

# *South Asia Analysis Group*

Published on *South Asia Analysis Group* (<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org>)

[Home](#) > United States Global War on Terror: Exploding the Myths

---

## **United States Global War on Terror: Exploding the Myths**

Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Mon, 02/04/2013 - 06:07

**Paper No. 5384**

**Dated 4-Feb-2013**

By Dr Subhash Kapila

The United States “Global War on Terror” launched by the United States in the wake of 9/11 Islamist terrorists’ attacks on New York and Washington marked the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and overwhelmingly determined United States strategic, foreign policy and political policy formulations, virtually to the exclusion of anything else.

Consequently, with US policies so dominated, it had a ripple effect on global and regional strategic calculi. Nowhere was the impact more deeply felt as on the Indian Sub-continent and particularly India which by US default was made to appease Pakistan Army’s strategic sensitivities so that the strategically delinquent Pakistan Army could be cajoled to serve US ends.

With Osama bi Laden liquidated after a decade of 9/11 attacks and the decade of US military embedment in Afghanistan necessitated by the so-called “Global War on Terror”, in a process of winding down, it becomes appropriate to carry out a cold and surgical analysis of United States “Global War on Terror” strategy . Was it really a “Global War on Terror”. Soon after President Obama assumed the reins of power in Washington, a re-think seems to have taken place on this term, as evident from the quote below.

“The Obama administration appears to be backing away from the phrase “Global War on Terror” a signature rhetorical legacy of his predecessor. In a memo e-mailed this week to Pentagon staff members, the Defense Department Office of Security Review noted that “this administration prefers to avoid using the term ‘Long War’ ‘Global War on Terror (GWOT)’. Please use ‘Overseas Contingency Operations’. --- Washington Post March 25 2009.

In the first flush of the stirring speeches by then US President following and his pledges to eliminate global terror with cooperation by US friends and allies, countries around the globe, including Russia and China were enthused that finally the United States had taken a rightful plunge against terrorism of all types and more specifically terrorism in the name of Islamic Jihad.

India was even more enthused having been victimised by Pakistan Army state-sponsored terrorism for a full decade prior to the events of 9/11. The euphoria was short lived for India as the United States strategy towards elimination of religious terrorism started unfolding on its doorsteps and also US pressures on India becoming heavier not in the name of fighting “Global War on Terrorism” but in the name of acquiescing to US priorities of appeasement of Pakistan Army dictates in return for military cooperation with US on operations against Osama bin Laden.

Against such a backdrop it becomes pertinent to explode the myths that were spun by the United States in the prosecution of the so-called “Global War on Terrorism”

### **The Global War on Terror-Was it Really Global?**

9/11 was the culmination of a diabolical plot of religious terrorism executed by terrorists of Saudi-origin, trained and financed by Pakistan, incubated in Pakistan Occupied Afghanistan and launched against the United States through facilitation by the Pakistan Army ISI. In geographical extent it got limited to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Afghanistan as far as the terrorist plotting was concerned. United States was the focused target and no other targeting was done at that time---it happened much later in Western Europe.

The “Global War on Terror” as initially conceptualised and launched was US-centric in extent and its scope limited to serve US national security interests and continued as such for a decade under exclusive military command of the United States.

It would have been a “Global War on Terror” rightly if it had been executed under United Nations command and focused on all global hot spots of terror: it did not evolve as such. The war on terror would have been really global if it was not confined in terms of operationalization to the United States and its NATO Allies. The essential ingredient of an integrated global cooperative effort was singularly absent. The United States was particular that Afghanistan where much of the so called global war on terror was fought was not internationalised and remained an exclusive US preserve.

### **Conflating the Threat from Global Terror to Regime Changes, WMD Threats, Rogue States and Failed States**

What started as the so-called Global War on Terror” in a year or two metamorphosed into a conflated broader US strategy to encompass wider US military aims which went beyond the focused aim of liquidating Al Qaeda and Taliban ensconced in Afghanistan , kind courtesy of Pakistan Army. Professor Jeffrey Record of USA who used the term “Conflating the Threat” rightly observed in 2003 that it encompassed three geographical levels of terrorist organisations; rogue states defined as Iraq, Iran, and North Korea; individual and entities that could provide WMDs to rogue states and terrorist organisations; and lastly failed states.

If that were the overall encompassing aims of the US “Global War on Terrorism” then why was Pakistan not targeted by the United States?

### **Pakistan Should have been a Legitimate Target of “US Global War on Terror”-A Terrorist State, WMD Proliferator, Rogue State and Failed State**

Going by the above postulations of the American Professor, then Pakistan should have been the legitimate target of the US “Global War on Terror” and yet it was never penalised by the United States or subjected to US retributive justice for its dubious role in assisting Al Qaedists in launching their war on the United States. Now let us analyse the components articulated above one by one and see how Pakistan qualifies eminently on each count.

Pakistan in 2001 under military rule of General Musharraf hosted national, regional and global terror organisations. It is a recorded fact of contemporary history. No wonder American academics continue to define Pakistan as the ‘Mecca of Terrorism ‘or the ‘Epicentre of Global Terror’. Even after the United States “Global War on Terrorism” has morphed into counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan, the United States has not been able to coerce or restrain the Pakistan Army from launching state-sponsored terrorist attacks against Afghanistan and India.

State-sponsored terrorism was an instrument of Pakistan's foreign policy controlled by the Pakistan Army. Pakistan provided and continues to provide safe havens to Afghan Taliban. Pakistan never rendered Osama bin Laden to US custody for more than a decade until finally liquidated by US Special Operations team deep within Pakistan.

Pakistan qualified to be designated as a "terrorist state" by the United States and the clamour for this was shrill immediately in the wake of 9/11. The US Government for reasons best known to it obdurately kept resisting this demand.

Pakistan eminently qualified as a 'rogue state' in US terminology and in the run-up to 9/11 was so described in US academic works. The only other 'rogue state' rightly in global estimation was North Korea. Curiously both Pakistan and North Korea are strategic protégés of China. Pakistan was being termed as a not only a 'rogue state' but further as a 'nuclearized rogue state'.

Pakistan has the dubious distinction of having been involved in WMD proliferation both at the state level and at the individual level. At the state level Pakistan stands internationally accused of providing nuclear weapons technology to North Korea in a barter deal for IRBM technology. At the individual level General Musharraf to deflect Pakistan Army involvement in WMD proliferation accused the Father of Pakistan Nuclear Bomb of individual proliferation of WMDs and curiously pardoned him too.

The last target spelt out above as being encompassed in the US "Global War on Terror" were 'failed states'. Does anyone need to be reminded that in the years prior to 9/11, Pakistan was being constantly being referred to as a 'failed state'?

On all counts therefore as per postulations of US counter-terrorism strategy following 9/11, Pakistan should have been the legitimate target of the US "Global War on Terror". On the contrary Pakistan was "sanctified" as a "US ally of long-standing and a frontline state in the global war on terror". The United States further "beatified" General Musharraf similarly.

United States double-standards on Pakistan knocked out the credibility of the "US Global War on Terror" and reduced its appeal worldwide and more especially in India. It ended up as a myth in which people severely questioned US sincerity and intentions.

### **US-Centric "Global War on Terror" Did Not Evolve Sequentially into a Real Global War on Terror**

The United States can be conceded that in its anger of terrorist attacks on Homeland United States it infuriatingly embarked against the perpetrators of 9/11 to inflict retributive justice. India as a victim of state-sponsored terrorism of the Pakistan Army was reportedly given to understand at responsible US levels that once the United States finished liquidating the Al Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan, the United States would turn its attention to deal with other terrorist threats in the region.

In other words what the US seemed to be giving out was that its "Global War on Terror" was a "sequential operational strategy" in which

others would have to wait until the United States secured its own national security interests. Implicitly, others like India had to wait until the United States sequencing was completed.

Sadly, the United States “Global War on Terror” never blossomed into a concerted, all-inclusive and integrated global war on terror.

### **United States Flawed “Global War on Terror” Strategy Spawned Enhanced Levels of Pakistani State Sponsored Terrorism against India**

Ironically, the US Global War Strategy in which the United States placed primacy to appeasing Pakistan Army rather than imposing retributive justice on it for its active collaboration in 9/11 attacks on USA spawned enhanced levels of Pakistan Army State-sponsored terrorism against India.

Pakistan Army secure in the belief that the United States stood needing it militarily in Afghanistan was emboldened into enhancing its state-sponsored terrorism against India. The decade of 9/11 witnessed the ironical spectacle where while the United States stood secure against further terrorism attacks saw India not only being subjected to enhanced major terrorism attacks but also a penetration of Pakistan Army sponsored terrorism attacks deeper into Homeland India.

As far as India was concerned, the US “Global War on Terror” stood turned on its head with India constantly being coercively restrained from retaliation against Pakistan by the United States. India supinely submitted to US pressures and withheld its hand from the sordid terrorist attacks on the Parliament House in 2002 to Mumbai 2008 with many other major Pakistan Army state-sponsored terrorist attacks strewn all over India in between.

### **Concluding Reflections on Global War on Terror**

The following concluding reflections on US Global War on Terror” based on my writings of the last decade on the United States and its strategic dynamics in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region are appended for whatever their worth:

- The US “Global War on Terror” as it evolved in the last decade turned out to be a myth. It was all but ‘global’ in conception, scope and intent and in the operational domain too. It remained throughout as a US-centric military enterprise designed to serve US national security interests.
- That in the middle of this whole American operational enterprise, the United States was forced to change the appellation from “Global War on Terror” to “Overseas Contingency Operations” is indicative that it never was a “Global War on Terror” in the sense that it was initially projected and propagated.
- The United States lost irretrievable credibility in pursuance of its “Global War on Terror” when it co-opted the Pakistan Army in its so-

called 'Coalition of the Willing' and as a 'frontline state against the Al Qaeda and the Taliban fully conscious that both these entities had indulged in religious terrorism at the behest of the same Pakistan Army. Pakistan on the eve of 9/11 was a failed state, a terrorist state and a rogue nuclearized state.

- "Global War on Terrorism" was but an euphuism contrived to sanctify the conflation of a threat which encompassed many other threats perceived by the United States as threats to US security like WMD proliferators, failed states and rogue nations. This robbed the "Global War on Terror" of its sanctity as a high moral purpose of a global cooperative effort to eradicate trans-national terrorism.
- United States principled image on the prosecution of the "Global War on Terrorism" was soon eroded when in the concluding stages of eradication of Al Qaeda and Afghan Taliban from Afghanistan the United States provided "safe air corridors" for Pakistan to evacuate by air thousands of Pakistan Army officers and men from Konduz in Northern Afghanistan where they were fighting with the Taliban, much to the chagrin of the Northern Alliance which had spearheaded the United States advance and victory in Kabul.
- United States credibility in the "Global War on Terrorism" was further eroded when it emerged that till 2005 or 2006 Southern Afghanistan bordering Pakistan was virtually free of US Army military deployments in deference to Pakistan Army sensitivities and thereby keeping all avenues open for Pakistani destabilisation of Kandahar and Helmand regions, a strategic mistake which the United States had to rue till today.
- The "Global War on Terror" would have been greatly successful had the United States in the initial stages itself expanded and trained the Afghan National Army to a strength of about 500,000. This again was not done out of US deference to Pakistan Army sensitivities.
- The United States till today has not offered any concrete reasons to explain as to why it supported Pakistan and co-opted it as 'frontline ally' in the "Global War on Terrorism" even after proven evidence that the Pakistan Army was double-timing the United States in the said war on global terror. Many other alternatives other than Pakistan were open to the United States in terms of logistics, operations and intelligence.

Overall, therefore, what have followed are not retributive and pre-emptive military actions against Pakistan which really generated regional and global terror and facilitated its trans-national operations but a prolonged war in Afghanistan where its hapless civilian population have been subjected to armed conflict and devastation for no fault of their own.

**Ironically, Pakistan Army which started the "Global War of Terror" against the United States by using Islamist religious terrorism, was not subjected to retributive justice by the United States for facilitating and collusion in 9/11 attacks but was soon rewarded by the United States by co-opting Pakistan as a 'faithful ally' in the United States termed "Global War on Terror". Reflective of US strategic chicanery in the "Global War on Terror" was the rewarded elevation of Pakistan as a "Major Non-NATO Ally", despite its proven 'terrorist state' credentials.**

Does more need to be said on the "Global War on Terror"? Was it not a myth?

**Tags:**

[US war on Terror](#) [1]

[Pakistan](#) [2]

[Al Qaeda](#) [3]

**Category:**

[Papers](#) [4]

**Countries:**

[United States](#) [5]

Pakistan [6]

**Topics:**

Terrorism [7]

Copyright ©2012. All Rights are Reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1153>

**Links**

[1] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/137>

[2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/71>

[3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/101>

[4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>

[5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/united-states>

[6] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/pakistan>

[7] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/terrorism>