

## **<b>The fight against terrorism: An assessment </b>**

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The existing US lead war against terrorism has a birth date: September 11, 2001. The September 11 attack is considered by the US government as a landmark initiating the world fight against terrorism, initiating a new definition of terrorism, and in setting the pace for counter terrorist actions. Outside of this US determined parameters, any contradicting definitions or contexts is not accepted or even considered as part of the defined terrorist attacks or to be included within the US lead fight against terrorism. This selective approach is helping attain a particular definition regarding terrorism: *"Any attack against American or American western allies, taking place anywhere in the world, and targeting either civilians or military, and happening only after September 11, 2001 is defined as terrorism"*.

Any attack that does not fall within these parameters, even if it is targeting innocent civilians, and resulting in destroying civilian objectives and infrastructures (like the Israeli mortal attacks against Palestinian unarmed civilians and their houses) is not categorized terrorism according to the previous definition. At the same token, any attack that satisfies one of the stated parameters, even if the situation is totally different (like the case of the Palestinian resistance), is categorized immediately as a terrorist act. It is an American definition, reflecting an American vision, with specific American parameters. Such definition excludes many other acts of terrorism initiated by countries or groups who might benefit from the American definition, and escape being labelled as terrorists or their acts as terrorist acts.

Can we as people and as civilians, regardless of our nationality, and who have suffered considerably from the constant acts of terrorism over the last decades, just let go other acts of terrorism inflicted on us, simply because such acts do not fall within the American definition of terrorism, or simply because we are not included as people or group of peoples in the category of such parameters?

The uni-polar system led by the USA who is governing the world today in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, has created within a short period of time a unilateral system that tries to take the maximum advantage of the military-political and economic reality of our globe to scarf certain logic and set of principles that will govern the world for the time to come until the re-balancing of the world order, bring back the situation to the *status anti*. The declared war against terrorism is a clear reflection of such imposed American unilateral concept. While the majority of the world did sympathize with the American tragedy of September 11, still most of them have their own domestic tragedies; some of these tragedies are ongoing with no prospects for an end. In certain cases American sympathy or simple solidarity was never offered.

In this realm of events and constant mobility, one needs to reflect on the constant developments and put him/herself on a simple test, which could consist of the following questions:

Why do the world in general, and the categorized third world countries in particular (who form the population majority) hate the USA? Do they hate the people or the politics? And what are the reasons for such a hate relationship? It could become clear, if there is a minimum interest among the US administration, to the real reasons behind such an anti-American collective world attitude. What is clear enough for us all is that the US administration is not interested in finding out the real reasons, and to work them out. If it does that, it loses the real reasons behind its push for a swift action against US identified objects and targets.

The momentum being created in the aftermath of the September attacks has given the American administration a historic opportunity to settle down unclosed accounts with certain countries, and to achieve long term strategic objectives. This explains the US unilateral global attitude, the imposition of US hegemony (the case of the new UNSC resolution on Iraq), the re-shuffling of all power equations, been regional or global, drawing new regional political maps, and forcing countries to take sides against their own interest.

While no existing country for the time being has any intention to replace the hegemony of the USA as the only super power in governing the globe, for lack of the appropriate mechanism and the necessary power to do so, thus reducing the existing threat to null, still the US administration negates the constant requests to move itself from globally unpopular position of attracting new enemies and losing close friends, to a more of an accommodating position of a real world leader.

How it is possible to transform the fight against terrorism from reflecting American unilateralism into a global fight? What makes it attainable at the collective world level? There is a need for an American inclusive world policy instead of an exclusive police as is the case today. There is a need to conduct a world conference about the threat of world terrorism, to define a collectively agreed definition of what terrorism is, to enlist world support and participation in the fight against terrorism. But it requires that the US administration takes up certain corrective measures in its own global policy, thus reducing the reasons for the anti-American world feeling and attitude. It is important that in the fight against terrorism, the USA becomes the leader of the world by their choice rather than by its choice.

The September 11 attack has proved the fact that one single country can't defeat terrorism alone. It needs the support and cooperation of a network of countries to face the threat and to fight it. The threat of terrorism does not emanate from one single group or country; it enjoys the services of networking, available technology and logistical support in different hubs and transit stations.

To win over terrorism, requires using the same methods and tactics. To overcome it, requires superior intelligence and better coordination. While it is already known that world terrorism is benefiting from its own different clandestine networks, its logistical stations and available technology, still the fight against terrorism lacks having the same ingredients, with clear hesitation in taking any part in such imposed fight among the majority of the countries. While there is a constant methodology and defined objectives in terrorist approach, there is a mixture of objectives, not clearly defined by the US administration. These objectives are occasionally added, reduced or modified according to exclusive US criteria without any intended consultation with potential partners. The road to war against terrorism

is determined by the USA, without any proper explanation needed to the connectivity between the real war against terrorism and some of the US exclusively identified targets. The case of Iraq is a clear example where the US administration has failed to draw any link between the Iraqi regime and the al Qaeda, or between the regime in Bagdad and the attacks of September 11. Still the US government decided to make a detour in its effort in fighting terrorism, by focusing on a possibly attainable objective of replacing the regime in Bagdad by an American appointed regime, and thus completing another uncompleted work, which was started by President Bush the father. But what has happened to the real war against terrorism, to the Al Qaeda network around the globe, to its leader and his close associates, to the war in Afghanistan, to the attacks in Yemen and in Bali? And why the American administration is taking a time out to pursue another objective, despite its effort to still call it as its war against terrorism?

What the Axis of Evil has to do with the war against terrorism? What categorizes these countries to belong to the American described axis? Are there other candidate states to become included in the exclusive club?, and what criteria to use?. Since the axis of evil is an exclusive concept of President Bush, then he is the one to explain why such countries were included in such category? It is clear that these countries have something in common, that have belonged in previous time period to the group of extreme nationalist, religious or extreme socialist or any possible combination, always rebellious to the American lead policies or doctrine. Following this logic, one easily can predict the list of candidate countries to join the exclusive club: countries like Iran, Libya, Cuba, Ukraine, Pakistan, Serbian republic within Bosnia & Herzegovina, Syria, Somalia.

The problem with the language used or expressions repeatedly quoted by the American president in his strive to win the support of his fellowmen is the fact that they are directly linked and identified with the bible, reflecting the increasing religious influence on the president, and showing how such influence is dictating his strategy in fighting the war on terrorism. "Axis of EVIL" (as if world government today is determined through the division between the good and the evil); "If not with us, is against us" (another simplistic Christian influence); "The Crusade War"(seeing the fight between humane Christianity and the backward Islam, in reference to the Crusade war to liberate the Holy Land from Islam). To determine US domestic policies through the influence of conservative Christian preaching is something, but to determine the world classification into separating countries and groups based on conservative religious influence is something else. It is an alarming sign, endangering the minimum global stability, and turning the world order into world Christian conservative order, encouraging the anti-Christian dominance of world order to rebel, encouraging the anti-religious conservatism also to rebel, and possibly encouraging the pro-secularism, social justice and progressive policies to ally themselves in new world polar to counter rest the powers enjoyed by the USA today for all the reasons mentioned earlier.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of communism as the main enemy threatening Western democracy, analysts and politicians were referring to the need to identify a new enemy to maintain the military-political logic of the existing interest-oriented US regimes. Hollywood anticipated such urgent need when it started introducing and selling the new enemy to western democracy, first tried to sell the image of some marginal nationalistic groups in the former Soviet Empire in the form of terrorists or arms dealers, and later moved to connect them to certain totalitarian Arab regimes, which were looking to destabilize the West. Later Hollywood decided to move the Arab-Muslim character to the forefront,

with the combination of religious Zealous and terrorist mentality, intended to threaten the smooth and tranquil stability of western democracies. A programmatic campaign introducing the potential threat of Islam was underway by many influential politicians and think tanks in the USA and to a less degree in Europe, paving the way for a serious adoption of such illustration by some US congressmen who belong to the politically far right or Christian conservatism or who are manipulated by the few influential lobbying groups like AIPAC, and who in turn try to influence their respective government. During the first years of Hollywood attack on Islam, few voices came out criticizing what Hollywood was trying to portray of Islam, but strangely enough with full Administration silence. Such silence was interpreted either as an encouragement to keep the pressure, or simply reflected the real balance of power in the American political system.

The attack of September 11 offered an opportunity for these voices to confirm their previous concern, and for the government to adopt it as the new enemy of western democracy and the US. All previous hesitations by the US administration to take Islam as the new enemy was automatically eliminated after the September 11 attack, elevating political Islam as a strategic potential threat. The immediate statement of the US President after the September 11 attack to call the war against terrorism as a Crusade war was a clear spontaneous reflection of such connection in the mind of the Administration and the president in particular.

Refusing to accept a world agreed definition of terrorism, and giving him the right to define the scope of his war against terrorism to include all countries, shows the existence of a predetermined decision to go against those countries, under the title of the already imposed war against terrorism.

Today, a year after the September 11 attack, it is worth to look back and to see what has changed since then on the fight against terrorism:

Definition: No agreement. The US Administration maintains its own definition based on September 11 attacks, while world community in general calls for an international conference to agree on a global definition on terrorism.

Global Coalition: The US has failed to master a strong global coalition to fight terrorism. With the exception of the UK and Israel, the rest of the world has its own reservation about the approach, the mechanism, the definition, and the targets.

Anti-terrorism policies and laws: Most of the international and regional bodies have adopted stiff policies and laws fighting terrorism, with a world consensus regarding the need to protect the globe from the threat of terrorism.

Cooperation: Did not and won't reach the expected level by the American administration. Many countries are still hesitant to cooperate fully fearing the reaction of their people to the US military presence and control in domestic affairs, fearing the reaction of their political parties and opposition groups, and fearing the long term effect on internal political and social stability.

Anti-American sentiments: The public in many countries of the world do perceive the USA as evil, and always connect their domestic problems to American hegemony and Israeli conspiracy. Such sentiment will flourish further as a result of

the American insensitive world policy, which disregards interests and concerns of the majority of countries in the world, and which tries to impose its own political will on peoples and governments.

American unilateralism: The US administration disregards the existing world order, threatening to destabilize it, as it is clear with the case of Iraq, by threatening to go alone if there is no new American initiated UNSC resolution giving the USA the right to use force against Iraq. The American administration, even supported with the most sophisticated available weapon and the high technology, can not fight terrorism alone, much less to defeat it. It requires the support of the world to achieve the ultimate goal, and needs to convince them first that such fight is theirs too as much as it is the US. With the way how the US administration maintains the pace of events in its war against terrorism, it is difficult to envision a successful US lead world coalition.

American Double Standard: While 16 resolutions were passed on Iraq, 126 were passed on Israel; still no force was used to compel Israel to accept the implementation of these resolutions. Israeli initiated state terrorism against the Palestinian civilians, the continuation of occupation and the building of settlements are a clear violation of international and humanitarian laws, still the USA uses veto power to prevent the UNSC from reaching an agreement on new resolutions condemning Israel for its continuous occupation and atrocities committed against the Palestinian civilians and their basic infrastructure. Israel suppose to possess nuclear, chemical and biological weapons qualified as arms of mass destruction, still it is free from opening its nuclear plants for international monitoring and observation, and still enjoys the full US protection, not even to be named as a country with potential possession of such weapons.

Gains achieved in fighting terrorism: The world is dangerous as always was, and the US lead actions did not reduce the threat of terrorism globally. To the contrary, we have started to see new targeted areas with new methods, increasing the fear among the world population of the danger of terrorism but also the danger emanates from the lack of coordinated US war on terrorism.

Strength or weakness of terrorist groups: The US war on terrorism, which was initiated with the US lead war in Afghanistan did not defeat Al Qaeda group or stopped its operations, but it reduced its operational capacity and networks for the time being. Such a condition has given the Al Qaeda and other groups the time to re-organize better themselves, and to take the necessary precautions to avoid being caught and to plan better their next targeted operations.

No one can underestimate the outcome of September 11 attacks on the American public and the Administration, who were taken by surprise if not by chock when always were thinking that terrorism is happening far away, belonging to other set of countries and civilizations. No one should also underestimate the effect of terrorism everywhere, or to underestimate the need to fight it. No one can be selective about human suffering and terrorist actions. Counting casualties of terrorism never was stopped, since people new how to count. Recognizing others pain, suffering, and offering a hand to alleviate it, and looking into the roots of terrorist actions and learning the reasons behind them could help in leading the fight against terrorism.