

Post-war on Terror- Dawn of a new era?

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Abstract

Following the fateful 9/11 attacks, the War on Terror (WoT) thesis has managed to dominate global politics for nearly a quarter of a century. With a complete disregard for any underlying drivers and root causes, the overly confining lens of the thesis focused blindly on kinetic and military alternatives. Such a narrow and myopic approach predictably failed to provide any permanent solution to the problem of terrorism. Despite its tremendous setbacks and brazen failures, many countries are still alarmingly struggling to cast WoT aside as their primary frame of reference. This unhealthy obsession is increasingly proving to be detrimental for the society at large that continues to suffer from the adverse effects of terrorism and violent extremism. As the epilogue on the war on terror is now beginning to unfold, we are on the brink of a major paradigm shift. However, for that much desired shift to truly materialize, we must first distance ourselves from the idiosyncrasies that were characteristic of the war on terror.

Article History

Received 29 March 2026
Revised 13 June 2026
Accepted 24 June 2026
Published 30 June 2026

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 OPEN ACCESS

Keywords

War on Terror, 9/11, Terrorism, Violent Extremism, Paradigm Shift, Post-War on Terror.

Introduction

The War on Terror (WoT) paradigm is arguably the most standout feature of the 21st century so far. Even though its failures and handicaps became apparent as soon as it was adopted, the paradigm, in many ways, has proven to be remarkably contagious and astonishingly resilient.

Be it Bush, Obama, Biden or Trump, the war on terror paradigm simply refuses to budge. Shaped by the contours of the infamous New Terrorism thesis, WoT continues to influence and shape policy decisions around the world. Terrorism, as a result is largely viewed as an evil, immoral and irrational activity that does not even warrant a dialogue or discussion.

Regardless of any superficial and cosmetic political changes, adherence to the WoT paradigm has in many ways ensured policy continuation. Whether or not there will be boots on the ground or whether terrorists will simply be bombed from the skies, the overall rationale and intent behind the policy has remained stubbornly consistent. Terrorism is simply to be fought with sheer brute force alone since there allegedly is no other policy alternative. This narrow and one-dimensional approach has permitted WoT to continue its ruthless and relentless assault against terrorism, with little to no regard for its drivers and root causes.

This article sets out to expose the highly shaky and dubious foundations of the notorious war on terror that has directed and dictated our policy responses to terrorism for over a quarter of a century. It will also demonstrate how we are currently standing on the verge of a major paradigm shift.

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However, our failure to let go of the idiosyncrasies that are characteristic of the war on terror is preventing us from making the long-awaited and much-needed transition.

From Bush to Biden and Beyond

It was at the turn of the millennium that the former US President George W Bush declared a global war on terror. For many of us, this monumental declaration has been a defining feature of the modern era. With terrorism comfortably occupying the centre stage for a good part of the last two and a half decades, it has so far impacted all major political decisions, foreign policy choices and strategic alliances across the globe. It will perhaps not be an exaggeration to suggest that terrorism and the ensuing resolve to fight it has thus far been one of the leading zeitgeists of the 21st century. Upstaging terrorism therefore should trigger a considerable discursive overhaul and a potential paradigm shift.

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent reemergence of Taliban was for that reason significant in more than just one way. It not only brought direct Western military engagement in the region to an abrupt and embarrassing end but it also informally drew curtains over the ill-fated war on terror. These developments should not be slighted for they signify not just the end of an era but crucially also mark the dawn of a new one. As Joe Biden in his August 31 Presidential address noted that the “decision about Afghanistan is not just about Afghanistan. It is about ending an era of major military operations to remake other countries” (The White House, August 31, 2021).

In spite of this bold declaration, there was interestingly no official admission nor any formal confirmation from the US government that the war on terror itself was over. Considering the potential fallout, it was highly unlikely that such an admission was even forthcoming.

Firstly, terrorism was perhaps just as pervasive as it was back in 2001. Not only had organizations like Al-Qaeda shown remarkable endurance but there had also been a perennial growth of terrorist actors all over the world. To officially announce that the war had ended, when terrorism continued to persist just as it did before, would understandably had been fairly awkward. Secondly, any acknowledgement of sorts would have to come to terms with the overwhelming failures and setbacks of the war on terror. The psychological and political toll of formally yielding would therefore had been immensely overbearing.

This was precisely why President Biden additionally maintained that the US would continue to fight terrorism in Afghanistan and other countries. However, he was also quick to add that “we just don’t need to fight a ground war to do it”. Evoking America’s “over-the-horizon capabilities”, Biden argued that America had no real need to deploy troops on the ground any more as it could remotely take care of any potential terrorist threat (The White House, August 31, 2021).

Joe Biden’s presidential address was primarily intended to mark the end of direct military response to acts of terrorism, which had long been a hallmark of the notorious war on terror. While it is clear that Biden wanted to distance himself from the failed counter-terrorism policies of the three preceding presidencies, his message however was overly ambiguous and in some ways even reminiscent of Bush’s initial response to the 9/11 attacks.

Where on the one hand Biden's presidential address acknowledged the immense human and financial cost of the war on terror, there at the same time it also reaffirmed continued US commitment to fighting terrorism abroad. Likewise, where the necessity and urgency to keep up with the changing times was emphasized, there on the other hand the ever "pernicious and evil nature" of terrorism was also highlighted (The White House, August 31, 2021).

After the September 11 attacks, George Bush had expressed somewhat similar sentiments when he described terrorism as "evil and despicable" and resolved to fight it "until every terrorist group of global reach [had] been found, stopped and defeated" (Dunn, 2005, p. 13). His "pronouncements brought in a new and now dominant discourse (and practice)" (Sahill, 2019, p. 189).

Deeming terrorism evil and nefarious coupled with an unswerving commitment to fight it emphatically, are the two quintessential characteristics that had directed and dictated the war on terror for two decades (Graham et al., 2004). To proclaim an end of era (as Biden did) while upholding the very characteristics that had up until then sustained the supposedly defunct era, was therefore both misleading and self-deluding.

It can of course be argued that Biden had proposed a tactical and strategic overhaul with a resounding commitment to not engage with the terrorist threat directly. A change in degree and intensity of response, however, does not constitute a significant departure from the past. More importantly, it clearly does not signify the end of an era as claimed otherwise.

It is also worth bearing in mind that Biden's proposed shift to over the horizon capability was neither a novelty nor a reference to some newfound resource. The use of drone strikes to remotely target alleged terrorists, as opposed to having boots on the ground, first emerged as a notable counterterrorism policy during the Obama presidency (Boyle, 2013). Shades of the same policy were also visibly evident throughout Trump's first presidency who made it abundantly clear during his campaign that he "will quickly and decisively bomb the hell out of ISIS" (Brechenmacher & Feldstein, 2017, p. 58).

This is not to say that the claims about the end of an era have been entirely baseless and unwarranted. There is a visible change at play, evident not just in academic and policy debates but also in our general attitude towards terrorism. Increasing agitation and exhaustion from fighting an endless war has forced us to confront the impolitic and delusive choices that have dominated the geopolitical landscape for a good part of the last twenty-five years.

With the war on terror having yielded little to no result so far, there is a growing demand to account for the trillions of dollars and thousands of lives sacrificed for the dubious cause. The matters have additionally been aggravated by the abrupt and embarrassing collapse of the US backed Afghan government, Taliban's triumphant return to power, continued political turmoil in Iraq and Libya, constant rise of terrorism in countries like Pakistan and perhaps most importantly, the buoyancy of the likes of Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab and ISIS.

Critiquing War on Terror: Neither New nor Surprising

Criticism and disapproval of war on terror is not some new or novel idea. In fact, a formal academic critique of the war on terror started as early as 2008, especially with the launch of the journal *Critical*

Studies on Terrorism. After only a couple of years of waging a war on terror, the immense failures and setbacks of this disastrous undertaking were becoming too obvious to ignore (Jackson et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, it is only now that we can truly assess the fallout of this misadventure. This is because, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the events that have followed since, have brought the last vestige of the war on terror to its unceremonious yet long overdue end. This potentially paves way for an open and unrestrained critique that was perhaps not possible earlier. Questions can and will be raised about the narratives and doctrines that sustained the war on terror paradigm for so long. Amongst them, the tendency to see terrorism as evil and the unqualified resolve to fight it unreservedly will particularly be scrutinized.

Terrorism is, first and foremost, a social problem. It has, in fact, always been a social problem. In retrospection, any venture that sought to distance terrorism from its context and sociopolitical realities was bound to fail miserably. This should have been obvious right from the very start. It is extremely astonishing and regrettably unfortunate that it took us nearly a quarter of a century to realize that very simple fact.

Waging war on a “method of violence” (p. 2), as Martha Crenshaw (2011) eloquently notes, was always going to be problematic. In hindsight, the entire enterprise was fairly shortsighted and largely impulsive. It is now becoming increasingly evident that terrorism is not something that can easily be defeated, at least not by our existing fighting toolkit that includes the so-called over the horizon capability.

The resilience of the likes of Al-Qaeda and ISIS, their seemingly endless mutations, and perhaps most important of all- their unyielding support, visibly demonstrates that terrorism is intricately woven into the sociopolitical fabric of the regions that produce it. Without understanding the local dynamics and the underlying socio-political factors that produce terrorism and violent extremism, we will only be engaging with some perverted and interminable byproduct of an otherwise complex reality.

Since the overwhelming failure of war on terror has made it abundantly clear that terrorism cannot be defeated by sheer brute force, it is therefore clearly a folly to continue expressing a blind resolve to fight it unreservedly. Given its pronounced indigenous character and sociopolitical interwovenness, the longstanding naive policy of fighting terrorism at all costs should therefore be replaced with a sincere desire to understand it. However, in order to understand terrorism and the socio-political realities that produce it, we must first abandon the deeply problematic WoT paradigm.

Taking Cue from the Clueless: Patronage of the New Terrorism Thesis

While the war on terror rhetoric was first propagated by the Bush administration, it did however also enjoy substantial academic support and patronage at the time. In fact, some core characteristics that were later internalized by WoT, were originally identified by the terrorism scholarship under the umbrella of the New Terrorism thesis. It will perhaps not be an exaggeration therefore to suggest that the WoT paradigm takes its intellectual cue from the contentious new terrorism thesis.

Popularized first during the late 1990s, the notion of new terrorism gained significant traction after the September 11 attacks. According to this thesis, there has been a drastic change and transformation in the phenomenon of terrorism. As Ersun Kurtulus (2011) notes, “new terrorism refers to a qualitative change in the nature of terrorism, which has allegedly taken place during the 1990s” (p. 477). This alleged change was evidently so extreme that it completely overhauled the nature and character of terrorism.

The new terrorism thesis enjoyed substantial academic patronage at the time, including the support of some leading scholars like Walter Laqueur. Proclaiming a radical shift in the nature and character of terrorism, Laqueur (1996) believed that modern day terrorism was far more dangerous and destructive than its predecessor. “The trend”, Laqueur (1996) argued, “now seems to be away from attacking specific targets like the other side's officials and toward more indiscriminate killing” (p. 25).

In order to make a more forceful and compelling argument, Laqueur conveniently conflated terrorist actors with millennial and apocalyptic cults. He stated that “Extremist millenarians would like to give history a push, helping create world-ending havoc replete with universal war, famine, pestilence, and other scourges” (Laqueur 1996, p. 32). Such catastrophic and world-ending tendencies, Laqueur (1996) argued, were no longer unique to millennial groups since “Apocalyptic elements crop up in contemporary intellectual fashions and extremist politics as well” (p.33).

Conflation of millenarians and terrorists allowed Laqueur to propose the notion of ‘postmodern terrorism’ that evidently corresponded to a new class of terrorists who were neither rational, moral or goal driven like their predecessors. While his proposed term did not quite gain currency, the rationale behind postmodern terrorism however had a massive impact on the emerging discourse of new terrorism.

Much like Walter Laqueur, proponents of the new terrorism thesis were convinced that all past categories and typologies of terrorism had largely been rendered useless due to the colossal shift and paradigm altering changes in the nature and character of terrorism. From being rational, calculated, conservative, hierarchal and somewhat discriminate in both its choice of weapons and target, terrorism allegedly had now become completely irrational, amorphous and indiscriminate (thereby justifying the affix ‘new’) (Neumann, 2009). Such characterization of terrorism concurrently delegitimized it without any exception, condemned it unequivocally and stripped it of all its morality. As I have noted elsewhere, “Decentralized and amorphous, with an active desire to use weapons of mass destruction through an act of self-immolation if necessary, stripped terrorism off its morality completely” (Gillani, 2017, p. 223).

A radical shift of such mammoth proportions subsequently necessitated a corresponding set of equally radical responses that departed considerably from conventional norms and established practices. Terrorism was no longer seen as a rational or calculated activity that was simply part of a terrorist’s strategic or tactical repertoire. Instead, it was seen as an evil monstrosity that was devoid of all morality and humanity. Viewed in such a manner, it became somewhat outrageous to even suggest that such a vile phenomenon could have any legitimate drivers or root causes. Terrorism, in other words, was not meant to be understood or rationalized, it was instead urged to be rejected irrevocably and fought voraciously.

After the horrific events of September 11, when the world was still grappling to make sense of all that transpired, the new terrorism thesis conveniently provided the simplest explanation for the seemingly irrational and vilely indiscriminate terrorist attacks. The shock and awe from 9/11, coupled with the disgust and revulsion it subsequently evoked, paved the way for universal condemnation and a complete disregard for any underlying root causes of terrorism and violent extremism. Deeming all rationalizing enterprises naive and counter-productive, terrorism was vigorously urged to be fought with sheer brute force alone. This subsequently and somewhat inadvertently paved the way for the uncompromising and one-dimensional war on terror thesis, which continues to be relevant even today.

Although arguably the focus under President Trump has of late shifted to inter-state conflict where the largely intra-state phenomenon of terrorism appears to have taken a back seat, his approach to the problem however (much like his predecessors), visibly takes its cue from the war on terror and the new terrorism thesis. In the recent comprehensive 2026 counterterrorism (CT) strategy, Trump reiterates the fairly familiar rhetoric regarding the transformed nature of terrorism that no longer adheres to the sensitivities and sensibilities of the past. The CT policy categorically states, “the terrorist threat has changed. We face new categories and combinations of violent actors that make the established ways of doing counterterrorism insufficient or obsolete” (United States Counterterrorism Strategy, 2026).

The Absurdity of the Absolute: ‘We do not Talk With Terrorists’

Adopted thus after the fateful 9/11 attacks, the WoT paradigm was extremely rigid and uncompromising. With its complete disregard for the drivers and root causes of terrorism, the overly confining lens of the thesis focused solely on militaristic and kinetic alternatives. Such a narrow and myopic response to terrorism predictably failed to provide any permanent solution to the problem as any relief or success attained proved to be superficial and short-lived.

Surprisingly however, despite its numerous shortcomings and repeated failures, the WoT thesis began to dominate policy and strategic discourses all over the world. Even when the so-called war on terror began to visibly fumble and falter, governments all over the world were reluctant to abandon the thesis and find alternate means to address the problem of terrorism. This reluctance is perhaps best captured by the policy to not engage, talk or negotiate with terrorists, which has remained the default position of nearly all governments for a good part of the 21st century. As Harmonie Toros (2008) points out, “Government after government has pledged never to talk to terrorists” (p. 407). Carl Miller (2011) similarly notes, “Can we negotiate with terrorists? The answer seems obvious, and the case closed” (p. 145).

The seemingly obvious answer to the rhetorical question ‘can we talk with terrorists?’ was never always this self-evident. In fact, prior to September 11, negotiations with terrorists, was a crucial part of a government’s response to terroristic incidents. In a 1980 article, *The Terrorists’ Dilemmas: Some Implicit Rules of the Game*, Jeanne Knutson views terrorism as a game that is effectively played out between the terrorists and the government. A crucial component of this game is the lingering prospects and potential of negotiations between the two players. Knutson (1980) argues that government players, at times, “have no option but to accept the terrorists as political players

and to negotiate with them a settlement of the incident or- maximally- of the stated causes for its occurrence” (p. 211).

After 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration set out to completely overhaul the previously established rules of the game. Negotiations, talks or engagement of any kind was simply no longer deemed an option. Terrorism and terrorists were believed to have mutated and their demands were no longer seen as logical or rational (just as the new terrorism thesis had posited). It was allegedly pointless therefore to engage with terrorists in a civilized manner. As George Bush pointed out, “we are not facing a set of grievances that can be soothed and addressed. We are facing a radical ideology with unalterable objectives [...] and no concession, bribe, or act of appeasement would change or limit their plans for murder” (The White House, October 6, 2005). The New York Times, in an article titled *Cult of Death*, similarly observed that “This death cult has no reason and is beyond negotiation” (Brooks, September 7, 2004).

The ‘negotiations are useless’ or simply the ‘we do not talk with terrorists’ dictum was one of the central assertions of the WoT thesis. It rested on the premise that no explanatory or justificatory space should ever be granted to terrorism. Talking to terrorists or engaging them in any meaningful way would amount to acknowledging them as a social and political reality, which would subsequently undermine the central assertions of the new terrorism thesis and the overall rationale of the war on terror.

While the ‘we do not talk with terrorists’ rhetoric of WoT is primarily about not acknowledging or negotiating with terrorists, the extremely rigid and uncompromising position however, also leaves little to no room for engaging with the drivers of terrorism in any meaningful way. For how can one realistically address the causes of a phenomenon that otherwise does not even warrant a dialogue? As this rigid and uncompromising position became the default response of nearly all countries confronting terrorism, the root causes of the problem increasingly became more complex and obscure. Failure to address the underlying factors responsible for terrorism consequently prevented the countries from finding any permanent solutions to the problem. Instead, a complete reliance on kinetics and military solutions, as espoused by the WoT thesis, continued to compound and aggravate the issues.

Oddly enough, even though over the last two decades the fault lines and inherent contradictions of the WoT paradigm have been made abundantly clear, most of the countries have failed to cast it aside as their sole or primary frame of reference. While this collective failure has had an impact on a global scale, it has proven to be particularly detrimental for countries that are directly struggling with violent extremism and terrorism.

Owing to viewing terrorism as egregiously wrong and immoral coupled with a complete and total disregard of its drivers and root causes, the WoT paradigm (and in extension, the new terrorism thesis) deliberately fails to distinguish between different types of terrorism. As far as WoT is concerned, whether terrorism is nationalist, ethnic, religious, sectarian, right or left, is completely beside the point. All terrorisms are essentially a product of the same irrational mind subject to the same pathologies. Since all terrorisms are inherently the same, they must all be meted the same treatment as well.

This one-dimensional view of terrorism deliberately leaves no space for context and the sociopolitical realities that produce terrorism. As it so happens, it is owing to ignoring the very context and sociopolitical realities that terrorism is just as pervasive as it was two decades ago.

What will Post-War on Terror Entail? Blasphemy Inspired Terrorism as a Case in Point

As discussed already, blindly fighting terrorism with sheer brute force has miserably failed to yield anything meaningful. It becomes imperative therefore to abandon the hopelessly wrong-footed WoT paradigm that only advocates a resort to strict military and kinetic actions. In its stead, we need a new post-war on terror paradigm that first and foremost seeks to understand terrorism and its underlying root causes. Such a paradigm shift is also necessary to take account of the previously ignored valuable context and indispensable sociopolitical realities of the regions that produce terrorism.

Since terrorism essentially is intricately interwoven into the context and socio-political realities of the regions that produce it, it becomes crucial to isolate and study each case separately. Conflation of terrorisms owing to misleading assumptions, exaggerated projections, vague family resemblance or simply due to our inherent cognitive propensity for simplicity, (See e. g. Chater, 1999) has proven to be grossly inadequate. There can be no ‘meta’ theory or narrative (like the WoT or new terrorism thesis) that can magically provide a single answer to the complex problem of terrorism. Each case is ultimately unique and a product of complex indigenous factors that consequently deserves to be studied as such. As Richard English (2021) pithily observes, “Every terrorism (and ultimately, every terrorist) is unique” (p. 565).

In addition to deconstructing and dismantling the fallacious meta-theories and narratives that sustained the war on terror for nearly a quarter of a century, it will therefore be necessary in the post-war on terror era to study each case separately and contextually.

For far too long we have relied on bogus assumptions and flawed generalizations that have prevented us from understanding and acknowledging the prevailing ground realities. Fixation with the likes of Al-Qaeda, for instance, has more often than not, reduced all Islamist inspired VE and terrorists groups to a single monolithic entity that allegedly share similar ideology, goals, ambitions and modus operandi. Such gross generalization strips the otherwise Islamist inspired strands of terrorism of their nuance and context. As a result of this oversimplification, the problem remains unaddressed just as the very strands of terrorism become more widespread and pervasive. Blasphemy inspired terrorism in countries like Pakistan, is a case in point.

While supposedly of recent vintage, blasphemy related acts of terrorism in Pakistan have a long and convoluted history since the sentiments that ultimately paved the way for it had been brewing for a very long time. Thus even though it has become far more pronounced and pervasive in recent years, the reality is that Pakistan in one way or another has been struggling with blasphemy related violence since its inception.

Despite its increasing pervasiveness over the last several years, this strand of terrorism has thus far not been accorded its fair share of academic attention and intellectual scrutiny. This is because like many other strands of Islamist terrorism, blasphemy related acts are sloppily lumped with Al-Qaeda/ISIS style terrorism. This reductionist approach (courtesy the war on terror) has prevented

us from objectively studying and finding lasting solutions to the problem of blasphemy inspired terrorism.

Admittedly, owing to a shared religious core, there is often considerable doctrinal overlap between religiously inspired terrorist groups. However, a shared religious core does not mean that the groups also have a shared set of grievances or objectives. In fact, more often than not, the grievances and objectives are shaped by their respective histories, identities and socio-political realities. Exploring or seeking an explanation through religion alone is therefore both imprudent and disingenuous.

Thus, even though all blasphemy related violence is effectively inspired by religion, it cannot and should not be isolated from the history and socio-political realities of the regions that produce it. Blasphemy and for that matter religion, are not stand-alone variables that can explain terrorism and political violence on their own. As English (2021) points out, “religion is neither an incidental, detachable badge nor an isolated and independent cause of terrorism” (p. 566).

To make sense of blasphemy inspired terrorism in Pakistan, it will therefore be crucial to examine the history of the country, its enduring identity crisis, (See e.g. Gillani, 2021) socio-cultural sensitivities, religious divisions, sectarian feuds, political maneuverings, and geo-strategic dynamics of the region. “It is in the complex, contextual interweaving of these elements that explanation really lies, rather than in the clumsy labeling of it as a religious phenomenon which operates in a mechanical fashion” (English, 2021, p. 567).

Conflation of blasphemy inspired terrorism with the likes of Al-Qaeda or ISIS will therefore be grossly misleading and counter-productive. The same is also true for just about any strand of religiously motivated act of terrorism. Regardless of its family resemblance and in spite of all the similarities, any type of terrorism should never be divorced from its history and context.

In the post-war on terror era, it will be paramount to account for both history and context. Only this will allow us to break free from the unhelpful and constrictive frames of references that dictated the fateful war on terror. It will also allow us to move past the ‘fight it all cost’ and ‘we do not talk with terrorists’ paradigm towards a genuine understanding of the problem of terrorism.

Conclusion

Adopted after the fateful 9/11 attacks, the war on terror paradigm was extremely rigid and uncompromising. Deeming terrorism immoral and irrational and with a complete disregard for any underlying drivers and root causes, the overly confining lens of the paradigm focused solely on kinetic and military alternatives. Such a narrow and myopic response to terrorism predictably failed to provide any permanent solution to the problem as any relief or success proved to be shallow and superficial.

While that maybe so, many countries are still struggling to cast WoT aside as their primary frame of reference. Terrorism is still largely viewed as vile and nefarious, devoid of any morality and rationality. There is also an explicit desire to root it out at all costs by any and all means possible, which usually is an allusion to or a tacit approval of brutal and ruthless military actions.

Given the tremendous setbacks and brazen failures of the war on terror- be they in Iraq, Afghanistan or Pakistan- fixation with it is both aggravating and baffling. This unhealthy fixation is increasingly proving to be detrimental for the world at large that continues to suffer from the adverse effects of terrorism and violent extremism.

It is time now to cast aside the restrictive, wrong-footed and ill-fated war on terror and replace it with a new post-war on terror paradigm that will first and foremost seek to understand terrorism and its underlying root causes. Such a paradigm shift is also necessary to take account of the previously ignored valuable context and indispensable sociopolitical realities of the regions that produce terrorism.

We will only truly be able to do justice to the study of terrorism once we stop viewing it as an evil monstrosity devoid of any merit or substance and start appreciating and acknowledging the local context and the sociopolitical realities that produce it. This is because the notion of evil is heavily pejorative and value-laden that prevents us from understanding and rationalizing any social behavior.

If we continue to see terrorism as evil and express an unequivocal resolve to fight it at all costs, then we are not really moving forward. Instead, we will be hopelessly clinging on to the salient relics of an age that we desperately want to distance ourselves from. For the claims about the end of an era to have any merit or substance, it is crucial to do away with spurious legacies and myopic policies of the recent past. Failure to do so could seriously jeopardize the long-awaited transition to the postwar on terror era.

As the epilogue on the war on terror is now beginning to unfold, we are indeed on the brink of a major paradigm shift. However, for that much desired shift to truly materialize, we must first distance ourselves from the idiosyncrasies that were characteristic of the war on terror.

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