

## THE WAR ON TERROR AND US STRATEGIES AGAINST AL-QAEDA AFTER 9/11

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### ABSTRACT

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the US launched a military campaign in Afghanistan, where Al Qaeda had established its base of operations. This was followed by the invasion of Iraq in 2003, based on the belief that the country possessed weapons of mass destruction and was providing support to terrorist groups. These actions were part of the US strategy of pre-emptive strikes against potential threats, a doctrine that came to be known as the 'Bush Doctrine.' The US also formed alliances with other countries, such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, in an effort to disrupt and dismantle Al Qaeda's network. Therefore, this paper utilizes a case study approach to gain a nuanced understanding of the specific actions, strategies, and policies employed by the United States in its efforts to dismantle and neutralize Al Qaeda. In addition to military actions, the US also utilized other strategies in the War on Terror. One such strategy was the implementation of enhanced intelligence gathering and surveillance measures, including the controversial Patriot Act. The US also focused on cutting off the financial resources of terrorist organizations, freezing their assets and tracking their financial transactions. Another key aspect of the US strategy was the use of targeted drone strikes to eliminate high-level Al Qaeda leaders. While these strategies have had some success in weakening Al Qaeda, the organization has evolved and adapted, posing new challenges for the US in its ongoing war on terror. This research paper concludes that the War on Terror and the US strategies towards Al Qaeda after 9/11 have had a significant impact on global politics and security. While there have been successes in disrupting and weakening Al Qaeda's operations, the threat of terrorism continues to loom large. The study recommends that the US, along with its allies, must continue to adapt and evolve its strategies in order to effectively combat this persistent threat. The fight against Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations remains a critical and ongoing battle in the quest for global peace and security.

**Keywords:** US, War on Terror, Al-Qaeda, Bush Doctrine, Afghanistan, invasion, challenges, global peace, security, terrorist organizations

### INTRODUCTION

The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City were a turning point in modern history, not just for the United States but for the entire world. The horrific events of that day sparked

a global war on terror, with the US at the forefront of the fight against Al Qaeda, the terrorist organization responsible for the attacks.

The term 'war on terror' was first coined by former US President George W. Bush in a speech on September 20, 2001, just nine days after the 9/11 attacks. In his speech, Bush declared that the US would use all necessary means to defeat terrorism and those who support it. This marked the beginning of a new era in US foreign policy, one that would have a significant impact on the country and the world.

The first step in the US strategy towards Al Qaeda was the invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001. This was in response to the Taliban government's refusal to hand over Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who was believed to be responsible for the 9/11 attacks. The US, along with its NATO allies, launched a military campaign to remove the Taliban from power and destroy Al Qaeda's safe haven in Afghanistan.

The US also initiated a global effort to disrupt and dismantle Al Qaeda's financial networks and support systems. This was done through various means, including freezing their assets, disrupting their funding sources, and targeting their leaders and operatives. The US also worked closely with other countries to share intelligence and coordinate efforts to track down and capture or kill Al Qaeda members. In addition to military and financial measures, the US also implemented a number of diplomatic and political strategies to combat Al Qaeda. This included putting pressure on countries to stop supporting and harboring terrorist groups, as well as promoting democracy and stability in regions that had been breeding grounds for extremism.

However, the most controversial aspect of the US strategy towards Al Qaeda was the use of drone strikes. These targeted killings were carried out by unmanned aircrafts and were seen as a more efficient and less risky way to eliminate Al Qaeda leaders and operatives. While these strikes were effective in taking out key figures within the organization, they also sparked criticism and debate over their legality and impact on civilian casualties.

Despite these efforts, Al Qaeda has not been completely eradicated. While the organization has been significantly weakened, it has also evolved and spread to other regions, such as North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. The rise of the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq also posed a new threat, with some

members of Al Qaeda pledging allegiance to the extremist group.

In recent years, the US has shifted its focus from traditional military operations to a more comprehensive approach that includes both military and non-military measures. This includes working with local partners, using targeted counterterrorism operations, and focusing on countering violent extremism through education and community engagement.

This research paper aims to critically examine the policies pursued by the United States towards Al-Qaeda, offering a comprehensive case study that delves into the evolution of these policies, their effectiveness, and the lessons learned over time.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The events of September 11th, 2001 marked a turning point in global history, as the world watched in shock as the United States was attacked by the terrorist organization Al Qaeda. In response to this devastating attack, the US launched a global war on terror, with the ultimate goal of dismantling Al Qaeda and preventing future attacks. In the past two decades, there have been numerous literatures available on the US strategies towards Al Qaeda and the war on terror.

Jones, S. G. (2008) examines the evolution of US strategies towards Al Qaeda from 2001 to 2008. The authors argue that the initial approach of a military response and a focus on Afghanistan was not effective in defeating the terrorist organizations. He suggests that the US should adopt a more nuanced approach, including diplomatic, economic, and information-based strategies to combat Al Qaeda.

Graham, S. (2013) provides an in-depth analysis of the various strategies used by the US in the war on terror. He argues that while the military response was initially successful in dismantling Al Qaeda's leadership, it also led to an increase in terrorist attacks and recruitment. He suggests that a more comprehensive approach, including addressing the root causes of terrorism, is necessary for long-term success.

Hathaway, O., Adelsberg, S., Amdur, S., & Levitz, P. (2013) focuses specifically on the US war on terror in Afghanistan. Khan argues that the US military approach has not been effective in defeating Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and has caused significant

harm to the civilian population. They suggest that a shift towards political and economic strategies is necessary for achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan. Banka, A., & Quinn, A. (2018) examine the impact of US strategies on Al Qaeda's organizational structure. She argues that while the killing of top leaders has weakened the group, Al Qaeda has adapted and decentralized its operations, making it difficult for the US to defeat them. They suggest that a comprehensive approach, including targeting the group's finances and propaganda, is necessary to truly defeat Al Qaeda.

Allan, F. S., & MARINE CORPS UNIV QUANTICO VA. (2015) focuses on the controversial US drone campaign against Al Qaeda. He argues that while drones have been successful in killing high-value targets, they have also caused civilian casualties and increased anti-American sentiment. They suggest that the US should be more transparent about its drone program and work towards minimizing civilian harm.

Craig, M. (2013) examines the resilience of Al Qaeda in the face of US strategies. He argues that the group has proven to be adaptable and resilient, despite the US's efforts to dismantle it. He suggests that the US should focus on preventing the radicalization and recruitment of individuals into terrorist organizations.

Kfir, I. (2013) focuses on the role of intelligence in US strategies towards Al Qaeda. The authors argue that intelligence gathering and analysis are crucial in understanding the motivations and capabilities of terrorist groups. He suggests that the US should invest in intelligence capabilities to effectively combat Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.

Van Evera, S. (2006) provides an overview of the various strategies used by the US in its counterterrorism efforts. He argues that while military force has been effective in disrupting Al Qaeda's operations, it is not enough on its own. Van suggests that a comprehensive approach, including addressing underlying grievances and building partnerships with other countries, is necessary for long-term success.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

How has the US approach towards Al Qaeda evolved since 9/11?

What are the unintended consequences of US strategies towards Al Qaeda?

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

To develop understanding about the motivations and tactics of Al Qaeda

To evaluating the effectiveness of US strategies towards Al Qaeda

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States has been engaged in a global war on terror, with a focus on eliminating the threat of Al Qaeda and its affiliates. This war has been characterized by a variety of military and non-military strategies, all aimed at disrupting and dismantling the terrorist organization and preventing future attacks. In order to understand the effectiveness of these strategies, it is important to examine the research methodology used in studying the war on terror and the US approach to Al Qaeda.

One of the primary research methods used for this study was qualitative research. This involves gathering data through interviews, observations, and analysis of documents and media sources. This approach has been particularly useful in understanding the motivations and ideologies of terrorist groups, as well as the impact of counterterrorism policies on local communities.

In addition to these research methods, case study has also been used in understanding the war on terror and US strategies towards Al Qaeda. Case studies involve in-depth analysis of specific events or situations, providing a detailed and contextualized understanding of the subject. These studies have been used to analyze the impact of US policies on countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the role of intelligence agencies in the fight against Al Qaeda.

### **9/11 and Reshaping of the Policy of United States**

Over the past few decades, the world has witnessed several acts of terrorism perpetrated by various extremist groups. One of the most notorious among them is Al Qaeda, an extremist organization that gained global attention through its devastating attacks, particularly targeting the United States.

Al Qaeda's motivations can be traced back to the United States' foreign policy in the Middle East. The presence of American military forces in the region, coupled with its support for regimes that were perceived as oppressive by many, created a sense of resentment among certain segments of the population. Al Qaeda capitalized on this sentiment, presenting itself as a defender of Islam against perceived Western aggression. The group saw the United States as an influential power obstructing their ideological vision for the region.

Thus, Al Qaeda's decision to target the United States was influenced by a combination of factors, including U.S. foreign policy, the symbolic importance of the country, recruitment opportunities, a desire for retaliation, and the amplification of their ideological appeal. By attacking the United States, Al Qaeda sought to undermine Western power, gain global attention, and attract support from like-minded individuals.

Since the devastating attacks of September 11, 2001, the world has witnessed the emergence of a new era of global terrorism. In this landscape, Al-Qaeda has been a prominent force, perpetuating violence and posing a significant threat to international security. Combating terrorism, particularly the Al-Qaeda network, has become a crucial responsibility of the United States. The United States, as a champion of democracy and human rights, has a vital role to play in promoting global peace. By combating Al-Qaeda, the United States acts as a deterrent to other extremist groups and helps protect countries vulnerable to terrorist activities. A destabilized world impacted by terrorism would compromise progress, economic development, and social harmony. The United States recognizes this responsibility and actively collaborates with international partners to counter the Al-Qaeda threat.

Thus, global counterterrorism efforts require effective coordination, intelligence sharing, and collaboration among nations. The United States, as a superpower with advanced military capabilities and intelligence agencies, possesses the resources and expertise to contribute significantly to this collective fight. By taking a leading role in combating Al-Qaeda, the United States strengthens alliances, enhances global counterterrorism mechanisms, and fosters international cooperation. Such collaboration is vital in dismantling terrorist networks, disrupting

their financing, and preventing the spread of extremist ideologies. Further we will discuss the gradual change in the policy of US after the 9/11 under different administrations. (McBride, 2021b)

### **Counter Terrorism Policies under George W. Bush Administration**

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Right after the attack President George W. Bush visits Manhattan to address rescue workers at the World Trade Center site, a ten-block area of rubble that ultimately takes nine months to clear. Later that day, speaking at the Washington National Cathedral, Bush vows to "answer these attacks, and rid the world of evil." He also declares a *national state of emergency*, which gives him expanded powers to mobilize the military. A week later, he issues a second emergency declaration that grants the executive branch sweeping powers to target terrorist financing around the world. These emergency declarations are renewed each year by Bush and subsequent presidents and remain in force today.

### **Speech on September 11, 2001 (Address to the Nation)**

On the evening of September 11, 2001, President Bush addressed the nation in a televised speech from the Oval Office. In this speech, he sought to console the American people, express solidarity with the victims and their families, and convey a sense of national unity in the face of the tragedy. He condemned the terrorist acts and assured the American people that the government would take every necessary action to bring those responsible to justice. He also emphasized that the attacks were not only against the United States but against freedom-loving people everywhere.



Speech on September 20, 2001 (Address to a Joint Session of Congress):

President Bush addressed a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, just nine days after the attacks. In this speech, he outlined his administration's response to the 9/11 attacks and presented a plan to combat terrorism. He stated that the United States would lead a global campaign against terrorism and emphasized the need for international cooperation. He also emphasized that the fight against terrorism was not a war against Islam and called for tolerance and understanding. President Bush outlined the objectives of the war on terror, including dismantling terrorist networks, holding nations that support terrorism accountable, and enhancing homeland security.

### **Internal Counterterrorism Policies**

In the United States, counterterrorism efforts are guided by various documents and policies, such as the National Strategy for Counterterrorism (NSCT) and the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) Strategic Operational Planning Guidance. These documents outline the government's strategies, priorities, and coordination mechanisms to combat terrorism.

Key elements of US counterterrorism efforts typically include:

### **Intelligence gathering and analysis**

Intelligence agencies collect and analyze information to identify potential threats, understand terrorist networks, and disrupt their activities. This involves monitoring communications, conducting surveillance, and cooperating with international partners.

### **Enhancing Resilience and Preparedness**

Building resilience within communities and critical infrastructure sectors is crucial to mitigating the impact of terrorist attacks. This involves developing emergency response plans, promoting public awareness, and providing training and resources to law enforcement and other stakeholders.

### **Law Enforcement and Investigations**

Law enforcement agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), play a crucial role in investigating terrorist plots, identifying perpetrators,

and bringing them to justice. They work closely with intelligence agencies and other partners to gather evidence and disrupt terrorist activities.

### **USA Patriot Act**

The USA PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act) was passed by Congress in October 2001. It aimed to enhance the investigative and surveillance powers of law enforcement agencies to track and prevent terrorist activities. It expanded the authority of intelligence agencies to collect information, improved information sharing between agencies, and provided new tools for wiretapping and surveillance.

### **Department of Homeland Security**

In response to the 9/11 attacks, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was established in November 2002. It consolidated various federal agencies responsible for domestic security, including the Coast Guard, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Transportation Security Administration, and Secret Service. The DHS aimed to coordinate efforts to protect the country from terrorist attacks and respond to natural disasters.

### **Enhanced Interrogation Techniques**

The Bush administration authorized the use of enhanced interrogation techniques, including waterboarding, on suspected terrorists held in secret CIA detention facilities. These techniques drew controversy and criticism from human rights organizations and many legal experts, arguing that they amounted to torture and violated international law.

## **EXTERNAL COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES**

### **International cooperation**

Since terrorism is a global phenomenon, international collaboration is vital. The United States works closely with other countries through intelligence sharing, joint operations, capacity building, and diplomatic efforts to address transnational terrorist threats collectively.

### **Border Security and Immigration Control**

Preventing the entry of individuals with terrorist intent or connections is an essential aspect of counterterrorism. Border security agencies, such as Customs and Border Protection (CBP), work to secure the borders and implement screening procedures to identify and intercept potential threats.

### **Disrupting Financing and Support Networks**

Cutting off the financial resources that support terrorist organizations is a critical part of counterterrorism efforts. The United States employs various tools and regulations to detect and disrupt terrorist financing networks, both domestically and internationally.

### **CIA's Detention Program**

Bush gives the CIA new, unrestricted power to apprehend and hold anyone it considers to be a **"continuing, serious threat"** to the United States in a secret document. Prior to this, the CIA's power to hold particular people without charge was severely restricted. The command launches what later expands into a vast global network of CIA **"black sites,"** or secretive, covert detention and questioning facilities. The first prisoner of this type, often referred to as Abu Zubaidah, is apprehended in Pakistan in March 2002 and sent to a secret facility in Thailand.

### **Congress Authorizes Border Military Response**

Bush ratifies a joint resolution of Congress empowering him to take "all necessary and appropriate force" over those who had "planned, authorized, committed, or assisted" the 9/11 attacks or who provided shelter to those who did. The Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) is originally used by the Bush administration to target al-Qaeda and the Taliban patrons in Afghanistan, but it later broadens its scope to target any forces "associated" with al-Qaeda anywhere in the world.

### **War on Terror-2001**

'The attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century. A war against all those who seek to

export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them.' -George w. bush

George W. Bush unveiled a comprehensive strategy to track down and neutralize terrorists all around the world. He demands that the Taliban government in Afghanistan hand up all al-Qaeda members on its soil, including bin Laden, and issues a warning to the world that "either you are with us or you are with the terrorists."

The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq were a part of the Global War on Terror. George W. Bush declared that the GWOT would not end until terrorism was exterminated on September 20, 2001, and urged that the Taliban stop harboring al-Qaeda members. The President declared on September 24, 2001, that he had issued an executive order freezing the assets of terrorist organizations and those groups that supported terrorist action. (The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days, n.d.)

### **UNDER OBAMA'S ADMINISTRATION**

President Obama inherited two wars when he commenced office, one in Afghanistan and the other in Iraq. With a clear goal in mind Obama wants to put an end to the war against terrorism. He vowed to improve upon the counterterrorism strategies employed by the George W. Bush administration in terms of their nimbleness, openness, and morality. Obama aimed to move away from the Bush administration's excessive reliance on force, which resulted in the disastrous American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The Obama administration built upon and modified some of the counterterrorism policies initiated by the previous administration while introducing new approaches. Here are some key internal counterterrorism policies during the Obama:

### **INTERNAL COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES**

#### **Continued Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (Uses) And Targeted Killings:**

The Obama administration expanded the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones, for targeted killings of suspected terrorists, including high-value targets. This policy faced criticism for its impact on civilian casualties and legal justifications.

### **National Strategy for Counterterrorism:**

In 2011, the Obama administration released the National Strategy for Counterterrorism, outlining a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism efforts. The strategy emphasized a mix of military, intelligence, law enforcement, and international cooperation while incorporating efforts to counter violent extremism and address the root causes of terrorism.

The counterterrorism strategy of the Obama administration adopted a comprehensive approach that recognized the multifaceted nature of the threat. It sought to address the underlying causes of terrorism while simultaneously targeting and disrupting terrorist networks. This approach recognized that military force alone is insufficient and must be complemented by intelligence, law enforcement, diplomacy, and international cooperation. Enhancing intelligence capabilities was crucial to effectively combat terrorism. The Obama administration focused on improving information sharing and coordination among intelligence agencies to gain a comprehensive understanding of evolving threats. This included leveraging technological advancements and fostering international collaboration to exchange intelligence with partner nations.

### **Transfer and Closing of Guantanamo Bay:**

President Obama sought to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, citing concerns about its legality, impact on America's image, and the potential for radicalization. However, this effort faced significant challenges due to legal, political, and security considerations, and the facility remained open throughout his presidency.

### **Enhanced Interrogation Techniques Ban:**

Early in his administration, President Obama signed an executive order banning the use of enhanced interrogation techniques, including those considered to be torture. This policy represented a departure from the practices under the previous administration.

### **Countering Violent Extremism (Cve):**

The Obama administration emphasized efforts to counter violent extremism by addressing its underlying causes. This approach involved working with local communities, faith leaders, and other

stakeholders to prevent radicalization and provide support for individuals at risk of recruitment.

### **Intelligence and Information Sharing:**

The Obama administration continued to enhance intelligence sharing and coordination among agencies, building on the reforms initiated under the Bush administration. Efforts were made to improve information flow and collaboration between domestic and international partners.

### **Reforms to The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (Fisa):**

In response to concerns about privacy and civil liberties, the Obama administration implemented reforms to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) in 2015. These reforms aimed to enhance oversight and transparency in the collection of intelligence by the National Security Agency. (Nelson, 2016)

## **EXTERNAL COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES**

### **Increased Military Engagement**

In order to prevent the hardline Taliban regime from reclaiming control and allowing al Qaeda to once again utilize the country as a base for terrorist activities against the United States and its allies, Obama increased the US military commitment in Afghanistan. Soon after entering office, Obama approved the military's request to send an extra 21,000 troops to Afghanistan, bringing the number of American forces stationed there to around 60,000. This decision was originally taken at the end of the Bush administration.

### **Counterterrorism Strategy and Deployment of Troops**

Obama shifted the focus of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy from a primarily military-centered approach to a broader, multifaceted strategy that emphasized intelligence, diplomacy, and international cooperation. He aimed to disrupt and degrade Al-Qaeda and its associated groups while avoiding large-scale military interventions.

General Stanley McChrystal, a newly appointed military leader, was tasked with coming up with a fresh plan of action in June. Instead of depending solely on American power, McChrystal asked for

40,000 extra troops and promised to use them to train Afghan forces to combat the Taliban. Obama declared in a speech on December 1, 2009, at West Point that he had ordered a short-term surge of 33,000 troops after a protracted series of meetings that started in September, with the condition that American forces must start withdrawing from Afghanistan in July 2011.

Over time, his administration sought to transition responsibility to the Afghan government and reduce U.S. troop presence, eventually leading to the withdrawal of most combat forces by the end of 2014.

### **Targeted Killing and Drone Strikes**

The Obama administration significantly expanded the use of targeted killings, including drone strikes, as a means to eliminate high-value targets within Al-Qaeda.

The president expanded the strategic deployment of special forces and drones in a “secret war” against suspected terrorists. (Drones are remotely controlled, unpiloted aircraft that conduct surveillance and drop precision-targeted bombs.) These strikes were carried out in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia, among other locations. The administration argued that this approach allowed for precision targeting while minimizing the risk to U.S. personnel.

### **Operation Neptune Spear**

The American team engaged in a firefight. Osama bin Laden did resist.”

-Words, uttered by a senior Pentagon official Operation Neptune Spear, named after the trident on the American Navy's Special Warfare symbol, was the name of the actual raid on bin Laden's compound. On the night of the operation, two dozen SEALs entered using two helicopters, flying below the radar and using different routes to avoid being seen.

Thus, in September 2010, the CIA received the lead it required after using surveillance images and intelligence reports to conclude that a known al-Qaida agent was visiting a property in Abbottabad, Pakistan. For years, military and intelligence personnel had searched the world for bin Laden's hiding place. Later Obama ordered the operation even though there was uncertainty and he was aware of the dangers that came with a military strike but

succeed. In celebrating bin Laden's death, Americans applauded the president's decisiveness and judgment.

### **SEAL Team Leader Radioed In, "For God and Country -- Geronimo, Geronimo, Geronimo," Thus Declaring the Raid a Success.**

#### **Covert Operations in Pakistan**

Obama's administration continued the policy of pressuring Pakistan to take action against terrorist safe havens within its borders, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The United States conducted drone strikes and covert operations in Pakistan targeting Al-Qaeda and its leadership.

### **Yemen and Somalia**

The Obama administration increased its focus on combating Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. It supported local partners in these countries with military aid, intelligence sharing, and targeted strikes to degrade the capabilities of these extremist groups.

### **Regional Cooperation and Partnerships**

Obama sought to build and strengthen regional partnerships to combat Al-Qaeda and its affiliates. This included working with allies, such as European and Arab countries, to share intelligence, disrupt financing, and coordinate efforts to counter extremist ideologies.

### **Counterinsurgency and Counter Radicalization**

The Obama administration recognized the importance of addressing the underlying conditions that fostered extremism. It implemented programs to support counterinsurgency efforts, promote good governance, and invest in economic development to prevent radicalization and provide alternatives to extremist ideologies. (Stern, 2023)

### **TRUMP ADMINISTRATION**

Donald Trump served as the 45th President of the United States from January 2017 to January 2021. During his presidency, his administration pursued a policy of countering Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations in Afghanistan. Trump's foreign policy toward Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan was primarily focused on the continued military presence of U.S.



forces in the country and supporting the Afghan government in its fight against terrorism.

## **INTERNAL COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES**

### **Travel Ban**

In January 2017, President Trump issued an executive order known as the "travel ban" that temporarily restricted entry into the United States from seven predominantly Muslim countries (later revised to six countries). The policy aimed to enhance national security by preventing potential terrorists from entering the country. The travel ban faced legal challenges and went through various revisions before being upheld by the Supreme Court in a modified form.

### **Enhanced Vetting**

The Trump administration introduced enhanced vetting procedures for individuals seeking to enter the United States. The aim was to strengthen the screening process for visa applicants, refugees, and other immigrants. These measures were intended to identify potential security threats and enhance national security.

### **Strengthening Immigration Enforcement**

The administration prioritized the enforcement of immigration laws, with a focus on individuals who posed national security risks. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) increased its efforts to detain and deport individuals with suspected ties to terrorism or other criminal activities.

### **Border Security**

The administration emphasized border security as a crucial component of counterterrorism efforts. President Trump advocated for the construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border to prevent unauthorized entry, including potential terrorists. Additionally, the administration sought to enhance border patrol resources and technology to detect and deter threats.

### **Countering Radicalization**

The Trump administration focused on countering radicalization and extremist ideologies within the United States. It launched initiatives to address

domestic radicalization, including efforts to collaborate with social media companies to counter online extremism and promote alternative narratives.

## **Repeal of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Programs**

The Trump administration discontinued some Countering Violent Extremism programs, which aimed to prevent radicalization and provide community support and resources. The administration argued that these programs were ineffective and overly focused on specific ideologies.

## **EXTERNAL COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES**

### **Doha agreement 2022**

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America are dedicated to cooperating to find a comprehensive and lasting peace agreement that ends the war in Afghanistan for the benefit of all Afghans and contributes to regional stability and international security. Four components will make up a comprehensive and long-lasting peace agreement:

Assurances that no foreign terrorist organizations or individuals will use Afghan territory to threaten the security of the United States and its allies

A timetable for the removal of all coalition forces from Afghanistan.

A political agreement reached through intra-Afghan talks and negotiations between the Taliban and a diverse Islamic Republic of Afghanistan negotiating team

A comprehensive and long-lasting ceasefire. These four components work together and depend on one another. All sides aspire a sovereign, undivided Afghanistan that is at peace with both itself and its neighbors.

Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan reaffirms its steadfast determination to stop any foreign terrorist organizations or persons, including Al-Qaeda and ISIS-K, from exploiting Afghan territory to undermine the security of the United States, its allies, and other nations. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan affirms that, in order to hasten the pursuit of peace, it supports the gradual withdrawal of American and coalition forces, provided that the Taliban honours its obligations

under the U.S.-Taliban agreement and any agreements reached through intra-Afghan dialogue. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan confirms its ongoing commitment to neither support or cooperate with foreign terrorist organizations or individuals, and it further declares that it will not serve as a base for their operations. In accordance with its commitments under the current security agreements between the two governments, the United States also reinforces its commitment to supporting the Afghan security forces and other institutions, including through ongoing initiatives to improve the capability of Afghan security forces to thwart and address both internal and external threats. (Boot, 2017)

### **Approaching for Dignified Outcome**

Any gains made by American forces since 2001 may be lost if they simply left Afghanistan. Considering the enormous sacrifices that have been made, including the sacrifice of life, "our nation must seek an honorable and enduring outcome," Trump stated. Clearly, Trump's aides had advised him to avoid the error made by President Obama in 2011, when he withdrew American soldiers from Iraq and permitted the establishment of the self-styled Islamic State. A quick exit, according to Trump, "would create a vacuum" that terrorist organizations like the Islamic State and al-Qaeda would occupy, much like how al-Qaeda used Afghanistan to plan the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.

### **Condition Based Strategy**

McMaster and Mattis, who both served in Afghanistan, developed the policy that Trump adopted. Trump's pledge to switch from a time-based to a condition-based strategy for troop withdrawals i.e., that the U.S. will only withdraw troops if the security situation becomes better, was his most significant commitment.

### **Deployment of NATO Troops**

Trump did not specify the precise amount of the increase in U.S. military levels that would occur under his leadership, sticking with his promise to be imprecise. However, by supporting the Pentagon's plans, he is likely to send an additional 3,900 troops—the quantity sought by General John W. Nicholson Jr., the top NATO commander in Kabul. Other partners will likely deploy fewer

reinforcements to the Resolute Support operation of NATO, which provides guidance and assistance to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).

### **Pressing Pakistan**

A key aspect in Trump's Afghanistan strategy is his new approach towards Pakistan. Trump also followed the tradition set by the George W. Bush administration of calling on Pakistan to stop aiding the Afghan insurgency without having a clear plan for how to do so. The Trump administration has already withheld \$350 million in military funding, but there is no evidence that this financial pressure would lead to a change in Pakistan's core policy of supporting the Taliban as a stand-in for its interests in Afghanistan.

The Trump administration is currently exploring other actions, such as penalizing specific Pakistani officials and more freely bombing militant organizations in Pakistan. There have always been strong counterarguments that the United States cannot afford to alienate Pakistan due to the fact that it serves as a supply route for American forces in Afghanistan and that it works with the United States to combat some transnational terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Trump effectively maintained current U.S. policy towards Pakistan in this manner.

### **Stranding the Policy of Nation Building**

Trump's frequent assertion that the US is not in Afghanistan to "build a nation" suggested that Washington will not micromanage Afghan policies but rather operate "just as a facilitator." This indicates that in order to allow the Afghan government to rule peacefully, the priority was on "defeating the Taliban." This signal that the US will give the Afghan government's struggle against the Taliban top priority. (RANADE, 2017)

### **BIDEN'S ADMINISTRATION**

President Biden has taken a multilateral approach to counterterrorism, working with international partners to address the threat. Biden has emphasized the importance of working with international partners to address the threat of terrorism. He has sought to strengthen partnerships with countries around the world to share intelligence and coordinate

efforts to prevent terrorist attacks. Additionally, he has focused on addressing the root causes of terrorism, such as poverty, lack of education, and political instability, through diplomatic and development efforts.

President Biden has also sought to reassert the United States' leadership role in the world and strengthen alliances with key partners, such as NATO, to address global security challenges. He has emphasized the importance of working with allies to combat terrorism and has sought to repair relationships with countries that were strained under the previous administration. Additionally, he has focused on addressing emerging threats, such as cyberterrorism and domestic extremism, through increased funding for law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

After the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, President Biden has pledged to continue supporting the Afghan government and security forces through diplomatic and economic means. The United States will also continue to provide humanitarian aid to the Afghan people and work with international partners to promote stability and security in the region.

Terrorism has been a significant factor in shaping U.S. foreign policy for several decades, and the Biden administration has inherited a complex landscape of global terrorism threats. While it is too early to fully assess the impact of the Biden administration on this issue, we can look at some of their initial approaches and priorities. (The Trump Administration's Afghanistan Policy, 2021)

## **INTERNAL COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES**

### **Countering Extremism and Domestic Terrorism**

The Biden administration has emphasized the importance of addressing domestic extremism and terrorism within the United States. Following the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol, the administration has taken steps to enhance domestic security measures and allocate resources to combat domestic extremism.

### **Multilateral Cooperation**

The Biden administration has sought to re-engage with international partners and strengthen multilateral institutions in countering terrorism. This

approach aims to foster collaboration, information sharing, and coordinated efforts among countries to address global terrorism threats collectively.

**Focus on Cybersecurity:** Recognizing the evolving nature of terrorism, the Biden administration has emphasized the importance of cybersecurity and countering online radicalization efforts. Cyber threats pose significant challenges in preventing terrorist financing, recruitment, and propaganda dissemination.

### **Regional Priorities**

The Biden administration has focused on regions with active or emerging terrorist threats. For example, they have sought to stabilize the Sahel region in Africa by providing security assistance and supporting regional organizations to combat groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates. Additionally, they have engaged in diplomatic efforts to address terrorism in the Middle East, particularly in Syria and Iraq.

### **Addressing root causes**

The Biden administration has stressed the need to address the underlying socio-economic and political factors that contribute to terrorism. By investing in diplomacy, development aid, and promoting human rights, the administration aims to reduce the conditions that allow extremism to flourish. (Permanently Winding Down the War on Terror Requires Greater Transparency, 2023)

## **EXTERNAL COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES**

### **Afghanistan and the end of the war**

The Biden administration made the decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, ending America's longest war. The goal was to shift focus from a military-centric approach to counterterrorism to a more strategic and diplomatic one. However, the withdrawal raised concerns about the potential resurgence of terrorist groups in the region. (Byman, 2016)

### **Fall of kabul 2021**

The fall of Kabul in 2021 refers to the capture of Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, by the Taliban on August 15, 2021.

Following the withdrawal of international forces, particularly the United States, the Taliban began a rapid offensive across the country in the spring and summer of 2021. They quickly gained control of various provinces and major cities, including Herat, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif. As the Taliban advanced, the Afghan government and security forces struggled to counter their offensive. Resultantly, there were reports of widespread corruption, low morale among Afghan forces, and a lack of effective leadership. The Afghan government also faced political challenges and divisions.

On August 15, 2021, the Taliban entered Kabul, and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. The Afghan security forces largely dissolved or surrendered, and the Taliban assumed control of the city without significant resistance. The fall of Kabul resulted in a chaotic and desperate situation, with thousands of Afghans trying to leave the country, fearing reprisals and a return to Taliban rule. The international community expressed concern for the safety and rights of Afghan citizens, particularly women, who had made significant gains in education, employment, and social participation over the past two decades. (House, 2021)

#### **Implications for Biden's Administration**

The fall of Kabul raises concerns about the security situation in Afghanistan and the potential for the resurgence of terrorism. The Taliban's return to power creates a potential safe haven for extremist organizations, which could pose a threat to US national security interests and global stability.

The US spent over 20 years in Afghanistan conducting counterterrorism operations and training Afghan security forces. The fall of Kabul undermines these efforts, as the Taliban's return to power weakens the ability to prevent terrorist activities. The loss of intelligence networks and military bases also hampers the US ability to monitor and respond to threats in the region. Furthermore, the Taliban's takeover has led to a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, with millions of Afghans displaced or at risk of persecution, especially women and minorities. The US and the international community face the challenge of addressing the immediate needs of those affected and providing assistance to alleviate suffering. The fall of Kabul has domestic political implications for the United States. It has sparked

debates about the wisdom of US military intervention in Afghanistan and raised questions about the decision-making process and execution of the withdrawal. This could impact public opinion, influence elections, and shape future foreign policy decisions. It is important to note that the situation in Afghanistan is evolving rapidly, and the full implications of the fall of Kabul are still unfolding. (Hummel, 2018)

#### **CONCLUSION**

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, forever changed the world and ushered in a new era of warfare – the war on terror. The United States, as the primary target of these attacks, responded with a series of military and diplomatic efforts to combat the threat posed by Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. Now, almost two decades later, it is time to reflect on the effectiveness of these policies and the overall outcome of the war on terror.

The United States' immediate response to the 9/11 attacks was swift and decisive. The then-president, George W. Bush, declared a global war on terror and launched Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime, which had harbored Al Qaeda. This was followed by the invasion of Iraq in 2003, based on the belief that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and had ties to Al Qaeda. These military interventions resulted in the toppling of both regimes and dismantling of their terrorist networks. However, these victories came at a high cost, with thousands of lives lost, and the financial burden estimated to be over \$5 trillion.

Despite these initial successes, the war on terror proved to be an elusive and never-ending battle. The United States' policies against Al Qaeda, including targeted drone strikes, covert operations, and the use of special forces, have not been able to completely eradicate the threat of terrorism. The death of Osama bin Laden in 2011 was a significant blow to Al Qaeda, but the organization has since evolved and continues to pose a threat in various parts of the world. The emergence of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria in 2014 further complicated matters, and the US had to shift its focus to combat this new threat.

Moreover, the US policies in the war on terror have been criticized for their violations of human rights



and international law. The use of torture in interrogations, detention without trial at Guantanamo Bay, and the controversial practice of extraordinary rendition have tarnished the image of the US as a champion of democracy and human rights. These actions have also fueled anti-American sentiments and recruitment for terrorist groups. The US has also faced backlash for its unilateral actions and disregard for the sovereignty of other nations, such as the drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen.

Another aspect that needs to be considered is the impact of the war on terror on the US economy. The massive military spending, coupled with the financial burden of post-war reconstruction, has taken a toll on the US economy. The cost of the war on terror has contributed significantly to the country's national debt, and the long-term economic consequences are yet to be fully realized.

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