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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TERRORIST FINANCING: A STUDY ON EXTREMIST GROUPS OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract

Terrorist groups maintain their finances from different sources which is difficult to track. In various studies it came out that individuals, organizations donate money to terror outfit. These sources of financing were not easily traceable. Due to technological advances, it has become very easy to send money without exposing the sources. However, governments have taken various measures to halt these sources. Despite their efforts it seems quite impossible to trace some sources. This paper investigate secondary sources of information to study financing the extremist groups in Bangladesh. It has been found that, individuals, some NGOs, organizations were held responsible for financing such groups. It is also came out that, due to lack of evidences it is not possible to take any measures against those sources. Besides, individuals donate money from their earning to terrorist groups which is not easily identifiable.

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Introduction:-

Terrorist activity as a tool of political change is a primeval practice. People in the ancient period thought themselves as chosen by the god to bring some changes on behalf of almighty and they found terrorist activities as their strategy to get that change. The term "Terrorism" was coined during the "French Revolution" when people were fighting against the French Empire to establish a republic by abolishing the existing system (Weinberg: 2006). After so many years passing terrorism has no universal definition and it is still controversial issue in international arena. People who use violence as a means of threatening people to bring a political change can be identified as terrorists to some specific groups of people and freedom fighters to others (ibid).

Over the period, terrorism got some individualistic features. Terrorists use different strategies than before, even use more heavy, lethal and modern weapons to attain their goal. The nature of attacking is also changing; they are more concern with the number of victims now. They are trying to maximize the number of victims because they think a bigger number would spread a bigger threat to all. The motto of terrorists is also changing; they were tend to live long for killing more enemy but now they are more tend to get killed or sacrifice their lives for divine achievement. People of identical ideologies try to acquire some political means by using such terrorist activities which will bring a positive consequence to them. But the present context of terrorism may define the interest of third party strongly than the terrorist groups. Terrorist groups are used as the tool of maximizing interest of some third party and the activist of such groups are used by their charismatic leader. Terrorism can be a good business. The financing nature to terrorist organizations is also changing, in the ancient period terrorists were used to manage their expenses themselves. That was self financing mechanism to arrange their activities but now a days there are so many major actors who is financing terrorists for their personal interest. They can be concerned with personal achievement,

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collective interests or holy responsibility. Financial support is important for terrorist groups. Without such support they cannot operate their operations. So it is very crucial to them. Terrorists collect their financing from state, group of people and single person to achieve their political goal. It is a big challenge for the governments and respective authorities to trace the sources in order to halt terrorist activities.

Terrorist Financing

Terrorist financing refers to activities by state, organizations such as charities, NGOs, private enterprises and individual figure that provides financing or financial support to individual terrorists or terrorist groups. Financing is required not just to fund specific terrorist operations, but to meet the broader organizational costs of developing and maintaining a terrorist organization and to create an enabling environment necessary to sustain their activities (OECD: 2008). The terrorist organizations need two type of financing such as for specific operations and for over all organizational requirements. Terrorists require financing to recruit and support members and sometimes for their family, maintaining logistics hubs, and conducting operations (UNODC: 2013). The UN General Assembly adopted the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism on December 10, 1999 to stop people and organizations from providing or collecting funds for terrorist acts (UN:1999). Terrorists and their organizations get assistances and financial supports from several major donors around the world.

Terrorist organizations have maintained huge expenses to operate its' regular operations; for example the expense of Al- Qaeda is more than 30 million USD per year (NCTA: 2004). To arrange such huge amount of money they often chose both legal and illegal way of earning and collecting money. They collect money for their operations from charity organizations, legal business, self-funding, drug trafficking, credit card fraud, cheque fraud, extortion, and exploiting natural resources (OECD:2008). They gave money to such terrorist organizations as a part of their religious practice "Khairaat". The term refers to give somebody's property and assistance to somebody else to reduce his or her sorrow. The regulations from religious books identify three tools of practicing "Khairaat" such as Zakat, Sadqah, and Waqf. Zakat is the obligation by the holy book of Muslim "Quran" (Quran 9:60) and the prime source of such donation from Arab countries. Zakat can be spend to perform jihadi activities (Salih:2004). There are so many references of Zakat in "Quran" and this is the "taxation" system of Islamic code of life (Heck: 2006). Charity organizations mainly emerged on the basis of serving backward and deprived people of the society or community. The financial arrangement of such charity organizations come from Sadqah and Waqf. This money is broadly provided to religion based terrorist organizations to preserve the fair rights of Muslim community around the world. Some Muslim people perceive Jihad to establish such rights and hence provide financial support through Khairaat.

Terrorist organizations are getting support and financial assistance from state party, some charity organizations, and some private enterprises and from some individual figure. And sometimes terrorist organizations arrange their expenses in their own by exploiting natural resources they illegally occupy in a country. To sell that resource they need some assistance from state level actors to big businessman. There are some situations that indicate the involvement of states into supporting and financing terrorist organizations for a long or specific time of period. The states are financing terrorists organizations secretly and sometimes they do it openly. This is also a part of their state strategy to support the terrorists and financing them. In 1979 Saudi Arabia along with member states of Organization of Islamic Cooperation and USA formed the terrorist group Taliban in Afghanistan. The states not only supported the terrorist but also trained them and provided them the modern lethal weapons. Taliban got all logistic support by the states because it was a part of their state policy.

Sudan gave opportunity to set up headquarter of Al Qaeda at Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan and the government had maintained a very close relationship with Osama bin laden. After the Coup d'état in Sudan, the government along with Iranian government trained up Islamic terrorists of several countries and made the country safe haven for terrorist (Ehrenfeld:2003). Sudan did not pay any attention or importance to UN or UN Security Council; they pressurized Sudan to end it up. Osama bin laden had a legal bank account there at Central Bank of Sudan and he also invested 50 million dollars in a private bank there (Burr & Collins: 2006). Sudanese government provides training and financial support to terrorists groups in Somalia during the last decade of previous century.

Palestine Liberation Organization and Hamas got financial support from western and Arab countries. European Union paid 10 million euro per month to maintain the authority of Palestine and Arab world raised a fund of 10 million dollars for martyrs' family (ibid). Terrorist organizations in Somalia, Bosnia, and Colombia they all get support and financial assistance from various countries during they fought against their authorities.

Groups of organized people from several countries, NGOs and charities provide major share of the terrorists' financing. There are 14 charity organizations who have involved into the activity of providing regular financial support to AL-Qaeda (Gold: 2003). Charity organizations such as Al-Rashid Trust, Al-Haramain, Rabita Trust, Islamic Relief they are directly involved in such financial support activities. Some private enterprises such as Dallah Al Baraka Corporation provided huge amount of money to AL-Qaeda from the emergence of this groups. Individual figure such as the biggest businessman of any particular country can be the source of terrorist financing. The richest person of Palestine gave 30 million dollars to Palestinian terrorist groups Hamas to operate their operations.

Financing: Extremist Groups of Bangladesh

Extremist or terrorist organizations have some ideological basis which makes them united and unified. They try to eliminate the existing political system because of some bitter experience of their equivalent ideological community and try to establish a completely new political order which will facilitate a better political treatment to their community. The ideological basis of such terrorist organizations can be religiously motivated or get motivation from the revolutionary thinking from secular incentives. When a terrorist group influenced by such ideological incentive their activities got extremist features and they became formidable and difficult to control or prevent them. Bangladesh has experienced both of the religiously motivated and influenced by revolutionary thinking extremist groups.

There are some secular or revolutionary or leftist extremist groups in Bangladesh such as Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Jasad), Bangladesh Sarbahara Party, and Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP). Jasad left their terrorist activities and join into politics of votes, this party is one of the coalition members of existing government. Their supporters and activists reconciled and they are now in their normal life, some of them are active in politics and some of are not interested in politics of vote. Bangladesh Sarbahara Party was established in 1960s under the leadership of Siraj Sikdar (Amin: 1986). The name was Purba Banglar Sarbahara Party when it was formed and in 1980s there were so many Sarbaha groups around the country then it became Bangladesh Sarbahara Party. The party is not active now but some random Sarbahara groups are active now in different region of the country. They used to collect their financial support to operate their organizational activities by self-funding and banditry. They abduct money from wealthy people and maintain their organizations expenses and distributed the rest of the money to the poor people. People who ignored to provide the money they demand for, got killed publicly. Among the leftist terrorist or extremist groups, Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) was the most dangerous in nature and difficult to deal with. They were engaged into massive level of murder, robbery, extortion, land grabbing and abduction for ransom (SATP: 2017). Members of these extremist groups were involved into rape, murder, robbery, extortion, and other terrorist activities as well as in land grabbing (Chowdhury: 2002).

Religiously motivated extremist groups got state support and financial assistance during their emergence. There are so many terrorist organizations that are active in Bangladesh, there are more than a hundred terrorist groups are active in Dhaka city alone (Siddiqua: 2015). There are some highly organized extremist groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islam Bangladesh (HuJI), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Neo-JMB. People were influenced by state party to take part into such initiative in 1980s when Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islam Bangladesh (HuJI) was formed. They are the Mujahideen who went to involve themselves into war against Soviet Union to protect Islamic sentiments. When these Mujahideen returned from war they formed HuJI and got financial support from Osama bin Laden (Burr & Collins: 2006). Many Saudi Arabia charity organizations donated \$400,000 for continuing training the new HuJI in 421 Madrasas around the country (Rahman: 2004).

Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) was a product of a reaction incentive of brutal activities that was committed by Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP). Siddiqur Rahman a Maulana engendered the organization to resist PBCP and bring a stable environment there in 1998. He was known as Bangla Bhai. That time PBCP was very dangerous and difficult to prevent them from doing their continuing activities for state party. So they did not want to impose any difficulty to JMJB because they assist government party by their strategy. They got their financial support from the local who eagerly want to contribute into their operations. Rabeta-e-Islam a NGO and an organization Islami Oytijho Sangstha gave donation to build a mosque (SATP: 2017). Bangla Bhai after few years formed a new extremist organization which was successful to get attentions from national and international arena. Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) was active in the first decade of existing century. They got financial support from individual donors in Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Libya. There are some NGOS and charity organizations that provided financial supports for JMB such as Society of the Revival of Islamic Heritage, Doulatul Kuwait, Al Haramaine Islamic Institute, Rabita Al Alam Al Islami, Qatar Charitable Society, and

UAE based Al Fuzaira (Ahsan:2005).Neo-JMB is the existing extremist group in Bangladesh who operates their operations very actively. They got its financial supports from individuals mainly. No organizational engagement has been noticed yet. All the financial support comes from unidentified individuals. The Neo-JMB arranges their operations with a minimum cost and huge number of individuals gave their all property to Neo-JMB; so it has a huge amount of money. A Ready Made Garment owner Imran Ahmed donated 4 laks taka to Neo-JMB (the independent: 2017). There are two others donors who donate them around 27.7 laks taka (the New Nations: 2016). Rokonuddin Khondoker, a pediatrician of Dhaka Shishu Hospital donates 80 laks taka to Neo-JMB (Daily Star: 2016). There are some Pakistani diplomats who had maintained a regular connection with Neo-JMB and had given some donations regularly. Farina Arshad, a relatively junior diplomat the Pakistani mission in Dhaka provided 30000 taka to this group (Panda: 2015). There are huge numbers of active Neo-JMB militant who raise their fund by self-funding and from some individuals known to them.

The nature of extremist financing is changing because of the negative intention of international community towards terrorism and the emergence of “war against terror”. Leftist extremist organizations have managed their funds by self-funding and robbery. Religiously motivated extremist groups raised their funds from international community and charities but now this nature of financing has changed. The activists of terrorist organizations collect their funds themselves because the decentralize nature of chain of command in terrorist organizations. The concept of lone wolf is also contributes to change this nature of financing.

Conclusion:-

International community has articulated so many initiatives to control over the terrorist activities and eliminate them. Although this is a debate whether they really want to eliminate them or not but some incentives such as “war against terror” and some resolutions and convention prove that there is a growing tension. International communities as well as every individual state try to impose their strategies to prevent terrorist activities. Bangladesh is not an exception; it articulated a Counter Terrorism unit and special weaponry unit in police. Though Government of Bangladesh is now on zero tolerance position about terrorism. However it is difficult to track their financial sources.

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