regular income came-in from sale of illegal oil to unscrupulous dealers. And, of course, donations,

Although the G-20 agreed to target and further squeeze the IS funding routes, it is not going to be easy. There are parties who still hope to further their political and ideological agenda through the IS.

Targeting the IS in Syria by military means is only part of the solution, though quite effective. What about organisations like the Al-Nusra Front? The IS has also established a foot hold in parts of Afghanistan. No international effort has taken this into account.

The IS influence has spread in concentric circles than that of the Al Qaeda because of its expert propaganda and daring to take the war against the west to their front yard. The manner in which volunteers have streamed to the IS in thousands in such a short time is startling. Even more important is that of women joining it with the fore knowledge how they are treated once they are there. But they are mesmerised and think they are sacrificing for a greater good.

For example, not a single Indian joined the Taliban or the Al Qaeda. Yet, at least 15 Indians if not more are now fighting with the IS in Syria in various capacities, some have been stopped from going, and a few have returned and have been put through a process of deradicalisation,- not arrested and thrown into prisons. But the threat to India remains palpable with India-centric IS affiliates like Ansur-ut Tawhid fi Bilad al-Hind (AUT) stepping on-line propaganda. AUT's trajectory suggests it may be expanding to neighbouring Bangladesh.

If the international community is sincere in eradicating and not containing, terrorism all terrorists must be addressed simultaneously. The old strategy of good terrorists and bad terrorists must be jettisoned. Still the old strategy of my ally's terrorists should be protected because they attack a potential enemy, continues.

In the Indian subcontinent, Bangladesh is in urgent need of international assistance. Whether the IS has taken a toehold there is one question. The other is terrorists are striking and killing liberals, the people in government and the police. Who are these people, who is behind them and how are they financed?

India is home to all sects and sections of Muslims. And all leading shoots of Islam have come together to condemn the IS and issue a fatwa.

The international community must draw a lesson from this and concert it into a much larger concerted global effort. In the meanwhile,

countries like the US, the UK and others must discard the policy of giving shelter to terrorist ideologues in the name of human rights and free speech. Terrorists do not respect human rights and freedom of speech, and they deserve none!

*(The writer is a New Delhi based analyst. He can be reached at e-mail [grouchohart@yahoo.com](mailto:grouchohart@yahoo.com) [1])*

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