

# Countering global terrorism

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



Terrorism is defined by the U. S. Department of Defense as the calculated or predetermined use of violence or threat of violence with the intention of inflicting fear so as to intimidate governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are mainly social, religious or political. It is a critical issue that needs to be addressed effectively as its consequences are many and harmful. Terrorism is mostly triggered by radical ideologies of hatred, oppression and revenge. Fighting global terrorism is not just about disarmament but it is a war on conflicting ideas or views.

The US has been very keen in protecting her citizens especially after the 911 attacks that shook the whole world. It encourages or rather promotes freedom and human dignity as an effort of reducing the chances of people indulging in perverse ideologies. The root causes of terrorism are varied and they depend on one's stand whereby the causes cited by the victims of terror for instance the US are different from those cited by the perpetrators. The US is categorical that its enemies exploit Islam to air their oppressive and hate ideologies.

(National strategy for combating terrorism). Terrorists on the other hand argue that the US and other western powers are the major causes of the problems facing the Muslim world as a whole. In indulging in terror activities they aim at eradicating the western dominance and to ensure that Islam remains intact. The US however views this school of thought as a means of paving way for additional attacks not only to the US but to its supporters or allies too. They argue that their main aim is to exploit the major disparities between the Muslim and the non Muslim and take full control.

The declaration of Jihads or holy wars to those with divergent ideologies is a clear indication of how Islam is exploited to spread radical ideologies. (Chase A, 2004). The root causes can be categorized as economical, social, demographic, political as well as cultural. Poverty is cited by some as a cause of terrorism but it is surrounded by divergent views. It can be opposed by the fact that most terrorists involved in the 9/11 attacks were from the middle class and in fact Osama bin Laden the leader was from an affluent upbringing. The war in Iraq was also viewed as a cause for terrorism.

This ideology can be dismissed by the fact that way before the US had deposed the Saddam Hussein's regime terrorist plans to attack were being carried out. (National strategy for combating terrorism). Citing the war on Iraq according to the US is therefore a way of justifying terrorism rather than a cause of terrorism. Terrorism is also not due to the Israeli- Palestine issues as plans for the 9/11 attack started in the 1990s when peace talks were being carried out. Political alienation according to the US is a key factor promoting terrorism.

In most cases the leaders of terror gangs recruit members from the states where there is minimal freedom of speech. Democracy is undermined and it becomes difficult to bring about change. (National strategy for combating terrorism). Such people are easy targets as they are very vulnerable to manipulation by those with violent and destructive ideologies. Terrorists are able to convince such people that the causes of all their problems are due to the western dominance. Past grievances and perceived injustices are made fresh in their minds making them internalize revenge motives.

The use of propaganda, miscommunication and conspiracy theories keep the terrorism spirit alive in such people's hearts. Bjorgo in the Root Causes of Terrorism explains how terrorism is a by product of a long process of radicalization in the process or preparation for extreme acts. It takes time before terrorists can actually act. Although there are great economic and social injustices in most Arab countries with a reputation of producing terrorists, this factor has never been cited as a cause for the attacks. It therefore suffices to say that the social and economic injustices in the Arab world do not trigger terrorism.

Illiteracy can also be cited as a cause of terrorism but it has been established that despite the rise in the literacy levels in the Arab world terrorism has increased. (Bjorgo T, 2005). This could be attributed to the fact that as people become more educated they can better understand the political, social and economic ills surrounding them and can therefore react accordingly. The notion that democracy would ensure the effective elimination or abolition of terrorism is not only an understatement but a great misconception. This is attributed to the fact that not all democracies are equally inclusive or respect the rights of the minorities.

(Club De Madrid, 2005). In cases where the minorities feel that they are excluded from the main stream they can join hands to express their grievances which can be through radical means. Liberal democracies ensure that there is freedom of speech as well as tolerance of dissent which can be exploited for terrorist activities. Separatism, left wing and right wing extremism as well as religions are factors that can trigger terrorism in democratic countries. Terrorism within a democracy is affected by the level

or degree of social, ethnic and political heterogeneity of the state in question.

The more a society is divided the higher or greater the risk of terrorism. Transitional or new democracies are also at a greater risk of experiencing terrorism due to the fact that their authorities may not have gained popularity to be strong enough. In areas where a legacy of oppression is still fresh in people's minds the chances of registering terror attacks are high. Countries like Chile, Argentina, Spain, and Algeria are good examples of how terrorism affects the effective transition into democracies. (Club De Madrid, 2005). Weak states are more susceptible to terrorism as they can easily become hosts for radical conspiracies.

States with prolonged civil conflicts and instability precipitate high numbers of refugees who seek shelter in other states and terrorists can use this to find shelter. Club De Madrid in the International Summit on democracy, terrorism and security, Addressing the causes of terrorism explain how democratic states practicing stable democracies have minimal chances of terrorism from within but they risk terror attacks from without. Their actions abroad are monitored by many and they may trigger opposition which can be magnified through terror attacks.

Actions that are viewed by other states as lacking International legitimacy can be considered as unjust and the radicals may view violent means as an appropriate tool to respond. (Club De Madrid, 2005). The US seems to have lost direction in preventing future attacks especially from the Arab or Muslim world. The use of war as an effort of curbing terrorism is not an effective approach. The war led to the death of many innocent soldiers as well as

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Iraqis and this creates room for the emergence of terror gangs to show their discontentment. The US ought to respect the sovereignty of other countries and stop imposing leaders on them.

It should leave the independent states to carry out their operations independently instead of influencing the decisions they take especially regarding foreign policies. It should also stop playing double standards by applying the bill of rights without discrimination. (Rogers P, 2005). Should any terrorist be arrested they ought to undergo trial before they are arrested and should not be imprisoned before it is carried out. In my opinion, the US should stop the war in Iraq and try to address the allegations of their dominance and its effect on the people.

Using forceful means may work in suppressing their enemies but this would not be successful in the long run. The US ought to let the people enjoy their freedom by exercising what they feel is best for them. What they think is best for the Arab world may not be necessarily be the best for them given the fact that the two regions are different in many aspects. The US has not been very effective in the fight against terrorism as there are instances where terrorists have been successful in their deeds without the US knowledge. Terrorists have been able to move with the times where they have taken advantage of globalization in their operations.

They have been able to use the new media like the Internet to recruit new members, train them, seek funds as well as spread their propaganda messages without leaving any mark behind that can lead to their location. The use of the Internet has an added advantage in the sense that it is global in scale, easy to access, less regulated and less costly. The new media has

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therefore created a barrier in the successful fight against terrorism. (Hamm M, 2005). Terror gangs have become less centralized making it hard for the US to locate and eliminate them.

Again, not all states in the world are US allies and some do not support their ideologies. Instead some find the causes of terror gangs justified and go the extra mile of supporting them by sponsoring their activities abroad as well as harboring them in their countries. Good examples of such countries are Syria and Iran. The strategies carried out by the US are not without criticism from their enemies. The war in Iraq is one strategy that has been used by some as a political weapon where it is cited as a reason behind the persistent terror attacks.

In the fight against terrorism, military power, diplomatic, financial intelligence and law enforcement agencies activities are used. Denying terrorist the access to important tools or equipment needed to survive is a way of paralyzing their undertakings. When terrorists are denied finances and weapons they cannot carry out their activities effectively. The current counterterrorism strategies have been moderately effective in fighting terrorism. Advancing democracies is mostly cited as a way of fighting terrorism.

The US cites this as a strong point in the fight against terrorism based on the argument that the lack of open systems where people can air their views is a reason behind the emergence of violent ideologies. Another approach used is the prevention of future attacks by terror gangs or networks. Terror networks are also denied the support of rogue states as well as the control of states that they are likely to use as a base for their terror activities. The US has also

laid foundations to build the institutions and structures that are needed to fight terrorism until the bitter yet successful end.

Other nations have been sensitized on the need to join hands in the global war against terrorism to a greater level where it is more than ensuring that justice prevails by bringing to justice the perpetrators of the 911 attack. These efforts have seen some nations change from being part of the problem to being part of the solution. (National strategy for combating terrorism). The US Patriotic Act has made a remarkable difference in counterterrorism efforts. The formation of the counter terrorism fund had a positive effect in ensuring that the Department of Justice had the required finances to promote their effectiveness and efficiency.

(US Department of Justice, 2004). The Act faces much criticism from those who view it as a way of compromising with their civil liberties. However, the Bush administration has through the act have been able to increase their ability of sharing intelligent information which have been used effectively in the fight against terrorism. Laws have been updated to incorporate the changes brought about by technology. Increased surveillance has enabled the authorities to react swiftly to deter terror attacks.

Surveillance in the public places which tend to be targets by most terrorists discourages them from perpetrating their heinous acts. (Michaels W, 2002). According to Mark Hamm's report on Crimes Committed by Terrorist Groups it is clear that most terrorists are likely to be involved in moneylaundering, bank robberies, theft of credit cards and document counterfeiting in trying to satisfy their needs for existence. The law enforcement officials can hinder



the effectiveness of terror gangs by simply being keen in preventing the crimes that promote their survival.

Curbing what may seem normal criminal activities may have spill over effects in the fight against global terrorism. It is appropriate that the US government invests in intensive research on the causes, effects and means of eradicating terrorism. The research would provide accurate information and the approach used to address terrorism would also be accurate. (Hamm M, 2005). Government officials in their immigration departments must also be keen in their operations. Terrorists must gain access to the areas they want to attack and if this is denied the chances of them committing their acts are minimized.

Through their routine work, immigrant officials may deter terrorism in the sense that they can identify counterfeit documents of potential terrorists and deal with them before it is too late. (Hamm M, 2005). Routine border inspection can also identify terrorists and thus hinder their effective operations. Local police officers through their routine activities can curb terrorism. The media can play a significant role in determining the success of the efforts or policies adopted to fight terrorism. Media bias can have a negative effect and make the policies unpopular.

A positive effect can be created if the media is willing to support the set policies. If the media intentionally ignored the vital information when informing the people of what the government is doing to fight terrorism then the policies might not be supported by many. The information created by the media can also be confusing or misleading paving way for criticism and consequently lowering the efforts made to ensure the success of ' war on

terrorism'. The media has been used by terrorists to show the masses that they still exist. This is clearly evident in the self-declaration of international terrorists that they intend to strike.

(National strategy for combating terrorism). This way their supporters and sympathizers are motivated as they can see that the battle is not over. Law enforcement agents must cooperate if the war on terrorism is to be successful. Effective communication must be enhanced so that the fight against terrorism is successful. With combined resources, expertise and intelligence then terror acts would be effectively abolished. The future war on terror is not bliss. Using war to prevent terror attacks has not restored peace and security and instead terror and grief has filled across the Arab world for instance in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Many innocent civilians have lost their lives courtesy of the US policies. The remnants of the war can easily collude and wage war against the US as a way of revenge for their loss. The US is laying grounds for fundamentalism and extremism by sowing seeds of hatred which will grow into fruits of a new form of terrorism. (Daniel B and Simon S, 2005). The US should change its strategies as the existing ones are a total failure. Instead of putting the lives of many people on the spot the US ought to explore oil reserves in her soil or better still use alternative sources of energy if it feels threatened by the oil producing countries.

Reducing its dependence on the Arab oil producing countries would be one way of their not wanting to poke their noses into the affairs of the Middle East as a whole. The use of diplomacy would also have yielded better results than the use of military force. War brought about the destruction of the

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country's economy creating loopholes for bitter feelings that can be expressed through terror attacks. The US is slowly but surely losing its popularity across the globe. Countries that supported their policies have changed their stand.

This has been attributed to the fact that some think the US war in Iraq is not just a war on terrorism but a way of ensuring their control over the oil producing countries and consequently maintaining her status quo as a world super power. Another major reason for reduced support is the fact that it has failed to honor the Geneva conventions. It is known for not respecting the International laws by the imprisonment of suspects without trial as well as the torturing of others. (Rogers P. 2005). Critics also argue that thorough investigations were not carried out before the termination of the Saddam Hussein regime was terminated.

Proper establishment that he had links with the al Qaeda and that he produced weapons of mass destruction ought to have been done before he was destroyed. The US is also accused of playing double standards where it supports oppressive and undemocratic nations like Palestine probably because by doing so it is at a better position. It should address the underlying problems affecting the developing countries. By doing so the developing nations would stop viewing them as being out to dominate them. It is illogical to argue that at one point in time terrorism will be a resolved issue.

As long as the US policies are not approved or readily accepted by all and there is the existence of extremists then terrorism is here to stay. The rise of left wing terrorists also increases the extent to which domestic terrorism

poses a threat to USA. These include extremists like the animal rights and environmental extremists. (Hamm M, 2005). According to my opinion the future position in the 'War on global terrorism' will be negative or unsuccessful. The strategies that it is using work to create more enemies and chances are that in the year 2015 these enemies will collude and react to have their voice heard by the whole world.

Trying to control the Islam world will not yield a positive effect on the Muslim countries. Terrorists will have a strong point to motivate people to indulge in terror gangs. The world will become a more dangerous place to live in instead of becoming a haven of peace. The reduced cooperation with other countries to back the US policies is also a worrying fact as far as the global war on terrorism is concerned. Countries opposing the US policies increase the spirit of anti-Americanism and they can magnify their displeasure by supporting the terror gangs. References: Alston Chase. 2004.

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