

9-11 and Global War on Terror

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Abstract : The terrible events of 9-11 produced shock, anger and a cry for vengeance, emotions with which much of the world sympathized for United States of America. This paper intends to highlight the causes of 9-11 and how US manipulated the event for achieving its imperialistic goal under the ideological banner of 'Global War on Terror'. This paper is divided into four parts. First part deals with the different causes for occurrence of 9-11 events. Second part of the paper highlights that how this human tragedy was manipulated and used by US for the creation of an informal and indirect global empire. Third part reflects on the consequences of US imperialistic doctrine. The military action against 'rogue states' not resulted in any clear cut US victory but rather reminded it the worst historical experience of Vietnam. GWOT resulted in a great tragedy for all people irrespective of their sides and position. Last part of the paper advocates restructuring of international norms and institutions for addressing all kinds of terrorism including those which are state-sponsored terrorism. This section emphasize that any form of terrorism whether state-sponsored or non-state sponsored, should be condemned and declared as a 'crime against humanity'. The root causes of terrorism should be located and properly be addressed through negotiation, discussion and deliberation and by winning the confidence of competing groups rather than through violence. Through this kind of efforts only we can hope to establish a 'peaceful' and 'just' world.

Key words: Global War on Terror, Imperialistic doctrine, State-terrorism, Non state actors, Crime against humanity, Peaceful and Just world.

After 9-11 terrorist attack on United States of America, suddenly the discourse on global terrorism came in forefront in almost all public spheres. The event got unprecedented media attention and the world reaction was a mixed one. Some termed the event as a heinous act; some celebrated it as an act of revenge. People denounced the act because they saw the perpetrators of this act deliberately set out to kill innocent civilians. A world-wide sympathy emerged for the US however a few Muslims celebrated the event and "danced in the streets at the news of 9-11 but most preferred to believe that Muslims could not have done it" (Mann; 2003). For the United States of America, no doubt, it was the black day in their history after Pearl Harbor. The claim that world changed on 11 September 2001 were supported by U.S. sympathizer. The Bush administration immediately identified Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network as the main culprits. It declared 'global war on terror' whereby no distinction was made between the actual perpetrators of terrorism and the country that might harbor them. Whatever may be one's conviction, nobody can ignore the fact that something unique had happened on that day.

11 September 2001 was a unique terrorist act because of many reasons. First and foremost, the large scale of civilian casualties

happened in a single act, outside of wartime. The four simultaneous airplane high jacking represents watershed terrorist events because the carnage associated with 9-11 was unprecedented: the number of people killed was as great as all deaths from transnational terrorism for 1988- 2000 (Sandler 2003). Prior to September 11, no terrorist incident, domestic or transnational, resulted in more than 500 casualties (Quillen 2002a, 2002b; Hoffman 2002). Second, 9-11 demonstrated that terrorists did not require a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) to cause mass casualties and more than \$90 billion in losses (Enders and Sandler; 2005). Third, the US homeland had never suffered so serious an assault of foreign origin.

A great human tragedy occurred but US did not declare it an "international crime against humanity" rather it described "the assault as a first salvo in a war against the United States, which, therefore, had to be countered by a GWOT which could last '8 to 10' years". One peculiar characteristic of this GWOT was that it directed almost entirely against Muslims. 24 of the 36 terrorist organizations were Muslim. The remaining ones were leftist groups, mostly in Colombia and Peru. The only non-Muslim groups were the Basque ETA and the Northern Irish Paramilitaries. GWOT had nothing to say or target Hindu terrorist in India or Srilanka or Christian terrorist, Buddhist

terrorist. Thus it was selective in its approach. The state department of US also listed 26 countries whose nationals were responsible for elevated security risk within country. Out of these 26 countries all were Muslims except North Korea. Armenia was removed from this list simply because it was a Christian country (Mann; 2003).

Why there is such demonization of Islam or Muslims? Why highlighting selective cases of 'Islamic terrorism'? Why not US declare incidents of terrorism as a 'crisis for humanity' and try to look at the root causes of terrorism and its possible solution? Why there is such a narrow understanding of terrorism? These questions compel us not only to rethink about US intention but also to probe the causes of events like 9-11. Before discussing this issue we should have at least a theoretical working definition of terrorism which is usually seen as a complex and contested concept.

Terrorism is of different kinds. Here, the study of terrorism is confined to political dimension. It is associated with two concepts: terror or intimidation and violence. However, it is a specific kind of violence (i.e. to terrorize, kill or physically harm people) carried out by individual, groups or state-actors. Political terrorism has political purpose. Thus a balanced, neutral and objective definition of terrorism can be "the calculated or premeditated use, or threat of use, of violence against an individual, group or larger collectivity in such a manner that the target is rendered physically defenseless against the effects of that violence" (Vanaik; 2007). If we accept this definition than the agents of the terrorist act can be individuals, groups or state-apparatus. In order to understand the complex phenomenon like terrorism, it is imperative to distinguish group terrorism from state terrorism. At the same time we must highlight the nature and purpose of state terrorism along with non-state terrorism because state does terrorist act in the name of 'national interest' or 'national security'. However allowing 'states' to escape from moral and legal obligation associated with such act will escalate further violence from victim side and a vicious cycle will go on. Terrorism of any kind is a curse for the humanity and it should be opposed in each and every form. In domestic terrorism, domestic actors carries out terrorist act for domestic purposes, similarly when "outside actors" carries out and directed their acts against "external power" for "extra national" purposes, we consider it as international terrorism.

With this theoretical backdrop we must try to understand why 9-11 happened? What was the motive of non-state actor? How US reacted to it? And how the doctrine of 'global war on terror' was used to achieve an informal US empire and how US betrayed the whole humanity. Various explanations were given regarding 9-11. Osama bin

Laden, the main actor himself, explains one of the causes of 9-11 as the presence of US army in the Persian Gulf and in the Middle East. According to him, the US is responsible for Muslim people's poverty and it also imposes upon them a western culture deeply offensive to traditional Islam. He accused US for the continued suffering and killing of the people of Iraq and for supporting Israel against Palestine. He declared that US sided with repressive Muslim regimes and condemned the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia as a desecration of the Islamic holy places and it must end (FCO, Responsibility for the Terrorist Atrocities in the United States, 11 September, 2001). These allegations were widely believed in West Asia because they were almost true and thus Muslim world was quite hostile to US.

Another explanation for the 9-11 was influenced by the conception of "clash of civilization" between the West and Islam. Here the dominant view was Islamic groups hate western lifestyle, envy western freedoms and prosperity. The popular perception in US is that Muslims hate west because "we stand for freedom and they hate it. We are rich and they envy us. We are strong and they resent this" (Zakaria; 2001).

Some believe and I also support this view that 9-11 happened because of US imperialistic foreign policy towards Middle East. Geo-strategically Middle East is important for US for two reasons: first it is the heart of Eurasia and second because of huge oil resources. Therefore US adopted an imperialistic foreign policy towards this region after the Second World War. It did not allow friends or foes to enter into this region. Also, it did not allow any country except Israel to become a dominant regional power. It supported authoritarian regimes in order to achieve its imperialistic goal. The mainstream of American foreign policy has been guided since the 1940s by two grand strategies. First strategy has realistic orientation and it is organized around containment, deterrence, and maintenance of the global balance of power. Second grand strategy has been the reconstruction of world economy through neo-liberal principles. These two grand strategies worked well for US. However after 9-11 a new kind of global threat that is 'terrorism' came in front of US and it devised a new grand strategy as a response to it. Earlier slogan like 'saving the world from communist threat' was replaced by 'saving the world from global terrorism'. Thus we have the grand declaration of 'Global War on Terror'. Through this grand strategy, an unrivaled US military power was expected to manage the global world. As Bush declares in his West point Commencement Speech, "America has, and intends to keep military strengths beyond challenge thereby, making the destabilizing arms race of other eras pointless and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace." Bush administration's

security doctrine made it clear that US has right to use preemptive or preventive military force. It argued that since terrorists do not respect borders, so neither can the US, thereby “recasting of the terms of sovereignty” (Ikenberry; 2002). Through its military might and under the ideological banner of GWOT US advanced its imperial project. It ignored the root cause of terrorism and in fact declared, “the difficulty of eradicating terrorism arises from its fundamental causes which are poverty, alienation, disaffection and ethnic hatreds deeply rooted in history” (George Tenet, CIA director; 2000). Americans believed that Muslims “own history, backwardness, poverty and cultural resentment causes terrorism” (Mann; 2003). So US did not respond 9-11 through non-violent ways nor through diplomatic channels rather, it, declared ‘war’ and that also of a ‘global’ kind. Terms like ‘global’ and ‘war’ was deliberately chosen. US responded by launching an air and ground attacks against the Taliban government in Afghanistan in the name of self defense and justified its intervention for three purposes, “first to remove ...Taliban that had provided a safe haven for Osama bin Laden’s terrorist organization; second to cripple the capacity of al-Qaeda to strike again; and third to send a clear signal to other governments that similar attacks would be visited on them were they to provide a base for global terrorism” (Wheeler; 2004). According to US government the reason for invasion of Iraq was the presence of ‘weapon of mass destructions’. Later this argument was found baseless and government saved its face through other arguments such as in the name of ‘regime change’, protecting ‘human rights’, saving world and upholding liberty and so on. US could do such thing because of two reasons. First there is a conception of “US Exceptionalism” – the belief that the US is the greatest and the best of all societies and even its imperialistic approach is for the greater good of the world (Vanaik; 2007). This US exceptionalism takes the form of ‘universalism’, under which its imperial acts and interests get hidden and what remains visible is US benign approach towards making a just world. Second reason is the passivity of general public towards politics. This passivity is a “boon to elites in domestic politics but a serious handicap for its external imperial ambitions so in order to achieve an aroused nationalism US government earlier used ideological banners like ‘defending the free world against Communist threat’ and now they use ‘GWOT’ through which they can prevent the enemy of US from acquiring WMDs” (Vanaik; 2007).

As we know, US is no longer remains economically superpower or politically unquestionable (which is evident in the case of Iraq), so it devoted all its energy and effort in its military campaign which also turned out a disaster. This will be clear in our next section. Thus, for the

creation of an informal and indirect global empire US used its military strength and ‘GWOT’ as an ideological banner.

The last part of this paper tries to explore the outcomes, which ‘terrorism’ and ‘counter-terrorism’ produced through political violence. It is estimated that between 14000 and 34000 afghan civilians lost their lives including women and children, since the US led war started. Many of the innocent peoples, who had nothing to do with 9-11 faced night-raids, abduction, rapes and torture by US soldiers. In Iraq the situation is more dangerous. A situation of civil war has emerged and the number of people killed is in thousands. Number of people killed in Iraq after US invasion varies from one source to another. According to ‘Iraq Family Health Survey’, the number of total deaths is around 151,000. Whereas, ‘Lancet’ survey predicts 601,027 violent deaths, out of 654,965 excess deaths. Opinion Research Business Survey predicts 1,033,000 deaths in Iraq from March 2003 to August 2007. Associated Press declares 110,600 deaths from the period March 2003 to April 2009. Wiki leaks release of classified document reveals 109,032 deaths from Jan 2004 to October 2009. Whatever number one may believe but one cannot ignore the fact that people are dying. This U.S led global war on terror has resulted a in human catastrophe whereby people from both the sides have lost their lives. Innocent people including women and children are caught in between this mindless warfare. Thousands of US soldiers killed in these operations. More than 500 innocent people killed in Pakistan because of US ‘drone attack’ and so on.

A peculiar incident started after US invasion of Iraq. Before the occupation by the US, Iraq had no suicide terrorist attack in its history. Robert Pappé’s works highlights it and he argues that there is no link between Islam and suicide attack in fact the world leader in suicide attack has always been LTTE. The volunteers against the sustained and brutal occupation of foreigners always carried out suicide attacks. In fact two third attacks are from the countries where the US has stationed large troop contingents. Let us analyze this example; there were 51 suicide attacks in Lebanon between 1982-86. However as soon as US withdrew its troops from there, the world witnessed no suicide attacks in Lebanon. In Iraq after the US invasion suddenly there were series of suicide terrorist attacks occurred, a country which had no history of suicide attack witnessed 20 in 2003, 48 in 2004 and over 50 in first five months of 2005 which is continuing till date.

The cost of ‘Global War on Terror’ is following. This report analyzes war funding for the Defense Department and tracks funding for USAID and VA Medical funding. Based on DOD

estimates and budget submissions, the cumulative total for funds appropriated from the 9/11 attacks through the FY2010 Supplemental Appropriations Acts for DOD, State/USAID and VA for medical costs for the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and enhanced security is \$1,121 billion including: □\$751 billion for Iraq; □\$336 billion for Afghanistan; □\$29 billion for enhanced security; and \$6 billion unallocated. Of this total, 67% is for Iraq, 30% for Afghanistan, 3% for enhanced security and 1/2% is unallocated. Almost all of the funding for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) is for Afghanistan (Belasco; 2010).

What we can conclude from above discussion is the sheer wastage of resources and a mindless approach towards global terrorism. The whole US imperial project resulted in chaos, death and horror. US is as responsible as non state actors like Taliban, for such human tragedy. As Walzer argues, “when we judge the unintended killing of civilians, we need to know how these civilians came to be in a battle zone in the first place” (Walzer; 1978). No doubt ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ was the product of 9-11, but what must be rejected is Rumsfeld’s assertion that

responsibility for the death of Afghan and Iraqi civilians rests solely with the terrorists and their supporters. One cannot ignore the fact that US planes flew on missions day after day with political, military leaders knowing well that civilian deaths were foreseeable. It means that US decision-makers must also accept responsibility for this suffering. Deaths of innocent civilians were declared as unintended and justified it in the name of ‘just war’, supreme emergency or the realist doctrine of war and ‘state-survival’. But what is crucial here is that “none of these justifications absolve US political and military leaders of their responsibility to protect civilians endangered by the war against terrorism” (Wheeler; 2004). So we should oppose and expose the US manipulation of the discourse on terrorism for their informal empire project. We must also create the condition whereby international terrorism will diminish by addressing the root cause of terrorism and by addressing the problem of state- terrorism specifically. International terrorist acts done by whosoever must be seen as a crime against humanity. There is also an immediate need for restructure the international norms and institutions so that perpetrators should be prosecuted. A thought should be given to strengthen the International Criminal Court and state actor should also be brought to justice. A just and peaceful world can only be established through discussion, negotiation and by addressing the root cause of the problem and not through violence.

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