UNIT 16   VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM

Structure

16.0   OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit is to enable you to :

- explain the concept of violence and terrorism;

- discuss the underlying causes of violence and its changing patterns;

- examine the relationship between political violence and maldevelopment;

- describe ethnicity and violence; and

- narrate violence against weaker sections.

16.1   INTRODUCTION

In the last unit we described and analysed drug addiction and alcoholism, and now we are going to analyse violence and terrorism. First of all we will analyse the concept of violence and go on to analyse that of terrorism. We then examine the causes of violence and terrorism. Following this we will discuss politics and terrorism. Related to the above and examined next is violence in the context of maldevelopment. After this is discussed ethnic identity and violence. An aspect of this theme is state violence and human rights. Next come the measures to deal with violence and finally steps to tackle terrorism. Let us now turn to the beginning of our unit.

16.2   CONCEPT OF VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM

Violence is as old as the history of mankind. In mythologies and legends it is presented as some thing linked to the beginning of history and always looked as deeds of heroes. Historically, violence is considered as a "human phenomenon" Violence, as defined in the Dictionary of philosophy is "the illegitimate or (at all events) illegal exertion of force. It is a function of the evolution of the democratic spirit". For violence is a phenomenon opposed to freedom and happiness; it must be fought. But it remains an aspects of human, non-animal behaviour and it is some times the last resort against violence itself. In other words violence is an encroachment on the freedom of others. Violence is the use of force in order to gain from the individual or the group something which they do not like to give away of their own free will.

Rape for example is always conspicuous and is considered a total form of violence, because it is obtained by force. Violence is horrifying but also fascinating. This is because it enables the strong to establish a profitable relationship with a weaker person or group without incurring much loss to themselves.

Violence itself has many meanings. However a recent study (Mackenzie, 1975. 39) defines violence as "the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on or cause damage to persons or property; action or conduct characterised by this, treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom."

Violence is considered to be 'pathological' behvaiour.

A three-tier typology explains violence in terms of:

i)   turmoil, e.g. riots, political strikes

ii)   conspiracy e.g. small scale terrorism, political assassination

iii)   internal war, e.g. highly organised political violence.

The causes of violence include:

i)   The frustration anger theory feels that the anger produced by frustration causes violence.

ii)   Relative deprivation theory (Gurr, 1970) points out that deprivation is a spur to action.

iii)   It is believed that a revolutionary outbreak of violence occurs when frustration due to lack of achievement manifests itself. They are often fueled by generated expectations that have failed.

iv)   Some scholars talk about systemic frustration. This is experienced by societies as a whole. These frustrations lead to social change.

v)   Other scholars feel that lack of viable political institutions does not allow for control of violence particularly when there is social change. Traditional and modern societies are less prone to violence than transitional ones. Revolutions and insurrections are common in transitional societies.

All these theories are based on the postulate of stable political systems. They also look for stability than change. Moreover they do not deal with decolonisation which is very important in the present context.

Decolonisation generates tremendous violence. As Fanon has pointed out violence can both be a catharsis and a harbinger of change. For Fanon (Fanon, 1965) the colonised man finds freedom in violence. It is viewed as a cleansing force.

Though violence has existed within society from time immemorial, yet in recent years the emergence of the problem of terrorism has become a burning issue. The headlines of newspapers, news bulletins on television and radio broadcasts tell us how people were shot dead, injured, or kidnapped, planes are highjacked with many passengers, are looted and so on. The photographs portrayed the killed or injured. They display property destroyed, and arms and ammunitions in varying quantities seised from the terrorists etc.

During the last three decades the problem of terrorism has increased manifold. Terrorism has been defined in several ways. In United States it is defined as "Those acts of violence or threat, aimed at a state or organisation with the intention to damage its interests or obtain concessions from it." Another definition is that "Terrorism is the threat of violence, individual acts of violence or campaign of violence designed primarily to instill fear to terrorise."

It is better to explain the definitions that we have given with some examples of terrorism as they will describe it better. In 1953 Dec. 17, as car bombing took place outside Harrod's in London, six people were killed and ninety four were wounded. Paul Karanaph of Belfast was charged with conspiring in this attack. He had conspired five times before. This was an IRA (Irish Republic Army) bombing and randomly aimed at Christmas shoppers, and not directly political. The idea was to underline the IRA fight and to demand withdrawal of England and Northern Ireland.

Another care was the Maoist guerilla movement Shining Path of Peru. From 1980 onwards they have involved themselves with attacks on the whites in cities and on Police Stations. They have been blowing up power lines, and raiding attachments as well.

The guerillas number is uncertain—anywhere from hundreds to thousands. They have been known to take over enclave villages. They stage trials which they call "People's Court". They have executed administrative personnel in these villages.

The military campaign against them, launched by President Belaunde Terry resulted in many casualties. However even after four years the numbers of the Shining Path seem to keep growing.

Terrorism is an ancient practice. The terrorists using fear as the key have often been successful in manipulating and intimidating large numbers. The effects of violence are not usually predictable. Terrorists have various motives. They say their fight is against inequitable distribution of income. However most of them are little more than bandits and are in it for the spoils. It is also a way out of personal frustration. Some terrorists are also pathological cases deriving pleasure from killing innocent people like K030 Okamoto, the surviving terrorist of the Lydda Airport Massacre.

Terrorists use shocking and outrageous methods. One wonders what would happen if they get hold of unclear weapons.

From the foregoing discussion it may be possible to term certain activities as terrorist activities. These are:

i) use of threat or violence to commit murders, arson, highjacking, sabotage etc.;

ii) political motives behind an operation or act;

iii) to terrorise and coerce the government to achieve certain goals;

iv) select important targets, and

v) they have no limits for their activities.

16.3 CAUSES AND PATTERNS OF VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM

Terrorism and violence are destructive social phenomena. They are caused by various interrelated social factors. Violence and terrorism are having specific patterns in different types of societies. In the following subsections we shall be taking to you on the causes and patterns of this social phenomenon with special reference to India.

16.3.1 Causes

As regards causes, studies in America show that nature provides us only with the capacity for violence. It is social circumstances that determine whether and how we exercise that capacity. Studies also show that violence and instabilities is more prevalent in countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America which are undergoing rapid economic and social change but have yet developed viable political institutions. Traditional and modern societies are less prone to political violence and instability. Military coups, insurrections, guerilla warfare and assassination are common features of the transitional societies.

Many sociologists are of the view that deprivation leads to discontent among people and this when coupled with politicisation leads to discontent which is expressed in the form of violence. This phenomenon may be indicated as below:

Deprivation

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Development of Discontent

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Politicisation of discontent

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Expression of discontent in the form of violence
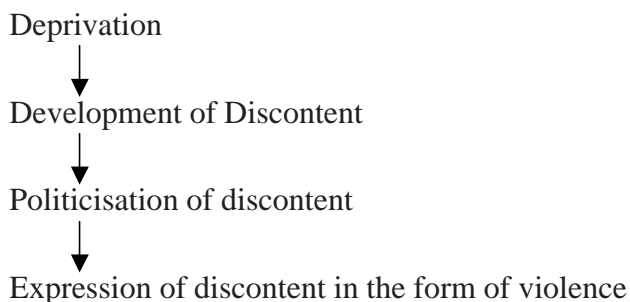
Deprivation may be in the form of lack of opportunity for education, training, employment or lack of ways to meet physical or social needs. For example, if legal means for attaining jobs are not available, people may resort to smuggling of arms, trafficking in drugs etc. If these illegal activities are not controlled, other problems will creep in. Deprivation will be felt at different levels and a feeling that the political system is incapable of meeting the situation will arise. Deprivation is likely to lead to discontent. Discontent may be in the form of strikes, bandhs, demonstrations, morchas etc. If these methods do not invite the attention of the state there is politicisation of these demands. When that happens the due process of the law may be bypassed.

The expression of discontent at this juncture may be in the form of murder,

arson, bank robberies, looting of personal property, kidnapping etc. The indiscriminate killing of innocents spreads wave of fear among the people. The release of those arrested on political consideration have given way for exploiting the situation by the terrorists.

However, religious fundamentalism and growing intolerance to other religion have emerged to be a crucial factor for the emergence and sustenance of terrorism at the international level. The religious indoctrination has led to the emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan in 1990s, Al Quida Forces in the Middle East. The attack on the World Trade Centre in the US on Sept, 11, 1999, Indian Parliament on Dec., 12, 1999 and on the foreign Embassies and High Commission in several state capitals of the world. All these have marked the emergence of global terrorism. The global terrorism has threatened the very basis of democracy of the world. Along with the emergence of global terrorism, there has also been the phenomena of cross-border terrorism, of which India has become a victim. Here terrorist were trained from across the border of the neighboring countries to destabilise the democratically elected Government. Thus there has been a slogan for fight against global terrorism. Indeed cross border terrorism is a part of global terrorism. Unfortunately in the fight against terrorism even the states who themselves sponsor terrorism in disguise, have emerged to allies of such fight. In this regard unfortunately terrorism has not been uniformly defined by the west, who are spearheading the fight.

At the local level there have been the attacks of the Maoist terrorists in Andhra Pradesh, Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and in many ohter states. There have also been terrorism of regional kind spearheaded by various ethnic groups.

16.3.2 Patterns

During last three decades violence and terrorism have become major issues. The word violence has been used differently in different phrases like:

i) 'violent crimes' (physical assault or threat thereof),

ii) violence in the streets (provocation, demonstration, police violence, partisan counter-violence, internal war),

iii) violence to self (suicide, alcoholism, drug addiction etc.),

iv) violence at the wheel (killing by vehicular accidents).

v) violence in the media (a syndrome : news or fiction of violence stimulating further violence),

vi) social violence (repressive to toleration).

Activity 1

If possible collect newspaper or magazine clippings on terrorism and violence for four weeks. Now study them and note down:

i) types of violence

ii) types of terrorism

Compare your notes with other students in the Study Centre if possible.

Though violence is most frightening and at times most reprehensible yet it becomes less scandalous when it remains for a longer time in the community,

and more, so if it is protected by respectable institutions or ideologies. In other words it is interpreted in terms of sensitivity to violence. Sensitivity and tolerance to violence are recent phenomenon or at least have recently assumed very significant dimensions.

In fact there are different viewpoints on dealing with the phenomenon of violence/terrorism. Certain countries including India have suffered the repressive activities by colonial rulers, and racist regimes have been terroristic. For example the freedom struggle in South Africa can be termed as terroristic.

16.4   POLITICS AND TERRORISM

A totalitarian state makes use of violence as a system of government. But a democracy resorts to it only selectively during a period of crisis, when they even overlook the international convention that insists on respect for human rights. The gravity of situation is assessed by the government and such situation is prone to possible abuse. The term crisis implies a threat to the regime. In weak democracies also rulers resort to direct or indirect violence to continue in power. In order to stay in power, rulers who had reached a point at which their follower is disowned them or because a minority, may overturn democracy. The military may help them behind the scenes. Every democratic constitution has provisions to enable the Government to assume special powers. Here again there is danger of abuse of power.

Terrorism demoralises the population of a region or state. In some instances however it serves as an integrating factor. However terrorism itself always invokes problems of law and order. Yet it is not capable of disrupting the entire social system. Terrorism is not a revolutionary movement and so far terrorists have not succeeded in fulfilling their aims. Terrorist killings do not change the structure of politics. However this is not to say that they have no effect on the social and political fabric. They do loosen it somewhat. Mechanisms have to be created to prevent acts of terror.

Box 16.01

Terrorist operations often involve systematic planning, which resemble a minor military operation. The intended victim (or other terrorist plan) is studied carefully. All habits and movements of the people involved are studied. The terrorists need transport to and from the scene of crime. They have to have false identity papers, weapons and money. Again to make a success of their criminal activity they need a publicity unit. All major terrorist groups have a central high command, which is either very professional or could be amateurish. Terrorism always involves an element of improvisation. Finally even the most careful planning cannot possibly make provision for all eventualities.

Individuals and group take to violence when their legitimate demands are not met through legitimate means. For example when there is

i)   corruption

ii)   malpractices

iii) exploitation

iv) failure on the part of state to protect law-abiding citisens

There is a likelihood of people taking to violence to fulfil their demands. When the use of conventional methods such as protests, dharnas, demonstrations, strikes, etc. become ineffective, then alone do the nonconventional methods for example murder, arson, looting of banks, personal property, kidnapping etc. are resorted to. This apart, terrorising people and assassination of important persons follow.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Give five phrases which have been used to express violence:

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ii) When does an individual group take on violence? Explain in about five lines.

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16.4.1 Violence and the Law

There is much evidence available to indicate that maldevelopment results in tensions, conflicts and violence. The frequency of outbursts in a number of countries over a period of time indicate that rapidity of social change is associated with violence. The higher rate of social change is associated with instability. Social change may result in imbalance of privileges in a society and hence change can affect some people in a society adversely.

Activity 2

If you have seen some TV Programme or a movie or read a novel made on violence and terrorism, then note down how outlaws indulge in terrorism and violence. What does the law do to prevent these activities? Note down your observations and if possible compare with other students in the Study Centre.

Countries with a colonial rule background have inherited the problem of

i)   poverty

ii) inequality, and

iii) the lack of equal opportunity as a legacy.

This legacy has been prolonged as there were no structural change in the system we have inherited. This has furthered the levels of exploitation, by the elites who wield power in the new political set-up. Poverty, inequality and exploitation have remained intact with us. The new political power group has legitimised exploitation with the new political order.

In a unequal society (divided by tribal, caste, class, religious or other clevages), maldevelopment means unequal opportunities in the competition for jobs, services, educational and social facilities. These factors also aggravate groups and class conflicts and accentuate individual frustration. This has led to the rich becoming richer. The middle class has expanded activities in different spheres of life and the poor have either remained poor or in some cases have become poorer. This is because of the increasing gulf between the "haves" and the "have nots".

The regulatory laws, and the provisions in the Constitution to prevent exploitation and any kind of discrimination have not been of much avail. The terrorist activities in Punjab, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, and the naxalite problem in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are examples of perceived maldevelopment and people taking to arms. The State policy of reservation has further aggravated the situation in many states and there have been incidents of violence.

16.5 ETHNIC IDENTITY AND VIOLENCE

There have been instances where it is clearly seen that violence is directed towards a specific group. Studies show that there are social, economic and political disparities between the races in the United States of America. They are sufficient to justify the fear that the Blacks would be found to have higher crime rate than Whites. Similarly it can be seen from the population in the Indian prisons that most of the inmates come from lower socio-economic background. This may mean two things:

i) that those who belong to lower socio-economic strata of the society are more involved in criminal activities than others,

ii) that the law is enforced more vigorously in the case of the poor rather than the rich.

If we look at the situation in India we have concrete examples of ethnic violence. This is so particularly in the case of the communal riots which take place sporadically in different parts of the country. The riots are often between the Hindus and the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, Shia and the Sunni Muslims. Besides, there are intercaste and intracaste conflicts. There is heavy loss of property and life during these conflicts.

When there are difference between the different segments of society violence may occur. This happens when they feel insecure or that they are being exploited by the other group(s). The killing of persons belonging to one segment by another brings out very clearly the ethnic nature of violence.

16.5.1 State Violence and Human Rights

Violence on the part of the State usually has the cover of legitimacy. There is also approval (at various times and places), of certain forms of violence under certain conditions. Justification for violence is just often an excuse. It is often reported that there was an encounter with terrorists or with the naxalites and so many of them were shot dead. There are also allegations that the encounters have been fake. The individuals or the group of people were killed without sufficient cause. Violence on the part of the State, particularly the police always finds some justification.

Totalitarian states use violence as a part of the system. In democratic states it functions as a control mechanism during crises. During crisis, even in democratic countries, almost all the fundamental rights are suspended and there is no place for human rights. The international conventions are kept at bay. The situation is usually measured by the State. Because of crisis, the threat to the regime is contained by using violence with the help of the police and the military. Most of the Constitutions in the democratic countries have provisions to enable the government authority to attain special powers. This, in fact negates all the conventions for the protection of human rights.

The proclamation of Emergency during 1975-77 and Operation Blue Star (1984) in Punjab are much discussed issues. These acts of the central government are considered as terroristic. Time and again such instances are repeated and the human right of the individual and group are taken away by the government.

16.5.2   Measures to Deal with Violence

A spurt in international activities by terrorists led to various conventions to tackle the problem. These conventions are :

i)   The 1937 Convention for the prevention and punishment of terrorism

ii) The 1971 Convention to prevent and punish acts of terrorism, crimes against persons and related extortion that are of international significance.

iii) The 1973 Convention on the prevention and punishment of crime against internationally protected persons including diplomats.

In the same year there was an European Convention on : (i) suppression of terrorism; and (ii) the 1979 International Convention against the taking of hostages. This apart there were conventions on air hijacking. They are:

i)   The Tokyo Convention, 1969

ii) The Hague Convention

iii) The Montreal Convention to tackle the problem of commission of offence on board, seizure of aircraft and it also includes offences in air or on ground and permits the State to take action for preventing the offences.

Box 16.02

Nuclear terrorism does not only pose a threat to a single nation. It could lead to a major international crisis. The potential of nuclear blackmail is very dramatic. However other equally lethal weapons do exist : these include poisons like OPAS : Nerve gases like the monofluoroalipathic compounds (BTX) which is lethal no matter how it enters the body.

Anthrax, bubonic plague, encephalitis and psittacrsis can all be produced by chemical terrorism. An epidemic of these diseases could spread far and wide. These weapons however are more likely to be used by a madman than a terrorist.

Terrorists can possibly gain nuclear weapons (a bomb) by theft or gift. Another possibility for terrorists is to manufacture a nuclear bomb with the help of scientists and engineers having the right specialisation. The potential/possibility of such nuclear terrorism is that it may turn into nuclear war.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write short notes on state violence and human rights. Use five lines for your answer.

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2) Various conventions were held to reduce or eliminate terrorism and one of these Conventions was (Tick the right answer):

   i) 1937 Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism

   ii) 1990 Law Against Violence and Terrorism

   iii) Neither is right

   iv) Both are right.

16.5.3 Steps to Tackle Terrorism

India has enacted a law known as "Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985 to tackle such problems. This Act has special provisions for prevention of, and for coping with, the terrorist and disruptive activities and matters related with it. The Act provides abundant powers to the law enforcement agencies to deal with the terrorists and disruptive activities. The major provisions under the Act are : that whoever commits a terrorist act and causes death of any person shall be punished with death. In other cases of terrorist activities the term of imprisonment shall not be less than five years. This may extend to a life-term and also be liable to a fine. In case of conspiring, the minimum punishment shall not be less than three years. This may extend to life and also include fine.

As regards disruptive activities, the punishment is similar to conspiring to commit terrorist activities. The disruptive activities, whether directly or indirectly, which may affect the sovereignty or territorial integrity of India, cession or secession, by action or speech and so on, are considered as disruptive activities. The Central Government may, by notification in the Offical Gazzette, make rules to prevent or to cope with, terrorist and disruptive activities. Section 5 of this Act gives vast powers to the Central Government, the state governments and the administrators of the Union Territories, for dealing with the terrorists and disruptive activities. Section 6 of the Act provides for enhanced punishment. Where there is contravention of the Arms Act, 1959, the Explosive Act, 1884, or the Explosive Substances Act, 1952. Any contravention of these provisions by any person shall be liable for a term which may extend to 10 years or term for life and also be liable for fine.

All proceedings before a designated court shall be in camera. The identity of the witnesses may be kept secret. The proceedings may be held at a protected place. Any record which is accessible to public contains no names and addresses of the witnesses. In a nutshell it may be mentioned that the Act provides enough tooth to deal with the problem of terrorists and disruptive activities.

POTA:

16.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed various aspects of violence and terrorism. We began with the concept of violence and terrorism. After this were described the causes of terrorism. Next we turned to politics and terrorism. After this we turned to maldevelopment of society in relation to violence and the law. Following this we discussed ethnic identify and violence. The other three aspects discussed are state violence and human rights; measures to deal with violence and finally steps to tackle terrorism.

16.7 KEY WORDS

Deprivation	:	Not to have something which is regarded as a common necessity.
Exploitation	:	The use of power and intelligence to take unfair advantage of those people, groups and communities which are weak.
Kidnapping	:	Forceful and unlawful lifting of a person and keeping him or her in criminal custody.
Maldevelopment	:	In the context of unequal society it means unequal opportunities in the competition for jobs, services etc.

16.8 FURTHER READINGS

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Merkl, Peter H. 1986. *Political Violence and Terror: Motif and Motivations* University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles.

16.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) i)   Violence in the streets

   ii) external war

   iii) violence in the wheel

   iv) violence in the media

   v)   social violence

2) Individuals in groups take to violence when their legitimate demands are not met through legitimate means. For example if there is a failure on the part of the state to protect law-abiding citisens, violence may erupt in various ways.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Violence on the part of the state has a cover of legality. Totalitarian states use violence as part of the system. In democracies it is used during crises. Thus human rights do occasionally get trampled upon by the state.

2) 2 (i)

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