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Global war on terror

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The so-called war on terror is being fought not only in Iraq or Afghanistan, but in its effort to take the war outside its frontiers the US is now also involved in Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Libya, North Korea, Indonesia, and Europe, where its involvement includes intelligence and diplomatic operations in pursuit of GOWT. Thus, while the fact, that no more attack has been conducted on the mainland US since 9/11, is flaunted as an index of success of US anti-terror policy, what is overlooked are the attacks that have been conducted on US allies or its interest outside its borders. Moreover, many US analysts see little correlation between the claimed success of Bush policy and the fact that there has been no further attack on US mainland since the Twin Towers assault, because it may well be that no new attack on the mainland have been attempted as it was not felt necessary to do so by the anti-US terrorist groups.

The causes of failure of the so-called global war on terror lay in its very philosophical concept. And this has been very aptly encapsulated by Keith Spence of the University of Leicester in, "World Risk Society and War Against Terror", where he states, "Despite its global character, war against terror is constructed through outmoded vocabularies of national security and sovereignty, within which the reasoned negotiation of risk is marginalised. This exclusion contributes to the intensification rather than reduction of terror and terrorism. In so doing the moment of violence inscribed within the concept of the political resurfaces in the constitution of war against terror, Homeland Security, and the identities and anxieties that they reproduce."

Even the 2007 national intelligence estimate (NIE) was bad news for the Bush administration, and indeed for those that wanted to see an end to the spate of terror-driven violence one is witnessing in many parts of the world today. The estimate contradicted the

optimism of the administration that the war in Iraq would reduce terrorism. As the NIE states, terrorism has intensified since the occupation of Iraq by the US and its coalition of the willing, and Iraq has become the leading inspiration for new Islamic extremist networks and cells that are united by little more than an anti-Western agenda.

Assessing the success of GWOT is neither a matter of speculation nor of perception but of acknowledging the existing reality. While much had been made by the Bush administration of the fact that two-thirds of al Qaeda's leadership had been caught, the mastermind, Bin Laden, a US sponsored intelligence asset, created and sustained by the CIA, remains at large, with no indication that the terrorist organisation's capability has been reduced.

For South Asia the disturbing consequence of the Bush policy is that the so called war that is being fought in its doorstep, will certainly increase in intensity now with the focus under Obama turning from Iraq to Afghanistan. Pakistan has already become inextricably a part of the GWOT, with very little prospects of the situation stabilising.

The onus of concluding the so-called war on terror has now fallen on the lot of the Obama presidency, as most had predicted. The inevitability was also acknowledged by the erstwhile administration when the US Secretary of State, in the same statement in Oct 2006 to the Wall Street Journal had said that the battle would not be won on George Bush's watch. One would like to think that Obama would live up to its pledge to reject Bush Doctrine by showing its readiness to commit to international law and institutions and declaring its readiness to shun unilateralism and accept multilateralism and respect for other's sovereignty.

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