War On Terror: Clash Of Civilizations Or Civilization Versus Chaos?

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➔ **Clash of Civilizations: Really?**

o *Islamic countries are part of the War on Terror*

- "Coalition of the Willing" led by the United States included many Muslim-majority countries, viz. Azerbaijan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Turkey, Uzbekistan; but France and Germany, successor states of the Holy Roman Empire and Reformation, opposed it.
- There are tangible examples of how cooperation between the Islamic world and the West has in fact increased post 9/11. Key Muslim states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan supported the US-led coalition in its efforts to topple Afghanistan's Taliban rulers and uproot al-Qaeda. In June 2002, Turkey took command of the International Security Assistance Force, the multinational peacekeeping unit in Afghanistan. Pakistan is a big part of the war on terror support network. The world's largest Muslim country, Indonesia, wanted to be part of the coalition but the US decided against it. Other Muslim countries such as Morocco and Malaysia have cooperated with US efforts to combat al-Qaeda elsewhere.

o *Democracy and Islam are not incompatible*

- All religions need reform at different phases in their evolution. Christianity experienced this dilemma through the debate on Trinity in the 4th century and through wars in the 16th and 17th centuries. Hinduism faced this dilemma between the 12th to 14th century and again from the 17th to 19th century.
- Democracy, the sovereignty of states and the separation of state from religion are universal values shared by more than half of the population belonging to different religions and cultures.
- The majority of the world's 1.4 billion Muslims live in democratically elected regimes. This includes the large population of Muslims in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Turkey, India, and Nigeria, as well as the Muslim minorities that participate in the democratic life of Western Europe and North America.
- Many live in restricted democracies of Pakistan, Tunisia, Egypt, Tajikistan and Yemen.
- Many Gulf countries are experiencing democratic ferment or democratization
    - Bahrain, where there has been a movement toward constitutional monarchy and the devolution of some power toward a democratically accountable government.
    - Qatar has shown signs of moving in the direction of constitutional monarchy, and a new draft constitution has been prepared.
    - Jordan is a constitutional monarchy.
- Indonesia's two largest Islamic organizations Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah, played an important role in Indonesia's successful transition to democracy.

Total World Population	6313.78 million
Total Muslim Population	1484.71 million (23.52% of the total world population)
Muslim Population living in Democracies (Countries with Muslims constituting 50% or more of the population or with 10 million or more Muslims)	682.56 million (46% of the total Muslim population)
Expatriates in North America	6.60 million
Expatriates in Europe	23.54 million
Muslim Diaspora in many other Smaller Democratic Countries	Not known
Total Muslim Population living in Democracies	712.70 million (48% of the total Muslim population)
Total Muslim Population in Restricted Democracies	285.70 million (19.2% of the total Muslim population)
Total Muslim Population in Liberal Monarchies	45.00 million appr
Total Muslim Population in Liberal Environment	> 1043.40 million (>70.3% of the total Muslim population)
Muslim Authoritarian Countries + Authoritarian Countries with High Muslim Population	372.61 million (25% of the total Muslim population)

Population figures are as of 2003

- Thus, nearly 48% of the world's Muslim population live in democracies as against the fact that at least 50% of the non-Muslim population of the world chooses to live in non-democratic societies.
- In Islamic countries with repressive regimes, the democratic deficit forces people to rally around the mosque, as mosque is the only vehicle that the regimes cannot ban. The mosque, which is a religious as well as a social institution, provides the only forum to discuss and formulate strategies against the rulers. The successful build-up of Iranian revolution around the clergy in the 1970s can be attributed to this fact.

o *Anti-Americanism is a function of American support to local regimes*

- Many Islamic movements are anti-Western because the governments they oppose are pro-Western. The US support for repressive Arab regimes have led Muslims to perceive it as the abettor to their repressors. The fact that extremists in Nepal, Thailand or India, where the US is not sponsoring but merely supporting the regime, do not target the US, proves this.
- US support for Israel is also frequently cited as a source of anti-Americanism in the Islamic community.
- Also, the radicals see the US military presence in some Islamic countries and the establishment of American puppet regimes as US moves to establish hegemony.

o *Terrorism cannot be linked to any religion*

- There is no denying the fact that some of the most dreaded terrorist groups have a stated objective of establishing an Islamic *Ummah* (Arabic for the "Muslim community"). Groups that want to promote rule of Islam are Al Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).
- Other Islamic groups include:
  - Nationalist groups – Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Abu Sayyaf Group, Free Aceh Movement, Movsar Barayev Gang, Riyadh- us-Saliheym Martyrs Brigade, Dagestan Liberation Army, Islamic Shashantantra Andolon etc; or
  - Palestinian groups – HAMAS, Al Fatah, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Palestine Islamic Jihad.
- All this, however, should not suggest some kind of inexorable link between Islam and terrorism. Within Islamic groups, not all are radical. For example, Uighur movement, which has launched 260 attacks in China from 1990-2003 resulting in 170 deaths, is not a radical Islamic group. It is predominantly Sufi and does not believe in conservative Islam. Its unification point is the ethnic cause of Uighurs. Similarly, Hizb-ut Tahrir, a major force in Central Asia, does not believe in using violence.
- There are many non-Islamic terrorist groups in the most dreaded list like – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), People's War Group, Basque Fatherland and Liberty, etc. There also are many terrorist groups that propagate issues such as like environmentalism, animal rights, abortion etc.
- Political motivation and religious overlap is not a ubiquitous phenomenon. According to the Rand-MITP database, out of 91 terrorist attacks in the US from 1997 to 2004, 55 have been conducted by the Earth Liberation Front, the Animal Liberation Front and their associates – American groups that firmly believe in democracy and have nothing to do with Islam. Free Aceh Movement has repeatedly claimed that they are not an Islamic group and they have consciously made an effort to stay away from Al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah.
- According to the MIPT database maintained by RAND Corporation, 331 terror groups executed 7757 attacks from 1999-2004. Out of them, 12 groups are most dreaded – they are involved in more than 50 attacks in the last 2 years or causing more than 1000 casualties in the last 5 years or have over 10,000 armed combatants. Out of these 12 groups, 4 are involved with secular non-Islamic ideological causes, 4 are fighting for the Palestinian cause and only 4 have an objective of establishing global Islamic order.
- According to the same database, 31 organisations were involved in more than 10 attacks in the last 2 years, or more than 100 casualties in the last 5 years. Out of them 14 had something to do with an Islamic cause or membership and 17 had nothing to do with the Islamic world.

Classification of 12 most dreaded terrorist groups by their objectives

Secular	Palestinian	Global Islamic Jihad
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	*Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamia/*Islamic Resistance Movement	Jaish-e-Mohammed
Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)/ United People's Front	Al-Fatah	Lashkar-e-Taiba
People's War Group	The Palestine Islamic Jihad	Jemaah Islamiyah
Basque Fatherland and Liberty / *Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna*	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine	Al Qaeda
Maoist Communist Center of India/ Maoist Communist Center		

Source: MITP Database

- While Al-Qaeda, its affiliates and some other terrorist groups have a vision of creating *Ummah*, and though the World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders considers a war between the *Ummah* and the Christian and Jewish West inevitable; this extremist form of Islam cannot be considered as representative of the religion and its one billion plus followers.
- Most Muslims do not ascribe to the Al Qaeda's interpretation of Islam, and are extremely upset with the extremist's misappropriation of their faith.
- Islamist terrorists strike moderate Islam and moderate Muslim countries as much as it strikes the West. Al Qaeda strikes all Islamic governments that it perceives as "godless".
- These facts demonstrate that terrorism is not perpetuated by any one religion, but is pursued by various groups belonging to different cultures and religions.

➔ **War on Terror or Civilizational Chaos?**

Assessment of the War on Terror

Yes	But
Traditional rivals – US, Russia, China – are engaged in strategic cooperation, which is healthy for global political stability.	Global politics are polarised on the basis of new fault-lines.

Financial regulators around the world have established cooperation.	The rate of success in freezing terrorist finance has come down from $100 million in 2001 to $25 million in 2002 to $11 million in 2003, and the tracking of havala, the main channel for terrorist financing, has been more or less given up in 2004.
The freezing of $136 million in terrorist funds is a significant achievement.	The global GTP (Gross Terror-economy Product) exceeds $10,000 million.
About 75% of Al Qaeda's original membership has been destroyed.	Al Qaeda is now a venture capital agency of terrorism and hence what happens to it is of little relevance, as operational responsibilities are carried by 20 to 30 different organisations
The second rung of Al Qaeda's leadership is in jail.	The top layer of Al Qaeda's leadership is out.
After 9/11, prospects of another, similar attack on US homeland are slim.	Since 9/11, terrorists have attacked a variety of targets ranging from Morocco to Nepal, India to Indonesia, and Spain to Saudi Arabia; US authorities have been worried enough to hinder trans-Atlantic air traffic.
The moderate government of Hamid Karzai has been established in Afghanistan.	The reign of Karzai government is limited only to Kabul and the surrounding areas.
Iraq has been liberated from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussain.	Most media reports suggest that Iraqi people believe that their country is occupied by foreign forces, leading them to kill almost 1400 US and allied forces by December 2004.
Central Asia has been freed from terrorism with complete destruction of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).	New local groups have emerged in Central Asia.
Saudi Arabia is cooperating with the US intelligence agencies in combating terrorism.	US troops have had to pull out of Saudi Arabia and terrorist attacks within Saudi Arabia have become frequent in 2004, for the first time in Saudi history.
There is cooperation between many countries to take tough action against terror groups.	- US allies are using the war to either crack down on the local terrorist groups by giving them international connections – like the way China came up with a nexus between Al Qaeda and the Uighurs; or to protect certain terrorist groups operating on their soil – the way Pakistan is doing with Let and JeM. - There is abuse of human dignity in some countries in the name of counter-terrorism, given the absence of checks and balances and judicial review.

o *One-dimensional and selective approach: Guarantee of chaos*

- A selective approach, that narrowly concentrates on Al Qaeda, and ignores other terrorist groups around the world, has led to the strengthening of other terrorist organisations, the formation of new groups, and deployment of new tactics by the international terrorist network. Islamic groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and HUJI in Pakistan have flourished post 9/11, even though their stated objective is to create a global Islamic state based on Shariah, in place of the present system of states based on sovereign constitutions. These organisations, though formally banned, have their assets and workforce intact. Their recruitment and fund-raising drives are in full swing despite of the war on terror.
- Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and HUJI have emerged as the likely successors of Al Qaeda as the most dreaded terrorist groups. The growth of these groups post 9/11 provides a perfect example of the superficiality of the War on Terror. Despite being banned by the government, LeT still has more than 500 offices, nearly 100,000 workers, and a large number of recruitment centres across the country. It has 2200 camps to provide armed training and continues to hold public rallies, conferences and recruitment drives. Similarly, HUJI's network is spread through 24 countries including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Chechnya, Xinjiang in China, Uzbekistan, Burma, Tajikistan, Iran, Fiji, Malaysia, USA, Middle East, Ireland, UK, Philippines and parts of Africa. Within Pakistan, its network is spread over 40 districts despite the ban.
- Pakistan, a major US ally in the War on Terror has carried out major military operations to flush out Al Qaeda and Taliban remnants from its territory, and has succeeded in killing or capturing more than 600 Al Qaeda operatives. It has also banned various indigenous terrorist outfits. However, the effectiveness of such a ban is questionable and can be gauged from the aforementioned examples. Thus, the issue of state sponsorship of terrorism is not dealt with emphatically, especially if the state in question is an US ally in its hunt for Al Qaeda and Taliban.
- Linkages between terrorist groups, organised crime and drug trade reinforces each other. Poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has gone up from 200 tonnes in 2001 to about 3600 tonnes in 2003 and 4200 tonnes in 2004. The drug money not only goes to the warlords and Taliban in Afghanistan, but is also channelled into Kashmir, Iraq and Palestine. The UN High Level Panel in its report has urged the member states to sign/ratify the Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime and its three Protocols.
- The US State Department designates foreign terrorist organisations. However, they have a selective approach on basis of their foreign policy. Similarly, UK Home Office lists only those groups that affect UK interests.
- The United States attacked a relatively weak Afghanistan and Iraq, but continues to cajole nuclear-armed nations involved in nuclear proliferation and terrorism. In combating states that are weak and negotiating with those with a degree of strength, the US actually establishes that force matters more than freedom.
- Billions of dollars spent on combating terror since 9/11 could not prevent M-11.

- *Changing nature of terrorism*

  - The war on Afghanistan has led to the transformation of a single dominant actor (Al Qaeda) to a widespread network, whereby Al Qaeda undertakes strategic planning and fund raising functions and contracts operational tasks to 50 odd disparate affiliates. Thus, after losing their safe haven in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda's force has decreased to about 1000 members, but its network has grown exponentially. For example, Al Zarqawi is not a member of Al Qaeda but is affiliated with it; similarly many other terrorist organisations like Egyptian Islamic Jihad or HUJI are Al Qaeda affiliates. These affiliates are autonomous bodies and may not subscribe to Al Qaeda's larger ideology of creating *Ummah*. However, they work together whenever their interests and targets overlap.
  - The emergence of mass organizations of terror with deep social roots in business and social welfare activities, have ensured unlimited supply of funds and manpower, and a potential to take over the societies and states in which they operate. LeT serves as a good example. LeT conducts social welfare activities for the general public in Pakistan and runs 3 hospitals, 34 dispensaries, fixed medical camps, mobile medical camps, 11 ambulance services, 150 model schools and a University. It also runs a large publishing empire to spread its ideology to the vast population. These social activities serve as a vast catchment area for consistent recruitment. Similarly, HAMAS and Hezbollah are involved in a lot of community activities.
  - An interesting trend emerging amongst the terrorist groups is to transcend ideological affinities and seek alliances with other groups and thus broaden their network and reach.
  - The neglect of economic development due to an obsession with security issues, resulting in disparities, stagnation, unemployment, search for alternative livelihood including crime and terrorism and a still greater obsession of states with security issues has led to colossal unemployment problems in the developing world. There are 10 million unemployed young men in the age group of 15-35 years in Southwest Asian countries, and about 10-20 million unemployed young men from the countries in Southeast Asia and East and West Africa. Terrorists are already promoting extremism as an ideology in Southwest Asia and there are indications that the stage is being set in Southeast Asia, as well as East and West Africa for the promotion of extremist thinking in the next few years. This pool of unemployed youth could serve as a massive supply line of manpower to the extremist groups. This could only be averted by facilitating large-scale capacity building of young people in developing countries to enable them to deal with the demands of the modern economy, and by creating decent work opportunities for them.
  - The changing nature of terrorism is leading to negative transformation of the society. We need to have positive transformation of society to counter it.

- *New fault lines*

  - The willingness of the United States, and potentially other states, to use force at their will, without reference to multilateral institutions and agreements, risking the life of millions of citizens in the targeted countries. Thus, the extremist strategic thinkers from the dominant states, as well as from terrorist groups claim the right to use illegitimate force in the name of their respective values, but in reality create conditions whereby force triumphs over justice and freedom.
  - US war on Iraq led to the loss of two major Islamic countries – Iraq and Iran alienating a combined Muslim population of 66 million. Iraq is a cause of worry now more than it was under the Saddam regime because of the proliferation of extremism in the country. Iran, which was on side of moderates till December 2002, is also a potential cause of worry. Because of the US war on Iraq, Iranians have started feeling insecure, and their insecurity is being fuelled by the radical elements from within and outside.
  - In many parts of the world, radical Islamic groups are succeeding in giving religious overtones to resistance movements. For example, ULFA in Northeast India is a purely ethnic movement. Of late, HUJI, with the support of Pakistani and Bangladeshi intelligence agencies, has succeeded in penetrating the ULFA network. ULFA is now acquiring new allies transcending ideological affinities, thereby causing a shift in the nature of ULFA terrorism from purely ethnic to radical Islamic. Allegations of Al Qaeda-ETA nexus behind M-11 also support this. Similarly, in the case of Uighurs and the Hizb-ut Tahrir, there is a high likelihood of these Sufi Islamic groups lapsing into radical Islam in the face of repression at the hand of the respective State governments.
  - International Atomic Energy Agency has reported 18 incidents of the smuggling of enriched uranium and plutonium in the decade from 1993 to 2003, and this was before the AQ Khan network was exposed!

➔ **Solutions: Counter Terrorism without the Clash of Civilizations**

- *Premise*

  - The counter terrorism measures should shift from the general to the specific; from defining terrorism to defining terrorist acts and motives.
  - The UN High-Level Panel On Threats, Challenges, and Change has provided the definition of terrorist acts as any acts of violence against non-combatants or civilians irrespective of the cause, and the definition can be improvised further. But this definition will only help to maintain a list of terrorist groups. For addressing the problem of terrorism, one needs to pay attention to the motives of such groups. Thus, there should be a comprehensive list of terrorist groups based on the definition of acts of terror and then there should be a sub list based on the motives of these groups.

- *Motives*

    1. ***Groups striving to dismantle the State system*** – Groups which intend to dismantle the system of State, rescind the separation of the Church and the State and create a global Islamic *Ummah.* These groups believe that the sovereignty lies with Allah and that Allah should rule directly over the people through His clergy.
    Examples: Al Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba, HUJI, Jemaah Islamiyah, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia, The World Islamic Front against the Jews and Crusaders
    2. ***Groups striving to destruct a State*** – These groups seek complete destruction of a particular State, which they perceive as their enemy. Examples: HAMAS, Hezbollah, Abu Nidal Organisation
    3. ***Groups striving to create a theocratic State*** – These groups seek the creation of a theocratic state in their own countries.
    Examples: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Al Muanah
    4. ***Revolutionary groups*** – Dedicated to the taking over of the State, overthrowing an established regime, and then replacing it with a new political or social structure.
    Examples: Communist Partly of Nepal (Maoist), Free Vietnam Movement, Cambodian Freedom Fighters, Free Democratic People's Government of Laos
    5. ***Secessionist groups*** – Secessionist groups seek separation from existing entities through independence, political autonomy, or religious freedom or domination.
    Examples: Chechnya-based terrorist organisations like Riyadh- us-Saliheym Martyrs Brigade, Basque Fatherland and Liberty, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (Kashmir), Abu Sayyaf group, Free Aceh Movement, Dagestan Liberation Army, Free Papua Movement, Bersatu (Thailand)
    6. ***Groups against external occupation***
    Examples: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Al-Fatah, Palestine Islamic Jihad, Ansar al-Islam
    7. ***Groups with socio-economic objectives***
    Examples: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia, People's War Group, New People's Army
    8. ***Single Issue groups***
    Examples: Earth Liberation Front, Animal Liberation Front, etc

    (The aforementioned groups are for illustrative purpose; the list is not exhaustive)

- ***Response***

The resolution to the problem of terrorism should be specific. The solution lies in categorising terrorist groups according to their motives and devising motive-specific counter terrorism means. The long-term solution also calls for bringing about a positive transformation of the society.
    - Terrorist groups in the sub list 1, 2, 3 and 4 are not fighting against any repression or grievance, but are using terror tactics to dismantle the state system, either within a country or through out the world. These groups can be dealt with only by use of force. Terrorist groups in the sub list 5 and 6 have political grievances that require political

solutions like dialogue. New ways should be explored for promoting political and peaceful resolution of conflicts leading to the end of military occupations. Terrorist groups in the sub list 7 and 8 have socio-economic root causes and calls for transformation and structural solutions.

- New ways of promoting political and peaceful resolution of conflicts leading to the end of military occupations should be explored.
- A Global Transformation Initiative should be launched to reform education and promote tolerance and respect for all religions and ethnic groups among young people worldwide. Such an initiative should include large-scale capacity building, on the basis of equal opportunities for men and women, through exchanges and other means, to empower them to deal with the demands of the modern society.
- The Organisation of Islamic Conference should be encouraged to establish an International Shura of Islamic Scholars to determine the issue of religious sanction, or lack of it, for violent acts. Such a body should be created at the initiative of the leaders of the Islamic countries and be comprised of independent scholars, representing different streams of Islam, and not government officials. Al-Azhar, the prestigious Islamic University, has undertaken a project to put 1400 years old Islamic manuscripts online to highlight and promote toleration and moderate interpretation of religious edicts. Such projects can form the backbone of the International Shura.
- An international expert group, representing various stakeholders including the Islamic scholars, should be created for –
  - Preparing and maintaining a composite list of terror groups categorised as per their motives, on a regular basis.
  - Preparing a simultaneous listing of states that allow their intelligence agencies and other structures to provide inputs to terrorist groups in the form of bases, training, funds, arms, transit rights, advice, and organisational vehicles.

Ideally, the United Nations Security Council should constitute such an expert group. However, since the UN places onus on the member states, the experience of committees dealing UNSC Resolutions 1267 and 1373 shows that states are not willing to submit the names of terrorist groups operating from their own territories. A proposal to maintain a list of terrorist groups under UNSC Resolution 1566 was dropped in order to seek unanimous adoption. Therefore, until the Security Council reaches a level of political agreement, such an expert group could be established on an independent basis. Such independent group and its findings may not have the legal value. But this list can influence the public opinion. For instance, Transparency International Corruption Perception Index supported by the World Bank does not have any legal value, but it influences public perception on corruption. The public opinion may then force the international community to consider such a listing for collective action against such terrorist groups, leaders and their affiliates.

References

This paper is based on the analysis of several official documents. The important references are:

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