

# CULTURE OF PEACE: A POTENT TOOL AGAINST TERRORISM

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## ***Abstract***

There is no gainsaying the fact that terrorism is a major threat to the survival of this generation, the international community or the civilised world. It is noted that peace had largely prevailed globally since the end of the World War II. However, it will be argued in this paper that terrorism has successfully but unfortunately interrupted international culture of peace. The apprehensions are rife. Everyone is vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

Since stringent legislative measures and military warfare have proved ineffective in halting acts of terrorism globally, this paper seeks to advance a paradigm shift in the strategies being employed by various nations in combating the menace. The premise of this paper is to proffer pragmatic way of getting this done. The Culture of Peace is the key strategy. Sadly, the global community has underestimated the potency of cultural values, education, tolerance, peace and understanding in countering violent extremism.

It will be argued that international cultural re-orientation and broad based education is very crucial in the ongoing international alliance against the culture of war (terrorism) being waged against humanity by unpatriotic elements.

International political will, patriotism and consciousness awakening are the needs of the hour, for effective response to the growth of terrorism. Any strategies for check-mating terrorism advancement, anywhere in the world, need to be comprehensive, all-encompassing, multi-prolonged but dynamic. It must also be capable of constant review and priority driven. Culture is cardinal in this regard.

The foregoing standpoint is not the same as the usual media vibe. The argument here is that, since terrorism starts from the mind, the culture of peace must be infused and integrated into the national and international education systems. Terrorism mentality impartation can be prevented if culture of peace is proactively instilled into the young minds before extremists get them derailed.

Unfortunately, the potency of culture, in the fight against terrorism, is yet to be embraced accorded its rightful place.

This paper further maintains that the current excessive militarization of terrorism combats alone will not better address the issues of violent extremism. The proposition is that a would-be productive armed counter-terrorism measure must be blended with non-military or civil solutions anchored on cultural re-orientation and broad based education. Unity in diversity, religious tolerance and mutual respect must be taught in the same manner languages, mathematics, sciences, arts humanities are taught in schools.

With cultural value imbuement, massive deconstruction campaign will be achieved if launched and vigorously pursued as a de-radicalisation strategic tool. Again, peaceful culture is loaded with untapped potentials that are capable of dissuading the present and future generations from taking to terrorism for any reason. The conviction of this researcher is that, since terrorism feasts on the young minds, the society requires proactive measures such as using cultural value impartations to check-mate terrorists' recruitment drives.

Therefore, this paper concludes that broad-based cultural education is an indispensable tool towards exterminating acts of terrorism. Every nation, whether presently experiencing terrorism menace or not, needs to inculcate the spirit of patriotism and love for humanity in the minds of their respective citizens.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Despite the violence-laden-world of today, peace is still possible. Yes, it is. It is if and only if good [people] form strong alliance against evil [people - terrorists]. It is a matter of choice and conscious efforts. This choice goes with sacrifices too: compromise, commitment, political will etc.

Needless to overemphasis the threat posed by terrorism to the peace of the entire world. The Middle –East is generally held to be the epicentre of the menace. However, other parts of the world have their own ugly experiences to share. African nations and Central Asia are not spared. Each of the European countries have either experienced acts of terrorism or are spending chunk sums of their annual (financial) budgets to prevent it. Even America, France and United Kingdom have been attacked one time or the other and are still vulnerable to future attacks.

The world body – the United Nations saw the enormity and of the challenge and formed the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) with the responsibility of

coordinating the efforts at combating the threat around the world. This Committee has been churning out programmes, collaborating with nations and regional bodies to further its terms of reference.

Gruesome images of senseless attacks, mayhem and extreme violence are all over the place for all to see. Security outfits, schools, markets, hospitals are randomly attacked. As peace – seeking people, the rest of the world need to rally round, work together and harness the potentials inherent in the culture of peace to defeat the common enemy - terrorism. Target should be the youths around the world. The feelings of discontents, injustice and oppression; the racial, ethnic and hateful prejudices embedded in them need to be deconstructed. They should be made to understand the world as big family, with equal opportunity for all to achieve their respective goals and aspirations.

Since religion is a strong indoctrination tool and radicalisation, legitimate regimes owe it as duty to this and future generations to ensure that religious teachings and practices are fairly or reasonably regulated. Light of peace should be lit to dispel the darkness of ignorance bedevilling the present world.

This writer concurs with the former British Prime Minister – Mr. Tony Blair who is emphatic that through education (culture), terrorism can be defeated.<sup>1</sup> Addressing the UN CTED in New York, the ex British leader stressed that, in the present 21<sup>st</sup> Century, education need to be viewed as a security concern. That only the education which opens the young minds to other peoples' diverse religious and cultural identities, and shows them how the future works, should be imparted. According to him, young people should be taught how to see others as equal and respect their respective cultures, faiths and belief systems.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, to see each other in oneself, peaceful co-existence must be the collective objective of all.

To achieve the above aspirations, there is the urgent need to go beyond rhetorics. So far, the needed action of urgency is lacking mainly due to little or no funding of the culture of peace programme. Massive mobilisation and organisation should be embarked upon. Conversely, the extremists are able to rake havoc on the world today because they are organised, equipped and

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial, "Terrorism can only be defeated by education, former British leader - Tony Blair, tells UN", UN News Centre, November 21, 2013. Also available at

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=46554#.WKWODG997IU> (visited last on 03.09.2017).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

funded.<sup>3</sup> The various programmes, strategies or initiatives of the UN and other regional bodies are neglected and reduced to mere paper tigers. This trend and attitude must be reversed.

## 2. TERRORISM: DESCRIPTION

A universally acceptable definition of terrorism is yet to be evolved. Stakeholders are constantly in disagreement on the precise description of terrorism. The difficulty in so doing is not unconnected with the fluidity of the subject itself and diversity of the actors on both sides.

Nevertheless, for the sake of this paper, some working definitions shall be adopted. One of such is one preferred by the defunct League of Nations. The then international body defined Acts of terrorism as *criminal acts directed against a state or intended to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons or a group of persons or the general public*.<sup>4</sup> It could also mean *The threat or use of force to achieve political objectives without the full-scale commitment of resources*.<sup>5</sup> The concept of terrorism has equally been described as *The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or organized group against a person or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons*.<sup>6</sup>

None of the foregoing definitions/descriptions is without criticisms. Some of the definitions hinged the objective of acts of terror on politics alone. But that is not always the case and need not be to qualify as act terror. According to Wardlaw,<sup>7</sup> because terrorism engenders such extreme emotions, partly as a reaction to the horrors associated with it and partly because of its ideological context, the search for a definition which is both precise enough to provide a meaningful analytical device yet general enough to obtain agreement from all participants is fraught with difficulty.<sup>8</sup>

This researcher knows of no such thing as 'perfect' definition of terrorism. As the concept of terror campaign constantly twists so is the search for its generally acceptable description. In fact, it is such inherent imperfection that makes the subject-matter more an interesting area of research. The reason is that that creates room for more rediscovery (research) among authors, research scholars and other stakeholders. There is also emphasis on fear in the definitions but this is not

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<sup>3</sup> Vivek Chandha, "Lifeblood of Terrorism: Countering Terrorism Finance", p. 43, (Bloomsbury Publishing India, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> League of Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism, 1937. Unfortunately, the smooth entry into force of the Convention was hampered by the outbreak of the World War II.

<sup>5</sup> Kupperman, K.. 'Low Intensity Conflict' Cited in Klare, M. And Kornbluh, P. (edited) "Low Intensity Warfare", pages 67 & 147 Pantheon (1988).

<sup>6</sup> The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Cited in p.4, Awake Journal of June 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Wardlaw, G., "Political Terrorism", Pp. 8 & 9, Cambridge University Press, England (1982).

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

always the case with every terrorist operation. It is true that acts of terror are often targeted at non-combatants (civilians) with the aim of instilling fear in them. However, the campaigners often go beyond merely instilling fear on their victims for political purposes and focus on religious promotion or preservation.

Narrowing the definitions down, they presupposes that –

- i. Terrorism is both of national as well as international concern.
- ii. It involves the application or use of force either by individuals or groups against symbolic personalities, places or governments.
- iii. Its aim could be political or for similar objectives.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF PEACE CULTURE AND TERRORISM:

The United Nations General Assembly defined the Culture of Peace as the-

*...values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society.<sup>9</sup>*

As can be deduced from the foregoing, the culture of peace or peace culture, as a concept, was a programme of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). It evolved following the UNGA's declaration of the International Year for the Culture of Peace.<sup>10</sup> The concept was aimed at inspiring the works of individuals, groups, organisations and institutions around the world<sup>11</sup> as the international community march towards global peace. Ultimately, it was meant to counter the culture of war, which has been ravaging the human family in different scales. The year 2000 was formally proclaimed as the International Year for the Culture of Peace by the UNGA. Later, 2001-

<sup>9</sup> See "Towards a Global Movement" of the United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace (A/RES/53/13). Also available at [http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk\\_mov.htm](http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk_mov.htm) (visited last on 03.09.2017).

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, under Resolution A/RES/53/243.

<sup>11</sup> Provided their actions correspond to those of the UN Declaration and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace (A/RES/53/243): to foster culture of peace through education; to promote sustainable economic and social development; to promote respect for all human rights; to ensure equality between women and men; to foster democratic participation; to advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity; to support participatory communication and free flow of information and knowledge and to promote international peace and security.

2010 was declared as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for Children of the World.<sup>12</sup>

The above proclamations obviously triggered off the global movements for the Culture of Peace. It is to analyse and further these lofty ideals that this paper is partly aimed at. The question of whether the movement is progressing is that of facts. Since the facts speak for themselves, the answer to the question is already in the public domain and all can see. It is no news that member nations of the UN are yet to fully and practically key into this noble concept because they have withheld their financial commitments towards its implementations.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the movement, though still in existence, is yet to make its mark on the global map. The impact is yet to be felt. It is this foot-dragging posture and ineptitude of the member states that has negatively affected the impacts expected of the concept, for almost two decades since its proclamation.<sup>14</sup>

It is not just enough to play the blame-game. It should not be seen as the duty of only the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), as the UN lead agency, to execute. All efforts must be put together and pulled together if its lofty ideals would be achieved. The mass media is indispensable in this regard. However, the contribution (if any) is also yet to be felt across board. Lovers of peace, other stakeholders in the global peace project cannot afford to wait any longer. The time to act is now. Why? Because terrorism is not 'their problem', it is our collective concern. Everyone is susceptible to the menace. In the September 2001, when the World Trade Centre was hit in the United States, it was not only the US citizens that were affected. Almost every nation in the world lost one, two or more of her citizens in that history-breaking terrorist attack.

The argument here is that, since terrorism starts from the mind, the culture of peace must be infused and integrated into the national and international education systems of the world. Terrorism mentality impartation can be prevented if culture of peace is proactively instilled into the young minds before extremists get them derailed with culture of war. Unfortunately, the potency of culture, in the fight against terrorism, is yet to be embraced accorded its rightful place.

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<sup>12</sup> A/RES/53/25.

<sup>13</sup> Especially the United States, the European Union members and their allies who removed the provision of funding for a culture of peace resolution passed by the UNGA. See Article by David Adams, "The Culture of Peace as the Best Alternative to Terrorism", p.13. Available at <http://www.culture-of-peace.info/terrorism/AlternativetoTerrorism.pdf> (visited last on 01.09.2017).

<sup>14</sup> It was proclaimed in the year 2000.

Drawing from the definition again, one way of maintaining peace in today's world is by tackling the root causes of violence, intolerance, extremism and hostilities. Relating this to terrorism menace, terrorism is a clear manifestation of culture of war. One root cause of terrorism is brainwashing, teaching or indoctrination which gradually becomes a way of life (culture) of the indoctrinated. When this root is successfully countered through deconstruction, re-orientation and value impartation, then culture of peace would take the place of culture of war.

Terrorism represents the culture of war. However, the culture of war should not be restricted to the ongoing terror campaigns around the globe. Culture of war extends to bad governance, authoritarianism, dictatorial regimes, intolerance and monster/enemy images carefully orchestrated to perpetrate hatred in the human society around the world today.

Nature abhors vacuum. For the world to do away with the culture of war, the vanguards of the culture of peace must be up and running. The campaign must be vigorous and an active one. The world must match or replace terrorism with anti-terrorism, war with peace, violence with non-violence. On this note, the philosophy of the likes of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, Betty Williams, Dalai Lama, John Lennon, Bob Marley etc maybe adopted. If non-violence movement worked in achieving political emancipation, it can work in dethroning the culture of war and enthroning the culture of peace. Peace is possible.

There was a Summit held by the UNGA in September 2005. A document called "Summit Outcome", more of a communiqué, was issued at the end of the Summit. In the document, non-combatant approach to tackling terrorism was prominently featured. Suggestions in the document tilted towards the culture of peace. It suggested *dialogue* of civilizations as a better approach of dealing with the main causes of terrorism in the world. Specifically, the document advocated for *a strategy to promote comprehensive, coordinated and consistent responses, at the national, regional and international levels, to counter terrorism, that also takes into account the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.*<sup>15</sup> The Assembly went further to *commend* different initiatives aimed at promoting dialogues, tolerance and understanding amongst civilizations organisations.

For the above recommendations to have the much anticipated impacts, it must be put to its proper use. The United Nations Security Council has a critical role to play in this case. The organ members must toe the path of civility as well and cooperate among themselves in doing so. The cooperation

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<sup>15</sup> See the "The 2005 World Summit" (High-Level Plenary Meeting of the 60th Session of the UN General Assembly" held from 14-16 September 2005, at UN Headquarters, New York. Also available at [http://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/worldsummit\\_2005.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/worldsummit_2005.shtml) (visited last on 01.09.2017).

is what is lacking between the permanent members – US, UK, Russia, China and France. The United States is averse to the idea of dialogue or negotiation with terrorists and has not supported such moves. Russia, on the other hand would not support US's moves against some nations on her terrorist watch-list. Because of the internal wrangling, when sensitive resolutions are put to vote, one or two either exercise their veto powers or frustrate the implementation of the resolutions passed. The position of Russia on Syria/ISIS civil war will drive home the point being made here.

If culture of peace will prevail over the culture of war, there must be unity and cooperation among everyone or, at least, the majority of the peace-loving world. Just as the terrorists are busy mobilising their members and adherents, the proponents of peace, on the other hand must put away their differences and unite in theory and in practice. The arms supplying nations should not prioritise their economic interest over and above the world's collective interest of peace. Everything should not be reduced to politics. Anything short of that will be exercise in futility.

Of course, the regional blocs were fully represented at the Summit<sup>16</sup> and they added their voice to the peace culture debate that ensued at some point. For the purpose of this paper, the position of the European Union (EU) is worth highlighting. The EU maintained that the culture of peace and dialogue is the most appropriate response to the terrorists' campaign of violence and blood-letting. This position, undoubtedly, furthered the Summit Outcome. The EU delegate made the Union's position clear in the following words,

*Who could have imagined at the start of this international decade the challenges to a culture of peace that the world is facing today? As a counter to extremism and terrorism, we must choose to celebrate the values that unite us. In order to undermine those who seek to sow division and chaos, we must strive to develop tolerant and inclusive societies. We must celebrate how diversity enriches our societies, improve understanding amongst faiths and cultures, and foster stronger respect between communities.<sup>17</sup>*

Other regional bodies and individual participant-nations also spoke almost in the same vein. What seems to be the dividing line in the efforts to replace the culture of war with the culture of peace is the sharp disagreement on the actual identity of the enemy. Whereas some nations have identified and tagged terrorists along the religions they profess, others are not comfortable with that trend. The latter is of the view that it is wrong to attribute terrorism to the religion the

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*



perpetrators professes.<sup>18</sup> No doubt, religion is a very sensitive issue. Almost each belongs to one religion or the other. Understandably, each group would do everything possible to preserve the sanctity of theirs. The result is that each of the divides continues to play the blame game and accusing-finger-pointing. How long will this continue? Only time will tell. But, it may be submitted here that once the common enemy is known and acceptable to all, then the actual journey of enthroning peace - as the potent tool against terrorism will commence. Unless and until that is done, the world may continue to sit on the solution to a common problem - terrorism.

### 3. SUMMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The national, regional and international communities' unique ways of life, customs, traditions and civilisation need to be blended towards a common purpose: war against terrorism and restoration of peace. Even though acts of terror are often linked to certain groups of people in the world presently, this may not augur well. Doing so does not, *ipso facto*, qualify terrorism as a culture of such region or people. Holding otherwise will be unsound in law and in logic. Terrorism is anti-culture. It is anti-divination. It is anti-tradition, custom, unity and antithetical to a peaceful society, which all peace-loving nations jointly strive and crave to have.

From the entirety of this paper, a plausible position has emerged: that there is no better alternative to terrorism than the culture of peace. When this is fully embraced and utilised, then the actual decline of the culture of war will begin to manifest. Extreme violence and culture of war are the twin postures of terrorist campaigners. National and international bodies, governments, civil regimes, policy makers and shapers, the media, faith-based groups and other stakeholders need to get into the umbrella of the United Nations and partner with the world body to promote the culture of peace as potent tool against international terrorism.

This author sums up this article with the following points:

- Terrorist financing is the sustaining blood of terrorism. Unless and until the main sources of terrorists' supplies are successfully cut off, curtailing the menace maybe take longer than anticipated.
- The culture of peace is a splendid programme that presents the world with an unusual tool to eliminated terrorism in all its ramifications.

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<sup>18</sup> Malaysia, China and Qatar etc are among the holders of this opinion.

- No doubts, the culture of peace is largely embraced across board but failed due to lack of funding.
- If blended with the likes of Gandhian and Lutheran philosophies of non-violence, if fully embraced, preached, taught, propagated and ingrained in the lives of this generation, then, sooner than later, the culture of war will be significantly dethroned if not practically or completely eliminated.
- With a huge sigh of relief, this world will cease to be a giant battlefield for terrorists.

This writer's few recommendations are as follows:

- All relevant institutions must be fully engaged in order to permanently block and dry-up the in-flow of funds for domestic and international terrorism. Once the terrorists run out of funds, they will gradually fizzle away both in India, Nigeria and elsewhere.
- Funding is the livewire of the success of culture of peace concept. Therefore, the culture of peace needs to be funded if the concept is really meant to succeed.
- Education or literacy is an indispensable tool towards exterminating acts of terrorism. Therefore, cross-cultural education is crucial to defeating the culture of war (terrorism) and enthroning the culture of peace.
- Culture of peace should be assimilated and made a taught subject in school systems globally.
- Every nation, whether presently experiencing terrorism menace or not, needs to inculcate the spirit of patriotism and love for humanity in the minds of their respective citizens through formal and informal instructions.
- On the implementation of the concept: the UN should make fresh moves for its adequate funding, then fashion out evaluation/reporting system under which member-states should periodically make their progress known.