

The U.S. Administrations, the Public Opinion, and the War on Terrorism: A Two- Level Game Comparative Analysis of the Wars on Afghanistan and Iraq (2001-2021)^(*)

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Abstract:

Objective: This paper aims to analyze the strategies and tactics employed by successive U.S. administrations in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2001 to 2021. Specifically, it focuses on the administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden. By examining the decision-making processes, public opinion, and partisan divides, this study seeks to understand the complexities and challenges faced by these administrations in conducting the war on terrorism. **Time line:** The timeline for this analysis begins with the 9/11 attacks and concludes with the U.S. Army's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. **Methodology:** This paper uses comparative descriptive analysis. This will help analyze two- level game: 1. The state level administrations and partisanship. 2. the American public opinion towards the war on terrorism. **Results and discussion:** The findings and discussions reveal that the different administrations exhibited varying approaches. Bush, for example, acted swiftly and decisively in response to the immediate threat of terrorism, gaining unanimous consent to launch the war in Afghanistan. However, this unanimity was lost during the war in Iraq, yet Bush still pushed forward with the decision. Obama subsequently led the strategies in Afghanistan and oversaw the withdrawal from Iraq, although he didn't personally oversee the withdrawal from Afghanistan. It was during his administration that Osama bin Laden was assassinated, and the withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 was a significant priority. Trump took a different approach, particularly in his dealings with the Middle East, Iran, the aftermath of the "Spring" in Egypt, the GCC-Qatar crisis, and the establishment of a peace declaration between the U.S. and the Taliban regime. This ultimately paved the way for the Biden administration to withdraw troops from Afghanistan in 2021. These findings underscore the

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absence of political and public consensus in foreign policy conduct, as well as the partisan nature of the strategies employed by different administrations.

Key words: U.S. administrations, War on Terrorism, Afghanistan, Iraq, Public Opinion, Decision- making, Partisan divides.

الإدارات الأمريكية، والرأي العام، والحرب على الإرهاب: تحليل مقارنة لعبة ذات مستويين لحروب أفغانستان والعراق (٢٠٠١-٢٠٢١)

المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل الاستراتيجيات والتكتيكات التي اعتمدتها إدارات الولايات المتحدة المتعاقبة في حروب أفغانستان والعراق في الفترة مابين عام ٢٠٠١ إلى عام ٢٠٢١. وتركز بشكل خاص على إدارات جورج دبليو بوش وباراك أوباما ودونالد ترامب وجو بايدن. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى فهم التحديات التي تواجه هذه الإدارات في شن الحرب على الإرهاب، من خلال دراسة عمليات صنع القرار والرأي العام والانقسامات الحزبية. **الخط الزمني للدراسة:** الوقت المنظور في تحليل الدراسة هو تفجيرات ١١ سبتمبر، وحتى انسحاب الجيش الأمريكي من أفغانستان في عام ٢٠٢١. **المنهجية:** تم الاعتماد على المنهج الوصفي المقارن، سوف يساعد ذلك على تحليل ذو مستويين: ١. مستوى إدارات الدولة والانقسامات الحزبية. ٢. مستوى الرأي العام الأمريكي تجاه شن حرب ضد الإرهاب. **النتائج والخلاصة:** أظهرت النتائج أن الإدارات الأمريكية المتعاقبة اتخذت نهجاً متبايناً. فإدارة بوش اتخذت الصلاحية الفورية ضد الإرهاب بسرعة وحزم، استجابةً للتهديد، حيث حصل على الموافقة بالاجماع لشن الحرب في أفغانستان. لكن هذه الموافقة فُقدت في حرب العراق، ولكن تم فرض القرار بالتنفيذ، على الرغم من عدم الموافقة بالقرار الجمعي. قاد أوباما استراتيجيات الحرب في أفغانستان وانسحاب القوات من العراق. وعلى الرغم من أن إدارته لم تقدر انسحاب أفغانستان، تم اغتيال أسامة بن لادن أثناء إدارته، وكان انسحاب العراق في عام ٢٠١١ من بين الأولويات الهامة في جدول أعماله. اتخذ ترامب مساراً مختلفاً، خاصةً في تعامله مع الشرق الأوسط وإيران وجماعة الإخوان المسلمين بعد "الربيع" في مصر وأزمة مجلس التعاون الخليجي - قطر وإعلان السلام بين الولايات المتحدة ونظام طالبان. قاد هذا النهج نهايةً أمام إدارة بايدن إلى سحب القوات من أفغانستان في عام ٢٠٢١. تؤكد هذه النتائج على عدم وجود توافق سياسي وعام في تنفيذ السياسة الخارجية، فضلاً عن طبيعة الانقسامات الحزبية في الاستراتيجيات التي تم استخدامها بين الإدارات المختلفة

الكلمات المفتاحية: إدارات الولايات المتحدة، حرب على الإرهاب، أفغانستان، العراق، الرأي العام، صنع القرار، الانقسامات الحزبية.

Introduction

Amid political and catastrophic events between the regions of North America and the Middle East, an increase of terrorism and violence has spread and foster world politics. Historically, terrorism and violence has been long before September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Towers in the United States. It is traced back to 1993 when the parking garage beneath the World Trade Center exploded causing death and casualties¹. This terrorist act was followed by several ones in 1994; e.g., U.N. building, the Holland and Lincoln Tunnels, and the federal plaza in New York². In 1995, Ramzi Yousef and other terrorists were captured in Pakistan, just then the information of multiple plots of terrorist act against the U.S. was detained³.

The 9/11 attacks were among the most sinister plot that was executed by Khalid Sheikh Mohammad and backed by Al-Qaeda prominent leader Osama bin Laden⁴. This chain of terrorists' acts has multiple ramifications: 1. It led to the focus of national security of the U.S. at stake. 2. Made Afghanistan as nurturing country to both Taliban and Al-Qaeda a target for the U.S. 3. Established an anti-terrorism policy, where the world should be divided between allies or hostile to the U.S.

Methodology

This research will utilize a two-level game using comparative analysis approach. At the domestic public level, primary data will be collected through the public opinion on the war on terrorism and its impact on decision-making processes. At the state level, secondary data sources, including government reports, academic articles, and relevant literature, will be reviewed to gather comprehensive information on the strategies and tactics employed by the U.S. administrations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Analytical Review

The analysis will focus on the specific strategies and tactics employed by each administration. It will examine the decision-making

processes and the level of public consent and partisan support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The analysis will also explore the shifting priorities and approaches in each administration, considering factors such as the evolving threat landscape, regional dynamics, and international relations.

A. United States Administrations, Public Opinion, and the War on Terrorism (2001-2021)

The war on terrorism and its agenda has brought partisanship between the consecutive administrations and between presidents and the multiple institutions e.g., congress, bureaucracy, organizational process, and the public opinion⁵. Bush Jr. administration has presented a unanimous agreement on the war on terrorism, benefiting from 9/11 attacks. The level of agreement lost its unanimity in the decision to launch war in Iraq. Obama administration started office with two level of military engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq. His claim and vision were clear on both. He believes in the fairness and justice of the war of Afghanistan, so the proposal was not to end the war⁶. His vision was different on the war in Iraq. The latter war is classified unjust and unfair, therefore, Obama believed in ending the war in Iraq and withdrawing military troops. Trump has an extreme policy orientation, where it is believed that the idiosyncratic pattern took place. His strategies were to control the Middle East, limit the power of Iran and Turkey, seize the power of *Mojahideen*/ terrorists regardless to their religious classification, contain terrorism, use extreme measures to secure what is necessary for national security to the U.S.⁷ Biden administration ordered the withdrawal from Afghanistan, benefiting from the peace declaration between U.S. and the Taliban regime ratified during Trump administration⁸. The role of public opinion was strong and immense during Bush Jr. after 9/11 attacks. Later then, the public opinion couldn't control the policies made by the multiple administrations starting with the war in Iraq⁹.

A.1. George W. Bush Administration (2001-2009)

After the incoming of the Bush's administration and the stability of the new government, three consecutive terrorist attacks

happened in the darkest day of the U.S. history 9/11, 2001. The attacks hit World Trade Center in New York, The Pentagon in Virginia, and partially the White House in Washington, D.C. The attacks happened after the hijack of three planes AA 11, UA 175, AA77, and UA 93¹. The catastrophic acts⁰ caused tremendous loss, death, casualties, and profoundly feelings of rage, anger, and retaliation.

Just then Bush ordered to launch a war on terrorism targeted to Afghanistan as a response to the menace terrorist attacks. The war was to topple the regime of Taliban and Al-Qaeda as responsible entities for 9/11 attacks¹. Bush also ordered the congress and all bureaucratic and organizational bodies to either agree on the war or waive the right to the president to exercise his power through constitutional rights in case of crises and national security¹. Proponents of realism² will agree on Bush's act and will argue that the state is a unitary actor, having national security as the highest point in the hierarchical of political issues. Hence, leaders can govern absolutely with the ignorance of bureaucratic and domestic influence. Subsequently, the congress voted unanimously except for one member towards the war in Afghanistan. The public opinion supported the political and leaders' decision due to anger and rage that was spread throughout the U.S. streets after 9/11.

Putnam addresses the two-level game between the government and the public in which institutional, structural constraint, and the public supposed to affect decision making process. However, this institutional, structural, and societal constraint differs considering the factor of "time". In time of crises, for instance, the domestic level, society, and the public opinion usually do not stand before the leaders. Public opinion will agree and support the decisions implemented by their leaders in a slogan named "rally-'round-the-flag effect"¹. In fact, the public approval of Bush Jr. reached its peak (approximately 90%) after 9/11 attacks and the war in Afghanistan¹.

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After a few weeks of highly missionary meetings, the war in Afghanistan was launched in October 2001. The target of this war was: 1. Anti-terrorism; 2. The topple of Taliban regime and Al-Qaeda; 3. the capture of bin Laden; 4. Build an alliance with leaders,

government, and army in Afghanistan that are against the Taliban regime¹. Due to the American tactics and strategies, U.S. army captured multiple of terrorists' followers and figures. Those individuals were prisoned in Guantanamo, where interrogation and investigation were done. In a reaction to the use of torture in the prison during the interrogation, many false information by the terrorists was given¹. Among the most important information was the linkage between Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi regime regarding weapons of mass destruction (WMD)¹.⁷

Bush optimum goal was to seize terrorism from future attacks towards the U.S. This had led him to strategize another war in Iraq. The intelligence provided by Bush administration showed the linkage between the 9/11 attacks, Afghanistan, and the Iraqi regime. This moment of political crisis did not have reached similar unanimity between the administration, congress, and the public opinion. As a matter of fact, the public opinion approval decreased immediately after 2003, the year of the war in Iraq. Nevertheless, the intelligence provided on WMD in Iraq was false and the war on Iraq was a further retaliation to 9/11 attacks¹. Political leaders tend to manipulate the public intelligently by "issue labeling" strategy.¹ Shaping the policies in the name of national security and interests is one strategy U.S. multiple administrations used on multiple occasions, and the war in Iraq was among the recent ones. Furthermore, Bush administration went too far in Iraq. There was a massive use of torture and coercion in Abu Ghraib prison². This was done under the order of the executive body, some military officials such as Ricardo Sanchez, who was a Lieutenant General and the senior U.S. military officer in Iraq², and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld².⁹

The partisan during the Bush's administration regarding the war in Afghanistan versus the war in Iraq project some of the "Sins of American Foreign Policy"²: 1. unilateralism, 2. precipitate military action, and 3. presidential imperialism. Unilateralism in Bush administration was mandatory at the governmental level, alliance level, and the public opinion. The whole nation should act according to the president's decision, or it would be considered as a hostile

entity. Precipitate military action is another factor analyzed in Johnson and Caruson paper. As soon as 9/11 attacks took place, Bush administration retaliation and the war in Afghanistan started few weeks later. The war in Iraq was another precipitate military action relying on false intelligence provided by untrusted forces e.g., Guantanamo prisoner's during the interrogation. Then the presidential imperialism is evident historically, but especially in the act of launching wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, the presidential prerogative decisions were to be implemented with or without organizational and public opinion consent.

A.2. Barack Obama Administration (2009-2017)

Upon entering office President Obama has many policies and promises in his agenda regarding the Middle East region. For Obama, the war in Afghanistan was fair and just, whereas in the case of Iraq he believed that this is an unjust war. Understanding Obama's perception on war in Afghanistan and Iraq is important when formulating and analyzing his agenda. This includes the military tactics in Afghanistan and multiple strategies to end the war in Iraq. Obama believed in ending the war in Iraq and transforming the military troops to Afghanistan, where the main anchor of terrorism and 9/11 attacks start. There was an order during the Bush administration by arresting Osama bin Laden as the financial core and the supporter to both Al-Qaeda and Taliban regime². This order went to the level of his assassination. Two years after Obama's inauguration, Osama bin Laden was assassinated in May 2011 in Pakistan.

The war in Iraq has different vision. Obama suggested multiple strategies to end the war. Those strategies are the withdrawal of the military, changing the mission in Iraq, and requiring the Iraqi government to cooperate with the U.S army and government. First, the idea of immediate and rapid withdrawal of the American troops fosters the "sin" of precipitate military action in and out. It will also lead to multiple scenarios such as reviving the Al-Qaeda in Iraq, reenergize the Suni insurgency, embolden Moqtada al-Sadr to recoup his militia's recent losses to the Iraqi Army, and return the central

government to a state of collapse.”² The lack of commitment of the U.S. administrations in the case of Iraq can make it a perfect case of a second Vietnam, at least for the American public.

Muller argues that although the American public had little support for the war in Iraq, but this support seems to decline due to the dire circumstances on both U.S. and Iraq. This situation has developed “a similar sentiment [as for Vietnam] called ‘Iraq syndrome’.”² The article clearly stated Obama’s intentions of withdrawing the military from Iraq: “He [Obama] announced plans to withdraw all combat forces by August 2010, as he sought to shift the military’s focus to the troubled war in Afghanistan.”² The previous statement has shown that Obama is not withdrawing the military from Iraq to leave it for “its people” as he declared. He wanted to shift military from Iraq to Afghanistan which led to extensive military and economic expenses and lose.

Changing the mission in Iraq was Obama’s second strategy to end the war in Iraq, which was not applicable. Obama said, “My first day in office, I will bring the Joint Chiefs of Staff in, and I will give them a new mission, and that is to end this war responsibly and deliberately but decisively.”² Articulating Obama’s⁸ speech, this doesn’t seem a change of mission because during the Bush administration similar speech was made. Bush asserts that he wanted to change the mission and “[focus] it on protecting the civilian population.”² When the war started⁹ in 2003 there were too many premises about democratization in Iraq as a part of the original mission, but as the war continues there was not any phase of democratization that took place.

Cooperation of the Iraqi government was the third strategy suggested by Obama. Too many issues and promises were advocated and promised to the government of Iraq. One, is the need for Nuri Al-Maliki (Prime Minister of Iraq) and his government to help build Iraq “state building”. Obama focused on “building institutions in Iraq, including the army and security forces. He emphasized the need for Iraq to do more to advance political reconciliation, to improve governance and basic services, and to create security.”³ These

suggested policies were given to Al-Maliki without a strategy of implementation, which makes it hard on actual grounds.

Comparing Obama's administration to Bush's in the case of the war in Iraq, one could assert that: 1. Obama's suggestions to Al-Maliki without strategies of implementation is just like Bush's military intervention without strategies of exiting. Gelb and Betts in their article mention that "Bush's policy process was much less realistic. The president did not take seriously the obstacles to his goals, did not send a military force adequate to accomplish the tasks, failed to plan for occupation and took few steps to solve the underlying political conflicts among Iraqis."³ Bush proposed that Al-Maliki's government is not a "helpful one" just as Johnson blamed the Vietnam government to fail³. Hence, the continuity in the war in Iraq should be ended.

In assessing Obama's administration, he seems to be more optimistic about the Iraqi government. Obama proposed that "Overall violence continues to be down."³ Secondly, he projected in his inaugural address that "We [Americans] will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people"³ believing that many political improvements have been done. However, evidence in Iraq show that Obama's claims are not well assessed. There was news about suicide bombing in Baghdad and Diyala which resulted at least in 60 killed people plus wounded people.³ Not to mention the partisan among Iraqi population and the raise of violence, hitherto will lead to many dire circumstances more than the situation during the withdrawal of the army in 2011.

A3. Donald Trump Administration (2017-2021)

Trump's administration marked an era of transformation towards strategies and tactics in conducting U.S. foreign policy. Major policies that were adopted by his administration: 1. Extreme policies towards the Middle East and Iran; 2. The agenda of ongoing anti-terrorism; 3. Alliance with Saudi Arabia especially during the GCC and Qatar crisis; 4. Establishment of peace declaration between the U.S. and Taliban regime, leaving out the Afghan's government and military troops of the equation.

The extreme policies towards the Middle East included issue of the Arab regimes transformation aftermath the Arab Spring. The presence and dominance of Iran and Turkey in the Gulf. The hostile relations between U.S. and Iran increased especially after the assassination of general Qasem Soleimani in 2020 in the international airport of Baghdad. According to Trump's administration Soleimani has a role in the "Islamist-backed" militia attack on the U.S and the Baghdad assault on the U.S. Embassy³. Despite there was no evidence of Soleimani's engagement³. It is asserted that he⁷ was tactician, mere military commander, and had developed skills as a masterful promoter and diplomatic negotiator for the national security in Iran. Other factors collaborated towards the hostile included the Iranian nuclear program, which led to the continuous economic sanctions on Iran.

Anti-terrorism as the second policy adopted by Trump's administration has gone in multiple directions. For one it continued the Obama doctrine on terrorism fighting the Islamist jihadists in Iraq and Syria. Also, facing the dominance of Iran and Hizbollah in the Gulf. Nevertheless, Trump faced negative direction by which not all bureaucracy and organizations in the U.S. partake in his agenda, e.g., the Defense and the National Security³.⁸

During the Arab Spring, the regime change in Egypt, and the rise of Muslim Brotherhood, there was a tactic and policy agenda by Qatar on what is called "regime identity" towards the region³. The new regime identity adopted in Qatar after 1995 was focusing on globalization, political expansion, regional alliances and agenda of protection and security⁴. This has brought alliance between Qatar and Iran, Turkey, and Muslim Brotherhood. The previous alliance has caused an increase of tension towards the GCC – Qatar crisis in 2014 notably Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. Qatar also learned the lesson after the first Gulf war in 1990, where alliances and mediation are important for small states. Hence, Qatar "allowed the U.S. to establish one of its largest military bases in Doha"⁴ and played the role of mediator with major factors as in the peace declaration in 2020 between U.S. and Taliban regime. It is

argued that this resolution has influenced the solution of the Gulf – Qatar crisis.

Comparing Trump to Obama regarding Qatar. Trump found the support of the four countries of the equation is helpful to deter Qatar's agenda and control terrorism. Whereas, Obama considered Qatar as pivotal regional player in the Middle East due to its alliance with Iran and Muslim Brotherhood. Yet, for Trump the confrontation of terrorism, and the hostility towards Iran have led to intense strategic policy towards Qatar. Just then, Trump has visited Al-Riyadh accusing Qatar of supporting and funding terrorism, giving Saudi Arabia and UAE green light to have extreme and severe measures towards the GCC crisis with Qatar⁴. This has great influence² over the longevity of the GCC and Qatar crisis, the blockade, and the provided solution in 2021. In fact, refereeing to the role of Qatar's mediation role, Trump has chosen Doha, Qatar as a ground for the establishment of the peace declaration between the U.S. and Taliban regime, leaving out the Afghan's government and military troops of the equation. This declaration has secured the withdrawal of the U.S. army, kept the Afghans' government and military at bay, and increased the chances of Taliban regime to be back in power.

A.4. Joe Biden Administration (2021-Currently)

Biden's administration is the outcome of the subsequent administrations: Bush Jr., Obama, and Trump. The ramifications on Biden strategy and tactics are immense. First, the launch of the war in Afghanistan in 2001 that continued until 2021. The increase of the military, economic, and logistic pumping in Afghanistan led to the U.S. and Afghan's great lose. Making it difficult to exit the war. The Guantanamo prison and torture that led to the increase retaliation of Bush has brought another war in Iraq, while battling in Afghanistan. Obama's decision on the withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 has increased immense consequences due to the shift of military from Iraq to Afghanistan. Trump counterterrorism strategy was more focused on ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The peace declaration is an important act by Trump in 2020, which affect Biden's decision on the withdrawal.

Biden then launch the actual plan of counterterrorism in Afghanistan. The war on terrorism was to topple the Taliban regime, the assassination of bin Laden, which was responsible for the 9/11 attacks in U.S. It is asserted that the peace declaration ratified during the Trump's administration made it executable to withdrawal the U.S. army from Afghanistan. In 2021, as soon as Biden declare the withdrawal of the army, the Taliban regime took control and power in Afghanistan. The Afghan's government and military served out of the peace declaration; thus, no control could seize Taliban from coming back.

B. The Role of the Public Opinion

There are two trajectories in understanding the role of the public opinion in the U.S. One is the influence it has on the political outcome, yet restricted. Two, its role during elections. There is a traditional wisdom that the public opinion is relatively less significant in the conduct of foreign policy. Holsti summarizes the consensus view centered on three major propositions⁴ : 1. It is highly volatile and thus will give very minimum foundation for foreign policy decisions such as wars. The war in Afghanistan has high public opinion approval and reduced after that especially in the case of Iraq. 2. Public opinion is lacking in structure and coherence. It will differ based on issue, incident, and time. The public rage and anger are one of the cores influential factors in the agreement on the war in Afghanistan. 3. Public opinion has limited impact on the foreign policy. This was clear in the launching on the war in Iraq in 2003. In times of crisis the public tend to trust the political system in issues of national security in strategy called political manipulation. This strategy was executed in the conduct of the war in Iraq by providing false intelligence that is related to 9/11 attacks. This triggered some of the public in gaining partial agreement.

Rosati and Scott categorize American public opinion into three patterns: 1. Inattentive; 2. Uninformed; 3. Volatile⁴ . First, the public tend to neglect or show margin interest in national and international affairs. This was shown by examining the circulation of the leading magazines in the U.S. "only three of fifty best-selling magazines-

Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report emphasize national and/or international affairs”⁴. Johnson and Caruſon emphasize similar pattern. In their article “The Seven Sins of American Foreign Policy”, “ignorance” was the first among them. The public, they argue, tend to neglect world politics, geography, events, and conditions⁴. Second, most of the public are uninformed about international affairs transparently. Either there is little information to the public or there is false information and more manipulation towards national security issues such as in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq⁴. Third, the public tend to have an opinion swing over issues due to the lack of information. Historically, this has been the case during Reagan’s administration in the Iran-Contra scandal. Some percentage of the public never knew about it⁴.⁸

Thus, the impact of the public on the conduct of foreign policy has two trajectories: 1. Due to the previous discussion and patterns about the public, policymakers have leeway in acting in mostly all issues especially during crisis⁴, e.g., war in Afghanistan and Iraq. 2. In most salient issues, the public show partial constraint on policymakers, e.g., when considering the presidential reelection⁵. Elections, where the public tend to exercise their limited powers politically. This asserts that the public tend to act unanimously during crisis and to issues that is considered a threat to national security. This is the norm since the Cold War and the anti-communist ideology spread throughout the U.S.⁵ It started to fluctuate during the first Gulf War⁵. 9/11 attacks brought the norm back, and the war in Iraq caused a fluctuation once again⁵. The public during Obama administration didn’t face similar challenges as during Bush because none of the military engagements were knew. During Trump, the public was limited due to his extreme strategies and policies domestically and internationally. It is foreseen that the public opinion will be content after the withdrawal of the military intervention in Afghanistan. It is unfortunate that this happened after a dramatic lose economically and militarily, and in human resources.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the strategies and tactics employed by successive U.S. administrations in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2001 to 2021 reveals several key findings. These findings shed light on the complexities and challenges faced in conducting the war on terrorism, particularly in the context of U.S. foreign policy. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policymakers and researchers alike.

The Bush Administration:

The Bush administration acted swiftly and decisively in response to the 9/11 attacks by launching the war in Afghanistan. At that time, there was a unanimous consent from both the state level administrations and the American public opinion to combat terrorism. However, this unanimity began to wane when it came to the war in Iraq. Despite the loss of consensus, President Bush still pushed for the decision to invade Iraq. Despite the loss of consensus, President Bush still pushed for the decision to invade Iraq, leading to a more divisive approach to foreign policy.

The Obama Administration:

The Obama administration inherited the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and President Obama took charge of the strategies employed in these conflicts. In Afghanistan, the administration aimed to stabilize the country and combat the Taliban insurgency. Additionally, the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq in 2011 was a significant priority during Obama's tenure. Notably, it was under his administration that Osama bin Laden was assassinated, which had a significant impact on the war on terrorism.

The Trump Administration:

The Trump administration took a different approach in its dealings with the Middle East. President Trump focused on issues such as Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood after the "Spring" in Egypt, the GCC-Qatar crisis, and establishing a peace declaration with the Taliban regime. These actions paved the way for the Biden administration's decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan in 2021. The Trump administration's approach showcased a shift in

priorities and strategies, highlighting the evolving nature of U.S. foreign policy in the region.

Overall, the Trump administration's policies in the Middle East and towards Qatar were marked by a more confrontational approach towards Iran, a focus on anti-terrorism efforts, and an alliance with Saudi Arabia. These policies had significant implications for the region and shaped the dynamics of the GCC and Qatar crisis, as well as the peace process in Afghanistan.

The Biden Administration:

The Biden administration's strategy and tactics in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are heavily influenced by the actions and decisions of the previous administrations, namely Bush Jr., Obama, and Trump. The ramifications of these administrations' policies have had a significant impact on the current situation faced by the Biden administration. Biden's decision to proceed with the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan was influenced by the peace declaration ratified during the Trump administration.

This analysis highlights the interconnectedness of the strategies and decisions made by successive administrations in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The long-term consequences of these decisions, such as the prolonged presence in Afghanistan, the shift of focus between Iraq and Afghanistan, and the peace declaration with the Taliban, have shaped the challenges faced by the Biden administration. The rapid takeover by the Taliban in Afghanistan underscores the complexities and difficulties of conducting foreign policy and counterterrorism operations in the region.

It is crucial for the Biden administration to carefully assess the implications of previous decisions and develop a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the evolving dynamics in Afghanistan and the wider Middle East region. This includes considering the potential consequences of a hasty withdrawal and the need for continued engagement to ensure stability and prevent the resurgence of extremist groups.

The Role of Public Opinion:

The analysis of the role of public opinion in U.S. foreign policy reveals a complex relationship between the public and policymakers. While public opinion can have some influence, it is often volatile, lacking structure and coherence. The public's limited attention and knowledge about international affairs can further contribute to swings in public opinion. Policymakers have some leeway in their decision-making processes, particularly during times of crisis. This allows them to act independently, even when public opinion may not fully support their actions. However, public opinion can partially constrain policymakers, especially during salient issues such as elections.

The impact of public opinion on foreign policy is also influenced by the level of information available to the public. Lack of information or the presence of false information can shape public opinion in different ways. Additionally, public opinion tends to unite during crises or when national security is perceived to be at risk.

Overall, while public opinion can have some influence on foreign policy, it is not the sole determinant. Policymakers have a range of factors to consider, including national security concerns, strategic interests, and international alliances. Understanding the complexities of public opinion and its impact on foreign policy is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of U.S. decision-making processes.

Lack of Consensus and Partisan Divides:

Overall, the analysis underscores that there has been a lack of political and public consensus in the conduct of foreign policy, particularly in the context of the war on terrorism. Partisan divides have influenced the strategies employed by different administrations, with varying degrees of support from the American public. This lack of consensus and partisan divide has made it challenging to maintain a consistent and unified approach to these conflicts.

The analysis of the strategies and tactics employed by successive U.S. administrations in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq reveals complexities and challenges faced in conducting the war on terrorism. The decision-making processes, public opinion, and

partisan divides have all played significant roles in shaping the course of these conflicts. Further research in this area can shed more light on the nuanced dynamics of U.S. foreign policy in the context of counterterrorism efforts.

Conclusion

This research paper has analyzed the strategies and tactics employed by successive U.S. administrations in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2001 to 2021. By focusing on the administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden, the study aimed to understand the complexities and challenges faced by these administrations in conducting the war on terrorism. The conclusion provides insights into the implications of these findings for future foreign policy decision-making and the conduct of the war on terrorism.

1. The war on terrorism after 9/11 attacks has shown different patterns of U.S. administrations since Bush Jr. until recently Biden (2001-2021).
2. The Bush administration, there was unanimous consent and immediate action taken in response to the 9/11 attacks, leading to the launch of the war in Afghanistan. However, this unanimity was lost when it came to the war in Iraq. Despite the lack of consensus, President Bush still pushed for the decision to invade Iraq.
3. The Obama administration inherited the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and played a significant role in shaping the strategies employed in these conflicts. In Afghanistan, the administration focused on stabilizing the country and combating the Taliban insurgency. Additionally, the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq in 2011 was a key priority during Obama's tenure. Notably, it was under his administration that Osama bin Laden was assassinated, which had a significant impact on the war on terrorism.
4. Both Bush and Obama failed to understand the case in Iraq. They seem neglecting the role of the crucial actors such as the

congress, the plurality in forming policies, and the public.⁵ They seem, so individualistic in forming the policies of U.S. which reflect both the unitary actions of those presidents and the “Presidential Politics”⁵ as a pattern of understanding policymaking in U.S. Ending the war in both Iraq (Obama 2011) and Afghanistan (Biden 2021) and the withdrawal of the military troops were done with a minimum level of responsibilities leading to chaos in Iraq, the return and re-emergence of Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the disappointment of the public in the U.S. It is those acts that trigger the fanatic and extreme terrorists groups to act even more violently.

5. The Trump administration took a different approach in its dealings with the Middle East. President Trump focused on issues such as Iran, the aftermath of the "Spring" in Egypt, the GCC-Qatar crisis, and establishing a peace declaration with the Taliban regime. These actions ultimately paved the way for the Biden administration's decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan in 2021.
6. Overall, the analysis underscores the lack of political and public consensus in the conduct of foreign policy, particularly in the context of the war on terrorism. Partisan divides have influenced the strategies employed by different administrations, with varying degrees of support from the American public.
7. The findings of this research contribute to our understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by U.S. administrations in conducting the war on terrorism and the lack of understanding the role of the military, the congress, and the executive body “organizational process”.

Further research in this area can delve deeper into the nuances of U.S. foreign policy, exploring the impact of these strategies on international relations, regional dynamics, and the overall fight against terrorism. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of these

complexities, policymakers can make more informed decisions and develop more effective strategies in the future.

To conclude, this research sheds light on the strategies employed by successive U.S. administrations in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, highlighting the challenges and complexities faced in conducting the war on terrorism. The decision-making processes, public opinion, and partisan divides all play significant roles in shaping these strategies. By continuing to study and analyze these dynamics, we can strive for more effective and informed foreign policy approaches to combat terrorism.

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