

LETTER

‘WAR ON TERROR’

The so-called ‘War on Terror’ should not be conducted by the USA and/or NATO, but instead should be handed over to a specialised agency created within the UNO for this purpose, of course only after adequate preparations have been made and groundwork done.

An important reason for this long-overdue change is that even when the USA is doing work which is actually needed, it carries too much baggage of imperialism from the past. So the anti-terrorism operations become unpopular, particularly in predominantly Muslim countries, just because of the dominance of the USA in these operations. Even those local forces who are genuinely against terrorism and brave enough to say so, are understandably reluctant to be seen to be supporting US led operations. The Iraq invasion was in any case all about imperialism and nothing against terrorism, but even in Af-Pak where fighting terrorists is truly the major (if not the only) objective, it is extremely difficult for the USA/NATO-led operations to get local popular support.

A related reason is that the USA was actually involved quite closely—in the days of the cold war—in strengthening, mobilising and arming violent fundamentalist/fanatic groups as a counter to communists and related groups. It is difficult to have a moral edge in a war where people can be constantly reminded that America helped create the enemy in the first place.

Also, as a part of its overall strategy based on reducing the risks to its soldiers, the USA relies excessively on military strategy like drone-attacks in which the risk of the loss of innocent lives is higher, thereby contributing further to local hostility.

When the war against terrorism is dominated and led by the USA, it can go horribly wrong just because of distorted thinking by a few policy-makers in one country, as happened in 2002-03 when suddenly the centre of this war was shifted from Afghanistan to Iraq by the Bush administration without so much as a credible explanation. Also, the war on terror gets needlessly affected by elections and other political development in the USA.

Particularly when things are not going too well for the USA, or in any case when there is excessive task of exit strategies and timetables, forces affiliated to the terrorist organisations feel emboldened while those opposed to them feel very vulnerable. This would not happen if the war was being conducted by an organisation permanently and exclusively dealing with action against terrorism. Even when it involves others like NATO members in its war against terror, it has been increasingly difficult for the USA to get firm, adequate commitments. Some of these allies start thinking of leaving quite soon after joining.

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