WAR ON TERROR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY

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A B S T R A C T

The study starts with an attempt to outline terrorism conceptually. It then discusses the policy and operational background of the War on Terror. The study progresses with a brief review of the major processes of political decision-making and military atrocities resulting from the war. The main argument of this study suggests that the scale of global terrorism cannot be successfully combated through the sole application of military power that produces more terrorism. The study contributes to the critical academic literature that claims that by overstating the terrorist activities and adopting brutal military strategies, the War on Terror is actually inducing terrorism. As is evidenced, terrorist attacks are on the rise both in number and magnitude after the war. The study concludes that the War on Terror is leaving the world more at risk with adverse consequences on global peace and security by creating inefficient governments, malfunctioning institutions, cultural intrusion of the west, and degrading misconceptions like Islamophobia.

Keywords: War on Terror, terrorism, Afghanistan, Iraq, peace, security, religion, ideology.

INTRODUCTION

There is a general agreement among people, both explicit and implicit, that like terrorism, counterterrorism can, and actually is in most cases, politically-motivated. Interfacing of religious ideology and political tools like terrorism is not new; scriptures of almost all religions contain stories of such events. Evil forces have often popped out from the bottle of elixir to seduce mislead people to do wrong. On the other hand, misleading forces also persistently try to derail the devoted pursuing that no religious commitment is rational. However, this article addresses the crucial question of War on Terror (WoT). It analyzes confronting issues that are related to this massive sociopolitical and politico-religious event in contemporary history. It examines whether or not religion, particularly Islamist ideology, leads to any form of political motivational ideology like terrorism. The article attempts to explore whether an extremely costly, both in terms of human casualties and financial expenditures, military operations like the War on Terror is feasible at all to encounter terrorism globally.

TERRORISM: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Simply put, terrorism is an ism that appreciates terror. In the first place, by an ism people understand an ideology or a system that is distinctive in terms of philosophical base and practice, whereas terror means extreme fear. Here the modifier 'extreme' denotes significance for only the acute fear that seriously frightens its victims and makes them panic is called terror by definition. Howe (1976) defines terrorism as

> An anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons … whereby the direct targets of the violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population and serve as message generators.

Friedlander (1979) defines terrorism as "the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change." However, the USA Patriot Act of 2001 gives the

following idea of what actually could be called terrorist activities.

a) Threatening, conspiring or attempting to hijack airplanes, boats, buses or other vehicles.
b) Threatening, conspiring or attempting to commit acts of violence on any 'protected' persons, such as government officials.
c) Any crime committed with 'the use of any weapon or dangerous device', when the intent of the crime is determined to be the endangerment of public safety or substantial property damage rather than for 'mere personal monetary gain' (Bruce, 2013).

From this document, three specific characteristics of terrorism can be identified, which Ruby (2002) points out as follows.

a) Terrorism must be politically motivated. Terrorism is directed toward goals that are political; in other words, terrorist actions are intended to guide or influence governmental policy.

b) Terrorist violence is directed at noncombatants. This criterion identifies terrorism as violence directed toward civilian populations or groups who are not prepared to defend against political violence.
c) Clandestine agents commit terrorist attacks. Victims of terrorism cannot anticipate the attack because of this clandestine feature.

However, for global publicity of the subject, terrorism hardly remains a value-neutral term (Weinberg, 2006). Different collectives and individuals have vested interests in terrorism, and they have defined the term from biased perspectives. They include alliances of nations, NGOs and IGOs, academics and researchers, legal professionals, counterterrorist and law enforcement agencies, and even governments themselves (Bruce, 2013).

Hence, if all the basic propositions of the above discussion are put in a logical sequence, the following diagram can be helpful in understanding the ebb and flow of terrorism:

Figure 1. The Ebb and Flow of terrorism.
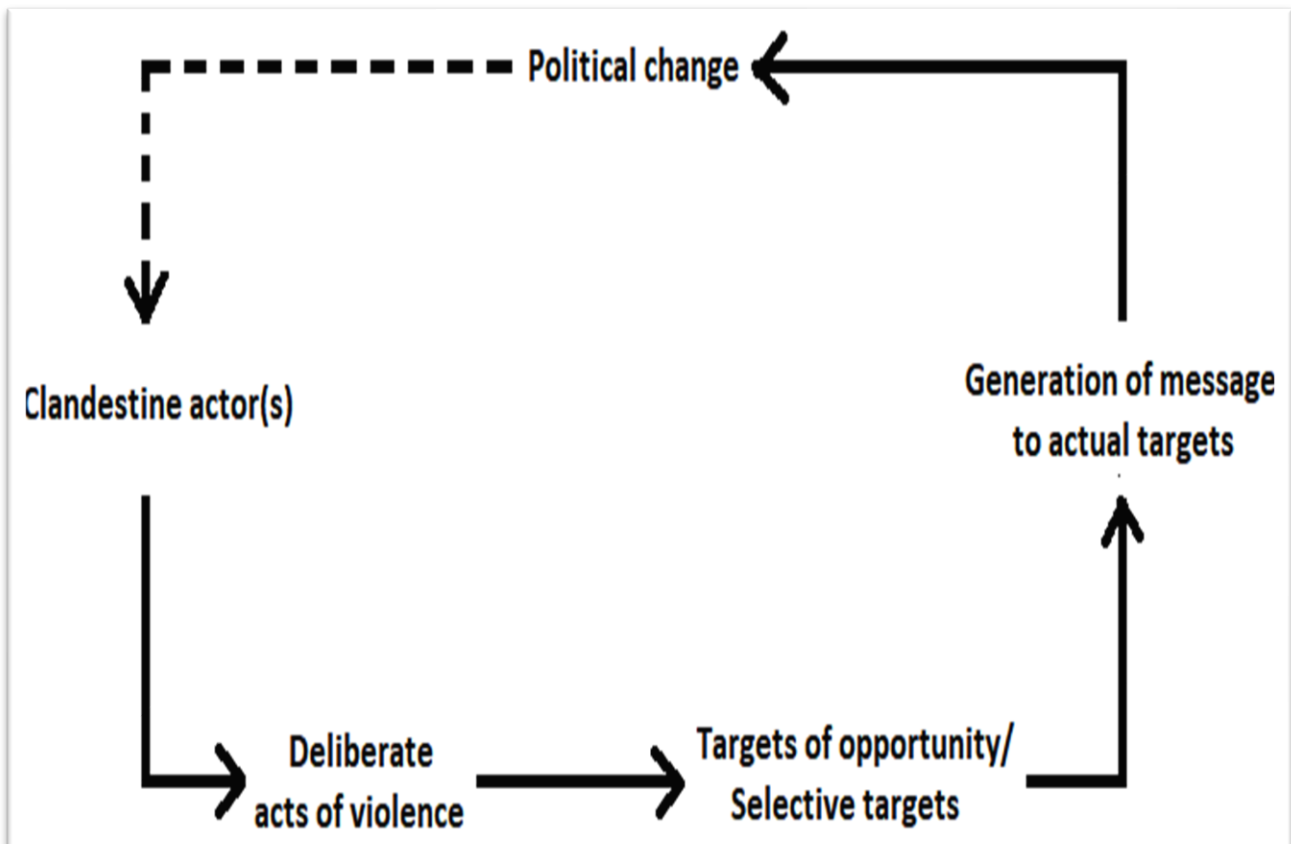
Source: Conceptualized by the authors.

Most importantly, however, terrorism is always counterproductive (Powell, 2016). From the above diagram, it can be seen that political changes that terrorism begets are non-accommodative. That is why the changes produce new actors who also intend to resort to terrorism either to undo the change or to bring new changes, which is also the central argument of the paper. However, it is a widely accepted notion that has also been proved in cases like Afghanistan and Iraq, but it is not obvious and not yet theorized. That is why it is shown in dotted lines.

WAR ON TERROR: OPERATIONAL AND POLICY BACKGROUNDS

The War on Terror (WoT) or Global War on Terror (GWoT) is a campaign of the US-led operations to eliminate international terrorism, which means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country. The operations were a response to the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. A total of 19 members of al-Qaeda terrorist network hijacked four aircrafts and used them like missiles to kill more than 3,000 people of 78 nationalities by hitting and destroying the following preselected targets (Tellis, 2004).

a) North and south towers of the World Trade Center in New York
b) Stony Creek Township, Pennsylvania
c) Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, near Washington, D.C.

The US immediately responded to the attack with an all-out effort in political, legal, ideological, and military spheres against organizations labeled as terrorists and governments or states that, according to the US, supported them. But the focal point was on al-Qaeda and all militant organizations and individuals with extremist Islamist agendas (Kayani, 2011).

However, WoT includes four particular fronts.
a) Military
b) Economic
c) Diplomatic and
d) Law enforcement

But background initiatives that the US took to wage the WoT can be classified into two basic categories.
a) Operational (combat)
b) Policy (non-combat)

Background policy initiatives include efforts to freeze terrorist financing, economic sanctions, strengthening infrastructure and supporting fledgling governments, protecting human rights, and providing humanitarian aid. On the other hand, operational initiatives include military operations against insurgents, intelligence, gathering, disabling known terrorist cells and training camps, training military and police forces, countering narcotics trafficking etc. (Kayani, 2011: 2-3).

However, Operation Enduring Freedom, the military component of the US-led coalition, began on October 7th and few days later, on October 26th, 2001, the US Congress passed the USA Patriot Act that is officially known as the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism. This Act is considered as the most significant and powerful instrument that the US is using in order to justify the WoT (Evera, 2006).

AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ ATTACKS: TERRORISM AGAINST TERRORISM

After the 9/11 attacks, US literally declared a war against al-Qaeda in particular. In the first phase of invasion, ground forces of the Afghan United Front working with the US and British Special Forces and with massive US air support, ousted the Taliban regime from power in most areas of Afghanistan in a few weeks. In the wake of heavy US military presence and assaults, most of the senior Taliban leaders fled to neighboring Pakistan. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), a NATO-led security mission in Afghanistan, was created by the UN Security Council towards the end of December 2001 to secure Kabul and the surrounding areas. The primary aim of the invasion was to hunt down Osama bin Laden and other high-ranking al-Qaeda members to put them on trial, to destroy the organization of al-Qaeda, and to remove the Taliban regime which supported it. The George W. Bush administration stated that, as policy, it would not distinguish between terrorist organizations and nations or governments that sheltered those (Salt, 2018).

On the other hand, on March 19th, 2003coalition forces launched 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' (OIF) to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction, as well as to topple Saddam Hussein regime and replace it with democratic and workable model of government. The coalition eventually achieved a decisive victory against the Iraqi military forces leafing to the collapse of Saddam's regime, but it struggled subsequently to secure peace in Iraq leaving the

question still unanswered that whether or not the war was really inevitable (Perry et al., 2015). Table no. 1 shows that the following is the basic statistics of casualties in both the wars.

Table no. 1: Casualties in the US invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq

Category of People	Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan, 2001-)		Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq, 2003-)	
	Dead	Wounded	Dead	Wounded
Local Security Forces	45,735		45,000	
Coalition Forces	3,546	22,773	172	551
Contractors	2,000	15,000		
Total (up to 2016)	51,481		45,172	
Total (up to 2018)	72,000		46,000	
Total Civilian Killed	**31,000**		**7269**	
(up to 2016)		**(only Iraq body count)**		

Source: Hinnebusch, 2007.

This is nothing but yet another sheer act of terrorism in the name of countering terrorism. Almost 40,000 innocent civilians were killed in the two wars and it is an irony that the global community failed miserably to respond adequately to this indiscriminate murder. While terrorists are heinous criminals but at the same time so are these massacres.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS: WAR ON TERROR – ENCOUNTERING OR ESCALATING TERRORISM?

The goal of ending terrorism by using terror is not only unrealistic but also counterproductive. After long 15 years of strategic consistency during the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama, Donald Trump still intends to 'bomb' out ISIS and 'defeat them fast'. This indicates that the WoT did not really succeed in eliminating terrorism. The paper argues that the War on Terror not only failed to dismantle the roots of terrorism, but it led to the rise of new insurgent groups with extremist ideologies. This failure can be seen in two specific sectors (Thrall and Goepner, 2017).

 a) Overstated assessment of the terror threat facing the US, and
 b) Adoption of an aggressive strategy of military intervention.

In 2003, the United States invaded Iraq without prior approval of the United Nations (UN). The political leadership thought that the intelligence was sufficient to prove that Saddam Hussein possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). But later it was proved wrong and

has been labeled as 'the perfect intelligence failure'. Finally, the US administration also confessed that they attacked Iraq on completely misjudged and wrongful information (Rossaak, 2017). But, unfortunately, by that time the ancient Mesopotamian civilization was doomed. On the other hand, the WoT employed excessively ruthless strategies in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The US forces regularly use military means and methods during arrest operations in residential areas where law enforcement techniques would be more appropriate. This has resulted in unnecessary civilian casualties; members of the US armed forces have arrested numerous civilians not directly participating in the hostilities; persons detained by US forces are held without regard to the requirements of international humanitarian law or human rights law; the general lack of due process within the US detention system violates both international humanitarian law and basic standards of human rights law. The US, as a detaining power, is essentially applying no legal principles to the persons whom they detain. Simply put, the US is acting with apparent disregard for the rule of law. There are no judicial processes restraining their actions in arresting persons in Afghanistan and Iraq. The only real legal limits on their activities are self-imposed, and there is little evidence that the Department of Defense has seriously investigated allegations of abuses or mistreatment (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

As a result, new terrorist organizations like ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) have emerged and flourished. The organization captured the attention of international audiences through widely publicized acts of atrocity,

followed by the proclamation of its own state and upending state borders in the process. Surely it did not emerge in a linear fashion, and is a distinct product of its time, geography, and circumstances. It grew out of the convulsions of the war in Iraq (2003-2011). The ISIS is the outgrowth of broader global trends of Islamization that stresses the tensions between religiosity and modernity, compounded by an increase in Islamic militancy. But, it is very important to remember that this abrupt 'Islamization' is believed to be the reaction of the abovementioned repressive wars (Oosterveld and Bloem, 2017).

IMPACT OF WoT ON GLOBAL TERRORISM

Some argue that the tragic events of 9/11 events and the subsequent military operations have brought about a more conflicting world. Some theorists call it a perpetual state of conflict between militant Islam and the West.

A 2016 article in the New York Times notes that the number of deaths attributed to terrorism in North America and Europe rose markedly in 2015. The article also adds that more than three-quarters of all terrorism fatalities over the last five years transpired in six countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, and Yemen – all places beset with civil strife (Smith and Zeigler, 2017).
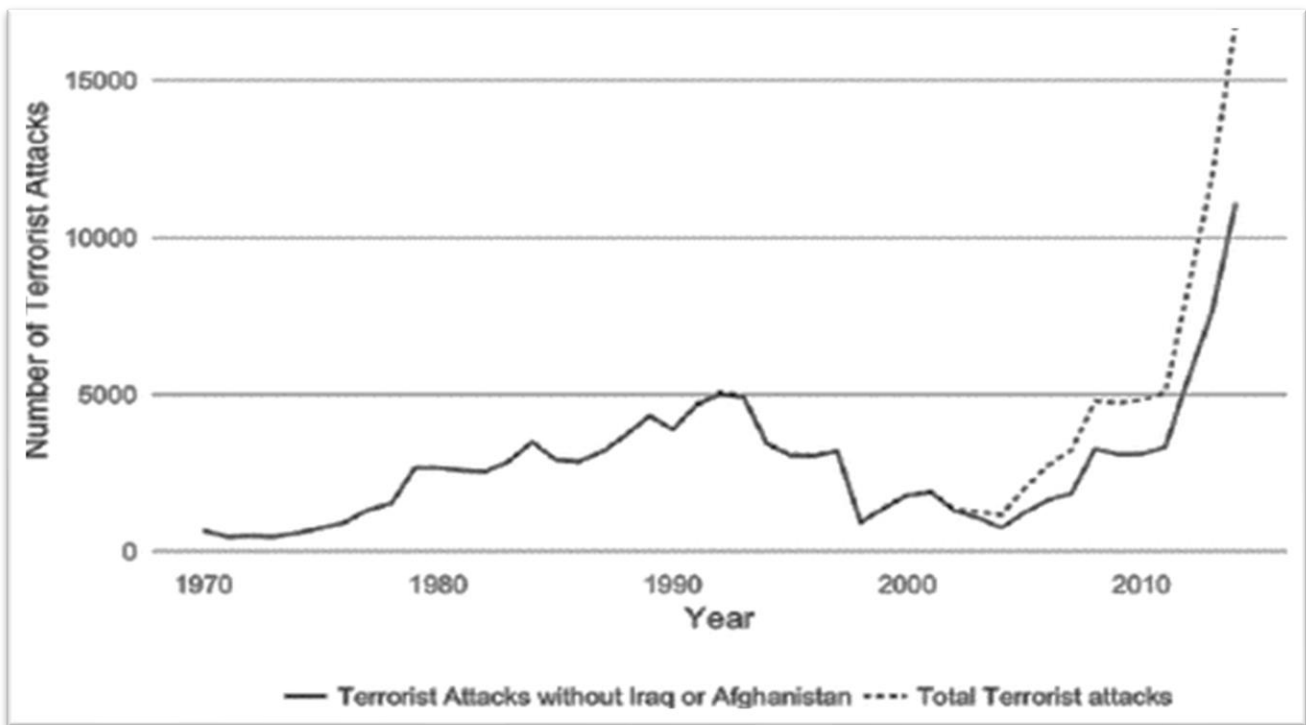

Figure 2. Terrorist attacks 1970–2014.   Source: (Smith and Zeigler, 2017: 2).

Figure 2 shows the number of terrorist attacks worldwide by year as reported by the University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database (GTD), an open-source collection of information on terrorist events from 1970 through 2014. For the past decade, however, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of terrorist attacks from just over a thousand in 2004 to almost 17,000 in 2014. The trend remains consistent even when excluding all events from Iraq and Afghanistan (Smith and Zeigler, 2017).

The most affected regions in terrorist attacks are South

Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. They collectively account for over 70% of the attacks in the last ten years. Sub-Saharan Africa, however, has seen the most dramatic increase in attacks as a percent of global totals. Accounting for just 3% of annual attacks in 2004, this number increased 65-fold by 2014, when 14% of global attacks took place in the region. These volatile regions with the largest growth in terror attacks also represent those most prone to armed conflict (Smith and Zeigler, 2017).
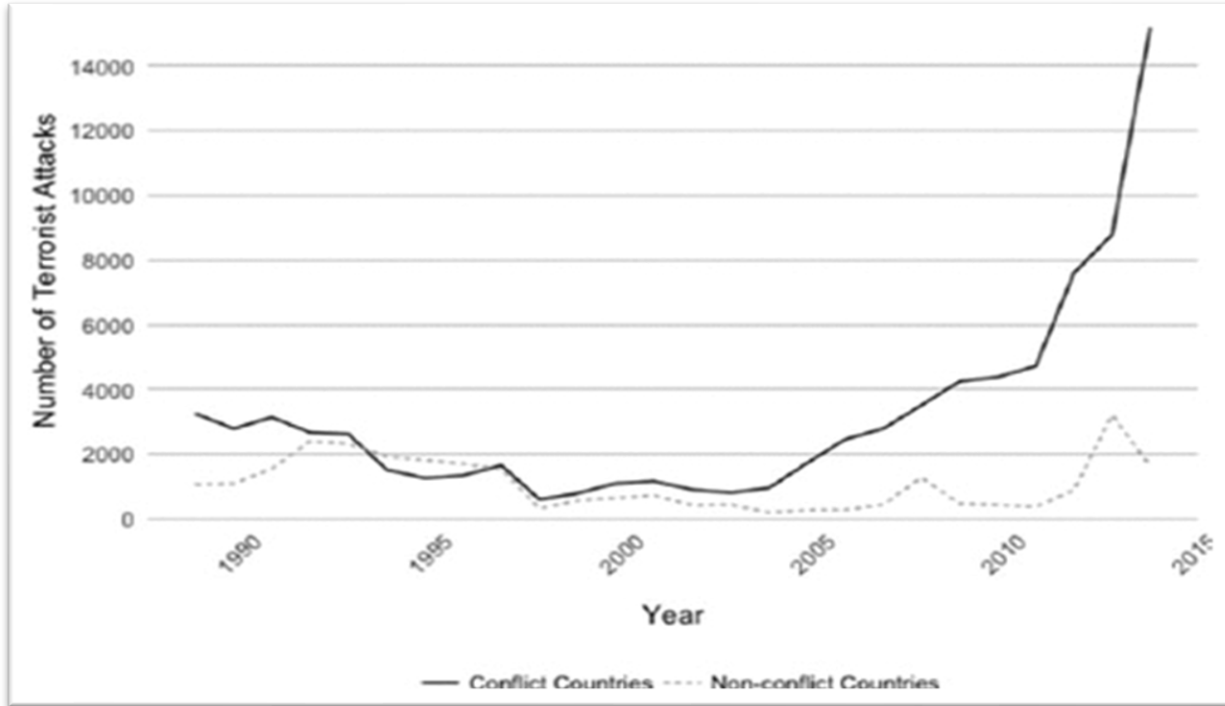
Figure 3. Terrorist attacks 1989–2014 in conflicting and non-conflicting countries
Source: (Smith and Zeigler, 2017: 2).

Figure 3 Terrorist attacks 1989–2014 in countries with and without active civil wars. Civil wars in graphic are those that eventually reached 1000 battle-related deaths. This visually interprets terrorist attacks per year between 1989 and 2014 in countries with and without active civil wars. Hereby, a sizable and widening gap between the two curves emerges around 2004.

IMPACT OF WoT ON GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY
After the 9/11 attacks, the new global threat of international terrorism took the place of interstate conflict as the main defining factor of global and regional politics all over the world. Major areas of global peace and security where the WoT has impacted are briefly discussed below.

Lack of Government Legitimacy
One of the main sources of instability and a cause of various forms of violence in Afghanistan and Iraq has been the lack of legitimacy of the coalition-sponsored government, coupled with disagreements over the type and composition of the future governing arrangement as well as widespread popular skepticism about its viability (Stepanova, 2004).

Lack of Government Institutions Functionality
Another key to anti-terrorism lies in the formation of functional state institutions that will enjoy both local legitimacy and broader international recognition, particularly that of the UN (Tkachenko, 2004).

National Sovereignty vs. Global Values
We are now witnessing debates about the relationship between the existing importance of sovereignty and the growing role of global values. The resolution of this debate is likely to shape the future role of the UN in maintaining global security (Tkachenko, 2004).

Religionism and Islamophobia
One aspect of the criticism regarding the rhetoric justifying the WoT was religionism, or more specifically Islamophobia. This is stereotyping of all followers of Islam as real or potential terrorists due to alleged hateful and violent teaching of their religion. Islam is tried to be projected as reduced to the concept of jihad and jihad is reduced to terror against the West (Davodson, 2011).
Therefore, it is rationally perceived that the 9/11 events and their aftermath have made a paradigm shift in the discourse and practice of global peace and security.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that terrorism is notorious but at the same time it has to be remembered that encountering terrorism with terrorism makes it even worse. However, major findings of the study include the following.

i.   The basic intent in terrorism is to generate message to a much broader indirect audience and create a spillover impact of fear on them.

ii.   The military operations created the operational or combat background for the WoT while making laws like the USA Patriot Act 2001 set the policy or non-combat background for it.

iii. In the name of counterterrorism endeavors, the US-led coalition forces invaded Afghanistan and Iraq and around 40,000 unarmed civilians including children, women, and elderly people were killed, which under no circumstances is acceptable.

iv.   Many western academics and scholars have a tendency to make exaggerated assessments of the terror threat facing the US. And by adopting an aggressive military assault strategy under the WoT, the US and its allies have further contributed to the proliferation of terrorism worldwide instead of truly encountering it.

v.   As a result, terrorist fascination, recruitment, activities, and attacks have risen dramatically since the declaration of WoT. In particular, states that are suffering from civil strifes are the worst victims of this menace.

vi.   The WoT has created newer problems in the global peace and security landscape like inefficient puppet governments, failed government institutions, dominating intruding values over sovereignty, and gravely misinterpreted concepts like Islamophobia.

Therefore, concerted global efforts are necessary to address these issues immediately and thus ensure enduring peace and stable security in the world.

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