



**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS AND
HUMANITIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, POLITICS AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**THE U.S. STRATEGY AGAINST TERRORISM IN
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: RESULTS AND
CONSEQUENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF
AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ**

SELEMAN YUSUPH KITENGE

MAY 2024



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**This thesis was submitted for distance acquisition of a
postgraduate degree in International Relations, Strategy and
Security at Neapolis University**

SELEMAN YUSUPH KITENGE

MAY 2024

VALIDITY PAGE

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14th May 2024

Johannesburg, South Africa

ABSTRACT

The dissertation explores the US strategy against terrorism in the 21st century, focusing on Afghanistan and Iraq. It uses qualitative analysis, historical review, case studies, and empirical data assessment. The study reveals terrorism's persistence and evolution, making combating complex and expensive. It calls for disrupting key enablers of terrorism, including human and financial resources, to prevent their continued existence. It provides eight recommendations for counterterrorism practitioners and policymakers.

Keywords:Counterterrorism, Diplomacy, Strategy, Terrorism, United States, Middle East.

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"They willingly expose themselves to potential dangers; they endure the pressures; they fulfill their duties without seeking recognition. While it may not be possible to express full gratitude in a public setting, it is important for them to understand that their role is crucial." Seleman Yusuph Kitenge

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the members of the Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF) and Tanzania Intelligence and Security Service (TISS), both in uniform and non-uniform positions. By virtue of their service and the sacrifices they make, the Republic is protected from the threat posed by terrorist organizations and transnational organized crime. It is also dedicated to my parents and mentors, who have taught me the true meaning of patriotism.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyze the strategy of the United States (U.S.) against terrorism in the 21st century and to assess the results and consequences of these efforts in the context of Afghanistan and Iraq. This chapter discusses the strategy used by the U.S. against terrorism in the 21st century by focusing on Afghanistan and Iraq. It highlights the problem that it aims to solve; its purpose and objectives; the research questions addressed; the significance of the study and its limitation.

This chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the U.S.' counterterrorism strategy in the 21st century, with particular emphasis on its approach in Afghanistan and Iraq. It provides definitions of terrorism and outlines the two categories of threats that the U.S. is presently confronting. It analyzes the many tactics employed by the U.S. to counter terrorism and investigates the number of fatalities that occurred directly between 2001 and 2018 in Afghanistan, and between 2003 and 2018 in Iraq, respectively. The chapter also emphasizes the cumulative number of military casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq following the wars that occurred after the September 11 attacks and other socio-economic repercussions of the U.S. interventions in the two countries under the pretext of the global war on terror.

1.2 The Background of the Study

The September 11 terrorist attacks killed over 3,000 persons, including 412 first responders (Smith, Holmes, and Larkin, 2021). After the assault, the U.S. government created a comprehensive plan to fight terrorism and its dangers locally and globally in accordance with national and strategic objectives. The realization that the U.S. faces significant risks from international and domestic terrorism and a growing number of other national security concerns prompted this reaction (Department of Homeland Security, 2024). According to Pomerantz (1987), the FBI defines terrorism as the illegal use of force or violence against individuals or property to intimidate or pressurize a government, the public, or a specific group to achieve political or social goals. Schmid (2004) noted that the US House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (2002) defines terrorism as

the illegal and intentional use or threat of violence by non-state groups against people or property to influence a government by instilling fear.

Considering the above definitions, the FBI classified the threat posed by terrorism to the U.S. into two main categories: domestic and international (Watson, 2002). Domestic terrorism refers to the unlawful use of force or the threat of force by an organization or individual operating exclusively within the United States (or its territories), without foreign influence, with the intention of intimidating or coercing a government, the civilian population, or a specific group, in order to advance political or social goals (Watson, 2002). While international terrorism encompasses acts of violence or threats to human life that contravene the criminal laws of the United States or any state, or that would be considered a criminal offense if carried out inside their jurisdiction (Watson, 2002).

Within this framework, the case studies of U.S. intervention in both Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 respectively offer compelling illustrations of the American government's efforts to defend its national and strategic interests as well as combat terrorism domestically and abroad. This acknowledges the presence of terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda in both nations, who aim to rebuild abroad and establish a worldwide network of sympathizers capable of targeting U.S. territories (Department of Homeland Security, 2024).

Table 1: Direct Death in Major War Zones: Afghanistan (Oct. 2001 to Oct.2018) and Iraq (March 2003 – Oct. 2018)

	Afghanistan	Iraq
US Military	2,401	4,550
US DOD Civilian Casualties	6	15
US Contractors	3,937	3,793
	58,596	41,726
National Military and Police		
	1,141	323
Other Allied Troops		
Civilians	38,480	182,272- 204,575
Opposition Fighters	42,100	34,806- 39,881
Journalists/Media Workers	54	245
Humanitarian/NGO workers	409	62
TOTAL	147,124	267,792- 295,170

Source: Crawford (2018)

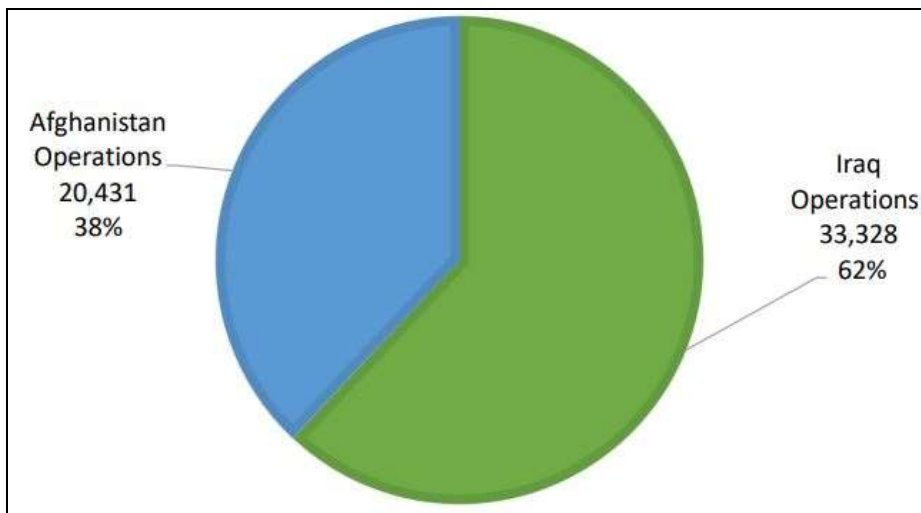


Diagram 1: US Soldiers and Sailors Wounded in Post-9/11 Wars

Source: Crawford (2018)

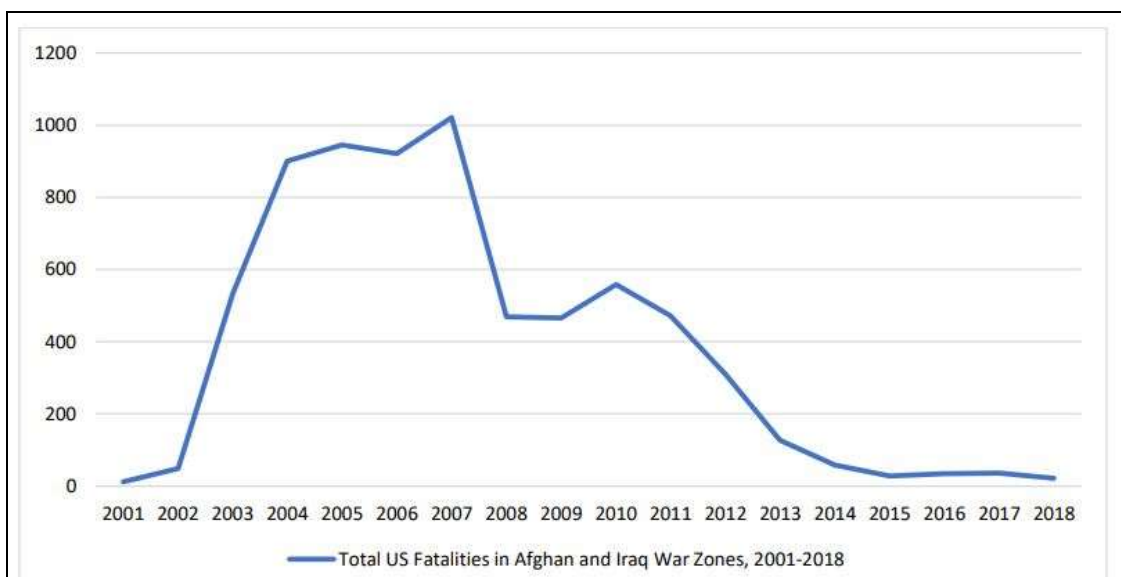


Diagram 2: Total US Military Fatalities in Afghanistan and Iraq War Zones, 2001-2018

Source: Crawford (2018)

The Afghanistan and Iraq wars have killed many people, as seen in Table 1, Diagram 1, and Diagram 2. About 147,000 Afghans died directly from October 2001 to October 2018 (Crawford, 2018). Between 268,000 and 295,000 Iraqis died directly from March 2003 to October 2018 (Crawford, 2018). Diagram 1 shows that 38% and 62% of U.S. troops and sailors were injured since 9/11 in Afghanistan and Iraq. Diagram 2 also shows the increase

and reduction of U.S. military deaths, which is connected to the drop of warzone personnel. Policymakers and practitioners developing and executing counterterrorism measures must understand and combat terrorism. Given the conditions, more study on U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq and its consequences on civilians, military personnel, and other stakeholders is needed. In addition to the consequences of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan and Iraq on military and civilian populations in Table 1, Diagram 1, and Diagram 2. Emphasizing the process's different strategies is crucial. These methods were used to prevent terrorist attacks against the U.S., its allies, and partners (Department of State, n.d.; Department of Homeland Security, 2019). Diplomacy, military, intelligence, law enforcement, financial, and cyber instruments are used to fight terrorism. These "National Strategy for Counter Terrorism in the United States of America of 2018" tactics prevent terrorist groups from gaining territorial and population control (White House, 2018). The White House (2018) suggests shutting down the financial channels that allow the trafficking of oil, the payments of militants, and the assistance for shipping reinforcements to terrorists.

As approved in 2001 and 2002, the U.S. has conducted counterterrorism activities after 9/11 (Chivvis and Liepman, 2016). Military action against terrorist groups and their leaders is a key U.S. strategy. In this context, the U.S. has fought in Afghanistan and Iraq (Trump, 2018). According to President Trump (2018), U.S. military actions have degraded ISIS capabilities. In 2011, President Barack Obama announced the death of 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden (Pew Research Center, 2011). A Washington Post and Pew Research Center overnight poll of 654 people found 72% "relieved" at Osama bin Laden's death, 60% "proud" and 58% "happy" (Pew Research Center, 2011). Only 16% were "afraid" following bin Laden's killing (Pew Research Center, 2011). After this successful military-CIA counterterrorism operation, President Obama's support rating rose to 56% with 38% disapproving (Pew Research Center, 2011).

Twenty years after 9/11, the US, lead by the Treasury Department (Treasury), has also developed a robust institutional and legislative structure to trace down and prevent terrorist funding (TF) domestically and overseas (Treasury,2022). This system includes a robust U.S. anti-money laundering/countering-the-financing-of-terrorism (AML/CFT) framework, legislative authority, and investigative resources to find and prosecute terrorist

financiers (Department of Treasury,2022). Treasury engages and builds capacity bilaterally to help U.S. foreign partners in dismantling terrorism financing (TF) networks and preventing terrorists from accessing the global financial system (Department of Treasury,2022). Coordination is done with State, DOJ, and other interagency partners (Department of Treasury,2022). Under Executive Order 13224 as amended, U.S. citizens are prohibited from transacting with information or materials, such as artwork, that belong to or are subject to an interest in property of Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs). These efforts had mixed results. President Trump (2018) acknowledged that the U.S. has made significant progress in weakening terrorist groups, but Hon. Scott Morrison, the Prime Minister of Australia in 2022, stated that terrorism remains a global threat. Technology has empowered violent extremists and terrorists to constantly adapt their digital operations as new technologies allow them to recruit, radicalize, and generate funds (Clarke, 2023) complicating terrorism prevention efforts.

It is important to note that the U.S. has eliminated key terrorist leaders like Osama Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and Hamza bin Laden (Barakat, 2022). It is important to recognize that these initiatives have had repercussions. Some experts believe the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq indirectly caused ISIS (Israeli, 2023; Hasan & Sayedahmed, 2018; Mohammed & Landay, 2023). American drone attacks in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern nations where the U.S. is fighting terrorism may harm people (Shah and Chopra et al, 2012). Since 9/11, governments have failed to contain, isolate, and eliminate terrorism (Gunaratna, 2017). Discussions have also focused on using military and diplomatic tactics to defeat terrorism. Thus, this research uses qualitative analysis, historical review, case studies, and empirical data to draw conclusions. It combines government reports, academic research, media, and expert comments. The goal is to comprehend the 21st-century U.S. strategy against terrorism and its effects on Afghanistan and Iraq.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Combating wars and insurgencies with violence is the norm in the 21st century (Gunaratna, 2017). After the September 11 attacks on American soil, President Bush invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 to fight aggression. A decision now deemed a blunder since it was predicated on poor information concerning Iraq's WMDs (Gunaratna, 2017). Thus, many soldiers and civilians have died in Afghanistan and Iraq. Besides

military participation in the two nations, the September 11 attacks spurred Bush's new world order, which attempted to form a worldwide, U.S.-led coalition to fight terrorism (Hyde, 2001). In 2002, the Department of Homeland Security was created by merging 22 federal departments and agencies to create a single, integrated Cabinet agency to organize national efforts to protect Americans from current and future threats (Department of Homeland Security, n.d.). These efforts included passing the Patriot Act of 2001 to help investigators investigate a wide range of terrorism-related crimes, including chemical-weapons offenses, the use of WMDs, killing Americans abroad, and terrorism financing.

The U.S. has also integrated diplomacy, military strategy, and law enforcement in its war on terror, using the Department of State to develop worldwide consensus to weaken and destroy these foes. The Department of State works with foreign government partners to prevent, degrade, identify, and react to terrorist threats via diplomatic engagement and international aid. Despite their successes, some of these policies have had detrimental implications on civil freedoms, human rights, and international relations (Watson Institute, 2023). Thus, the research study seeks to analyze the 21st-century American strategy against terrorism and assess its effects on the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

The main objective of this research is to critically evaluate the strategy of the U.S. against terrorism in the 21st century and to assess the results and consequences of these efforts in the context of Afghanistan and Iraq.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study aims to:

- i. Analyze the American's perception or understanding regarding the essence of terrorism as a threat to its national security.
- ii. Assess the effects of terrorism to its national or strategic interests.
- iii. Identify the guiding lines or the organizing rationales of its counterterrorism strategy.

1.4.3 Research Questions

To achieve the objectives outlined above, the research will seek to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the American's perception or understanding regarding the essence of terrorism as a threat to its national security?
- ii. How terrorism affects its national or strategic interests?
- iii. What are the guiding lines or the organizing rationales of its counterterrorism strategy?

1.5 Methodology

This research is qualitative. To resolve the problem, qualitative analysis, historical review, case studies, and empirical data assessment are used (Jansen Van Rensburg, 2007). Secondary sources include government reports, academic literature, media, and expert views provide qualitative data. Professional literature reviews should focus on academic and research publications, according to Rowley and Slack (2004). Scholarly and research journals are peer-reviewed before publication, establishing credibility (Youns, 2023). This research focuses on 21st-century U.S. terrorist strategy data. It provides statistics on these activities' effects in Afghanistan and Iraq. After the September 11 attacks, the U.S. government focused its global counterterrorism efforts on Afghanistan and Iraq, believing they harbored terrorist organizations or threatened her national and strategic interests domestically and abroad.

Multiple databases were best for the literature search to include a broad variety of reliable, peer-reviewed scientific articles (Youns, 2023). Some journals reviewed just the most relevant papers, while others included non-terrorism periodicals (Youns, 2023). To analyze communication's hidden meaning and context, the study uses qualitative research and interpretative analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Secondary data is also critically reviewed. This method provided a theoretical framework for discussing and analyzing Afghanistan and Iraq case studies (Jansen Van Rensburg, 2007). The goal is to understand the U.S. strategy to counterterrorism in the 21st century and assess its outcomes, notably in Afghanistan and Iraq. This research used Content Analysis (CA) to analyze literature (Youns, 2023). Content analysis (CA) categorizes important information to grasp a studied subject in textual content. It entails categorising data according to research goals (Hsieh &

Shannon, 2005). Conventional, summative, and directed content analysis are used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). However, the present research used traditional content analysis, a highly inductive method that generates new concepts and categories via critical and reflective examination (Vreugdenhil et al., 2022).

1.6 Research hypothesis

This study's main hypothesis is based on the idea that, as much as terrorism threats grow the U.S. increases its efforts to thwart it. The hypothesis highlights the nexus between terrorism threats and the U.S. government level of commitment in terms of financial and non-financial resources invested in her counterterrorism endeavors.

1.7 Significance of the Study

A research study on the U.S. strategy against terrorism in the 21st century in Afghanistan and Iraq might enlighten academics, politicians, and practitioners on the best counterterrorism methods. Though terrorism is a complex and multifaceted issue that affects national and global security, this study provides a comprehensive analysis to help policymakers and counterterrorism agents design and implement measures to combat and mitigate its effects at the national, regional, and global levels. This research may also help academics, politicians, and practitioners combat terrorism, particularly in Africa, by providing best practices.

1.8 Study Structure

Research is divided into five parts. The first chapter discusses the historical backdrop of the U.S.' 21st-century counterterrorism policy, notably in Afghanistan and Iraq. Next, the section discusses the study's topic and justifies its conduct. Next, the research aims, questions, and methods are provided, followed by an explanation of the study's significance. The second chapter analyzes current and previous literature, focusing on Afghanistan and Iraq case studies. The researcher discusses counterterrorism literature in chapter 3. The fourth chapter presents the study's findings on U.S. counterterrorism policy factors in Afghanistan and Iraq. The fifth chapter summarizes the results and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

CASE STUDIES

2.1 Case Study: The Situation in Afghanistan before the U.S. Intervention

Landlocked Afghanistan is surrounded by the Hindukush mountain and runs east-west and north-south (Imran, Mustafa, & Bhatti, 2020). The country has been protected from invasion by this natural barrier. Southern and Eastern Asia are vitally connected to Central and West Asia via it (Imran, Mustafa, & Bhatti, 2020). Notably, Afghanistan is a South-Central Asian country composed of many different ethnicities, none of which are Arab. Therefore, it is not appropriate to refer to Afghans as 'Arabs' or as 'Middle Eastern' (SNTC, n.d). The official languages of Afghanistan are Dari (Afghan Persian) and Pashto. (SNTC, n.d)

Before the 1978 civil war, Afghanistan was ruled by Muhammad Zahir Shah, who took the throne in 1933. Afghanistan worried about a Soviet attack in July 1939 (Koplik, 2015). After World War II, the U.S. and Soviet Union used economic aid to gain influence in Afghanistan. Afghanistan relied further on Soviet support after the U.S. and Pakistan established military ties in 1954. By 1978, the Soviet Union provided about \$1.2 billion USD in economic aid to Afghanistan and built its main roads (Minkov & Smolynec, 2007). However, in 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to gain the Afghan government's loyalty (Minkov & Smolynec, 2007).

On December 24, 1979, the Soviet Union airlifted many troops to Kabul due to the military breakdown and the risk of an unstable Afghanistan affecting its security along the southern border. Soviet intelligence soldiers overthrew the Khalq government and established Parchami Babrak Karmal as president, assassinating Hafizullah Amin. The 115,000-strong Soviet occupation army and Karmal regime detained, tortured, and executed dissidents to quell the protests (Human Right Watch, n.d.). They also bombed and executed rural residents (Amstutz, 1986; Human Right Watch, n.d.). The adoption of these measures killed one million Afghans (Galster, 2001). This increased hostility to the communist regime in Kabul and caused a large refugee outflow. Pakistan and Iran swiftly attracted five million refugees (Minkov & Smolynec, 2007), a significant fraction of the sixteen million people (Human Right Watch, n.d.). Afghanistan's isolation and poor American

policy prevented the US from preventing the Soviet conquest in December 1979 (Amstutz, 1989; Galster, 2001).

However, the Soviet invasion, which displaced 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, was considered one of the worst wartime events (Galster, 2001; Ghufuran, 2006). Congress, the White House, and the world community agreed this crisis required immediate aid (Galster, 2001). The U.S. pushed other countries to give to refugees for political and economic reasons (Galster, 2001). By aiding Pakistani refugees, the U.S. hoped to reduce political and economic pressure on Islamabad and build a rebel support structure (Galster, 2001).

Pakistan and Iran were home to the jihad warriors, or mujahidin, who organized the resistance (Human Right Watch, n.d.). The U.S. and Saudi Arabia, seeing the conflict as a Cold War battlefield, provided significant aid to the opposition via Pakistan. The rebel forces recruited thousands of Muslim extremists from the Middle East, North Africa, and other Muslim nations (Rubin, 2002). Most of the wars were fought against Pakistani and Saudi-backed Pashtun militias, such as Gulbuddin Hikmatyar's Hizb-i Islami and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf's Ittihad (Rubin, 2002). Osama bin Laden came in Pakistan in the early 1980s and set up training facilities for Afghan non-native recruits (Human Right Watch, n.d.). Thus, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) brought major Islamist figures like Ahmad Shah Masud and Burhanuddin Rabbani to the U.S. (Rubin, 2002). However, U.S. policy opponents claim that the CIA's direct backing to Arab volunteers who flew to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets helped build the Taliban (Rubin, 2002). Arab volunteers used American weaponry to terrorize Western targets, according to Rubin (2002). Former CIA Station Chief Milton Bearden (2001) denies these assertions, claiming the CIA never recruited, trained, or utilized Arab volunteers in Pakistan. His claims distance the U.S. from the Taliban and Arab volunteers who coordinated and carried out terrorist attacks on America and its allies. Bearden denies direct participation, although Hoodbhoy (2005) says the U.S. surreptitiously helped the Afghan opposition.

Hoodbhoy (2005) claims that Pakistani General Zia-ul-Haq helped establish the U.S.-Saudi relationship. The CIA openly recruited Egyptian, Saudi, Sudanese, and Algerian Islamic radicals as part of this partnership. The partnership intensified extreme Islam since the U.S. and Saudi Arabia supported the mujahideen (Hoodbhoy, 2005). The 1988 Geneva Accords allowed Soviet forces to leave without terms, and Hoodbhoy (2005) said that the U.S., Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt won.

After the last soldier crossed the Freedom Bridge on February 15, 1989, Soviet officials were dubious about Najibullah's term (Fivecoat, 2012). The Afghan government controlled cities and roads with conventional troops, the Khadamat-e Aetla'at-e Dawlati (KhAD), and militias, but financial shortages and militants hampered them (Fivecoat, 2012). The withdrawal of Soviet soldiers from Afghanistan showed that the country's problem was caused by state breakdown as much as foreign meddling (Rubin, 1989). After losing over a million lives, Rubin (1989) said that Afghans had to choose between a government they didn't like and a resistance they feared. Najibullah implemented the National Reconciliation Policy after the Russians left, leading to stronger acts (Kalinovsky, 2011). This entailed opening up government and society, connecting with tribal elders, and shedding its communist past (Kalinovsky, 2011). The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) government survived until 1992 because to these initiatives (Kalinovsky, 2011). After the U.S. and Soviet Union agreed to end proxy war backing, the Najibullah government was ousted (Rubin, 2002). Massoud and Hekmatyar's soldiers seized Kabul and its surroundings (Rubin, 2002).

While Hikmatyar pounded Kabul with rockets, Tajik Jamiat-i Islami leader Burhanuddin Rabbani became ISA president in June 1992 (Bhatti and Hoffman, 2001). Hikmatyar allied with Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum, the commander of a powerful Uzbek militia that had supported Najibullah until early 1992, in January 1994. They wanted Rabbani and his defense minister, Ahmad Shah Massoud, out of power, which started a civil war in Kabul (Bhatti and Hoffman, 2001). In 1994, Kabul killed about 25,000 people, according to Saikal (1998). Rocket and artillery assaults killed most of these individuals. To be more specific, the city symbolized the state's economic interests and social conflicts (Dorronsoro, 2007). About one-third of the city was destroyed by 1995 (Saikal, 1998; Dorronsoro, 2007). During this period, several mujahidin leaders became regional warlords while the rest of the country was split among groups. This setting led to the Taliban and the unity of former mujahidin soldiers behind Mullah Mohammad Omar, a Qandahar mujahid.

The Taliban sought stability and their own version of Islamic law (EU Agency for Asylum, 2023; Human Right Watch, n.d.). The Taliban provided a variety of religious guidelines within this framework. Extramarital relationships, dress code, prayers, and music were covered by these guidelines (EU Agency for Asylum, 2023). The European Union Agency for Asylum (2023) reported uneven limit implementation in Afghanistan. These

restrictions led to human rights violations by the de facto government or Taliban (EU Agency for Asylum, 2023). Arbitrary arrests, imprisonment without contact, torture, killings, abductions, and forced disappearances were reported (EU Agency for Asylum, 2023). The EU Agency for Asylum mentions corporal and death penalties, including de facto court decisions, in 2023.

Osama bin Laden returned to Afghanistan in 1996 after being evicted by U.S. pressure (U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2009). After returning, he lived under the Jalalabad shura (tribal council) until the Taliban took over Kabul and Jalalabad (Rubin, 1998). Osama bin Laden moved to Qandahar in 1997 and had a close relationship with Taliban commander Mullah Muhammad Umar. Bin Laden's men fought with the Taliban (Rubin, 1998). According to unidentified diplomatic sources, the Taliban guaranteed Saudi Arabia that bin Laden would not use his refuge to promote bloodshed outside. By mid-1998, the Saudis doubted this agreement was being maintained (Rubin, 1998). Saudi Arabia suspected virtually simultaneous explosions in front of the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on August 7, 1998. Over 4500 people were injured, and 224 died, including 12 Americans. Al Qaeda's agents were quickly blamed for the attacks (American Foreign Service Association, 2023; FBI, n.d.). In retaliation, the U.S. bombed bin Laden's purported training sites in Pakistan in August 1998 (National Security Archive, 2008). The UN Security Council sanctioned the Taliban in October 1999 with UNSCR 1267 (Department of State, 1999). These penalties forced the Taliban to hand up bin Laden. The Taliban's foreign assets were frozen and Taliban-controlled planes were banned from taking off and landing (Department of State, 1999). The U.S. demanded bin Laden's extradition for the embassy attacks in 2000. The Taliban refused, resulting in fresh UN sanctions that hampered commerce and slowed economic growth (PBS, 2021). A Pennsylvania field, the World Trade Center Towers in New York, and the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C., were hit by four commercial jets hijacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, killing hundreds.

After reviewing preparations with General Franks and senior Central Command advisers on September 21 and October 2, President Bush approved military actions against Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. To avoid insulting Muslims who believe infinite justice is divine, the operation was renamed "Enduring Freedom" from "Infinite Justice" (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004). After the Taliban refused to hand out bin Laden, U.S.

and British soldiers began bombing in Afghanistan (PBS, 2021). Additionally, U.S. planes bombed Taliban and al-Qaida targets (PBS, 2021). For this reason, the Taliban declared their readiness for jihad (PBS, 2021). The U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan began thereafter.

2.2 Case Study: The Situation in Iraq before the U.S. Intervention in 2003

Iraq contributed to regional and global security, notably against international terrorism, before the 2003 U.S. invasion (Baker & Hamilton, 2006). However, ethnic divisions between Shia and Sunni Islam and Kurdish and Arab minorities (Baker & Hamilton, 2006) have caused geopolitical worries. Per Baker & Hamilton (2006), Iraq has the second-largest oil reserves worldwide. Despite its oil wealth, this nation has long been plagued by political turmoil, including coups and counter coups (Marine Corps Institute, 2003). In the mid-1970s, Saddam Hussein skillfully used the political climate to enhance his power (Marine Corps Institute, 2003). Except for him and Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, all 1968 coup attempters were demoted or killed (Farouk-Sluglett, Sluglett, & Stork, 1984). Saddam and al-Bakr have a close political relationship in this episode. After allying with his maternal uncle's cousin Ahmad Hassan Bakr, Saddam's political ambitions began to materialize, according to Bucknam and Esquivel (2001).

As President Ahmad Hassan al Bakr's health deteriorated, most ministries started reporting directly to Saddam Hussein (Marine Corps Institute, 2003). Saddam Hussein refused to share authority and used the cabinet and council to achieve his goals (Marine Corps Institute, 2003). President al Bakr resigned on July 17, 1979, and Saddam Hussein became President of the Republic, Secretary General of the Iraqi Baath Party Regional Command, Chairman of the Regional Command Council (RCC), and Head of the Iraqi Armed Forces. Saddam Hussein revealed a "conspiracy" inside the RCC against him and the government on July 28, 1979. Seven Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) members began a six-day trial of 68 Ba'th Party members. They are accused of "conspiring against the Party and the Revolution" with Syria (Farouk-Sluglett, Sluglett & Stork, 1984; Bucknam & Esquivel, 2001). The tribunal sentenced 22 to death, 33 to prison, and 13 to acquittal on August 7 (Farouk-Sluglett, Sluglett & Stork, 1984). Saddam Hussein saw the executions the next day. Five Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) members and several Ba'th Party rivals were killed. Former conspirators were serving prison terms (Farouk-Sluglett, Sluglett & Stork, 1984; Bucknam & Esquivel, 2001).

Karsh and Rautsi (1991) suggest that Iraq prospered economically between 1979 and 1980 due to an unprecedented worldwide oil boom, despite Saddam's political persecution of his political opponents. Saddam Hussein wanted Baghdad to replace Cairo as Arab capital (Jensen & Klunder, 2001). Upon assuming office, he raised the salary of key public sector workers including security, intelligence, and courts (Hiro, 1991). Saddam also liberalized his economy by permitting imports and offering a variety of consumer items (Bucknam & Esquivel, 2001). In 1980, he increased the value of Iraqi government contracts from \$14.8 billion to \$24.3 billion (Robbins, 1988). These activities seemed to be designed to maintain political support and downplay the costs of war (Robbins, 1988). After then, Iraq fought Iran for eight years until August 1988 (Gause, 2001). Additionally, Iraq received its first nuclear reactor from the Soviet Union in 1968 (Reiter, 2005). It signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1969, although it considered buying nuclear weapons in 1971 owing to worries over Israel's nuclear stockpile (Reiter, 2005). However, on June 7, 1981, eight Israeli F-16s attacked Osiraq and destroyed the 70-MW reactor before it could operate (Reiter, 2005).

The Gulf War—Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990–1991, is well-known. The 1990-91 Gulf War was the largest American military involvement since the Vietnam War, according to Gause (2001). It also signified a new era after the Cold War and a turning point in Middle Eastern affairs. It also showed that the U.S. and other major economic powers will not let any regional leader possess Persian Gulf oil riches (Gause, 2001). Inspectors destroyed 38,500 weapons, 480,000 liters of chemical agents, and 1.8 million liters of precursor chemicals after the battle (Copson, 2003). The fate of 31,600 chemical weapons, 500 mustard gas bombs, and 4,000 tons of chemical precursors was unknown (Copson, 2003). One reason for Iraq's quick disarmament is its suspected support of terrorism (Copson, 2003). There was no evidence that Iraq had traded WMD technology, capabilities, or materials with terrorists, but it was still a possibility (Copson, 2003). The 2003 Iraq War was sparked by fear of the unknown. Gunaratna (2017) claims that false information about WMDs started the conflict.

Simuziya (2023) claims that 9/11 marked a turning point in U.S. foreign policy toward global security. Iraq's lack of cooperation with the UN and violation of Security Council disarmament decisions dating back to 1991 contributed to U.S. security difficulties (Simuziya, 2023). After 9/11, the U.S. understandably suffered psychological anguish

(Simuziya, 2023). According to Simuziya (2023), this trauma led to the assumption that pariah nations like Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Sudan may become safe havens for terrorists who would damage the U.S.

One of the worst events of the late 20th century was Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons on Kurdish towns in 1987-88 and Halabja in 1988 (Palkki & Rubin, 2021). In a counterinsurgency offensive in Kurdish-populated northern Iraq near the Iranian border, the Iraqi forces used chemical weapons on more than 40 Kurdish communities, which garnered little international notice (Palkki & Rubin, 2021; Kurjiaka, 1991). Saddam Hussein's brutality and provocation (Layne, 1991) threatened U.S. Middle East interests. According to Layne (1991), the battle against ruthless Saddam Hussein was legitimate. Thus, controlling Iraq and other Middle Eastern and North African nations was seen as necessary before another calamity might harm U.S. interests (Simuziya, 2023). The U.S. attacked Iraq and decimated its military forces, security, intelligence, and Baathist administrative institutions, which maintained stability (Gunaratna, 2017). According to Harris and Beaumont (2006), this decision encouraged extremist and terrorist organizations to recruit combatants against the U.S. and its allies. Due to deep-seated resentment and fury against the perceived colonial troops, foreign and Iraqi rebel organizations arose (Pape, 2010).

CHAPTER THREE

COUNTERTERRORISM

3.1 The Overview of the U.S Counterterrorism Strategy of 2018

The U.S. government needs the National Strategy for Counterterrorism to successfully fight terrorism domestically and internationally. Since 9/11, the U.S. has produced different variants of the policy. However, this research heavily on the 2018 National Strategy for Counterterrorism. This strategy covers the National Strategy for Counterterrorism, understanding the terrorist adversary, prioritizing and allocating resources, actively pursuing terrorist threats at their origins, cutting off terrorists from financial, material, and logistical support, updating and integrating a wider range of tools and authorities to counter terrorism and safeguard the homeland, and protecting critical infrastructure.

3.2 Fundamental Causes and Motivations of Terrorism

It is difficult to define terrorism and agree on the motivations and causes that lead to terrorist acts. Thus, Crenshaw (1985) suggests that terrorists are driven by four factors: the opportunity to act, the desire for a feeling of belonging, social status, and money incentives. Post (1990) argues that terrorism may arise independently of political or ideological purposes. His main point is that the claimed reason is not the genuine cause. Terrorists justify their actions with the group's philosophy. This perspective holds that people become terrorists to join terrorist groups and commit terrorism (Post, 1990). However, the literature study found three motivating variables for terrorism. Borum (2004) lists injustice, identity, and belonging.

Hacker (1976) claims that terrorism is motivated by the desire to right wrongs. According to Borum (2004), a desire for retribution is a common response to injustice. However, revenge—the desire to avenge others rather than oneself—is a likely motivation for terrorism (Borum, 2004). Various techniques of identification may also drive people to extremist or terrorist groups (Borum 2004; Crenshaw, 1986). Jim Marcia, a psychologist, called "identity foreclosure" when a person embraces a role, attitudes, and beliefs without personal or critical scrutiny. According to Johnson and Feldman (1992), joining a terrorist group offers a sense of belonging to people with a flawed sense of self. Terrorist

membership is their main psychological identity (Post,1987). Post's thoughts and Johnson and Feldman's hypothesis show that identity seeking is linked to terrorism.

Luckabaugh et al. (1997) argue that a high desire for belonging drives people to join terrorist organizations. After years of rejection, disadvantaged people joined a terrorist organization to find a feeling of belonging, becoming the family they never had, according to Post (1984). A strong feeling of belonging drives joining, staying, and acting (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Volkan (1997) suggests that terrorist groups may provide security by limiting individuality and promoting group membership. Thus, a sense of belonging motivates terrorists. Terrorists fight for several reasons (Richardson, 2006). Cinar (2009) lists historical and political, economic and social, ideological and religious, and psychological variables as terrorist triggers. Leeman (1987) claims that fear and violence have always been used to gain political dominance. The word 'terrorism' emerged during the French Revolution in 1793-1794, during the Reign of Terror (Wilkinson, 1974: 129). However, the phenomenon developed its modern meaning in the 20th century (Cinar, 2009). The Irish Republican Army, Palestine Liberation Organization, and Red Brigades of Italy were called 'terrorist' in the 1980s, a word that has since extended (Cinar, 2009). With political origins, According to Cinar (2009), terrorism is a cancerous disease in the political system. If the political system works well, this cancerous cell is undetected (Cinar, 2009). If the political system isn't working properly, it will spread across the system (Cinar, 2009). According to Wilkinson (1974), political institution tensions may lead to revolutionary violence.

Some academic research links poverty and socioeconomic disparity to terrorism (Burgoon, 2004). These economic variables produce deprivation, injustice, and political unrest (Burgoon, 2004). William Landes, Todd Sandler, and Walter Enders have examined transnational terrorism using crime economics. They say the economic model doesn't explicitly link market possibilities to terrorism. Individuals' decisions to participate in terrorist acts depend on factors like the likelihood that their participation will lead to political change and the benefits for the various groups involved in achieving the terrorists' goals compared to the penalties they may face if they fail. Cinar (2009) argues in social origins that fair treatment and resource distribution are essential to society. Social justice promotes unity (Cinar, 2009; Maldonado et al.,2022). Instead of using violence, people

may trust each other and work toward peace (Cinar, 2009). Political favoritism and wealth inequality will undoubtedly create anger (Cinar, 2009).

Terrorism uses ideology to influence the public and communicate with like-minded people (Cinar, 2009). To explain, terrorism needs a thorough philosophy, whether religious or secular, to justify violence, recruit new members, and motivate them (Richardson, 2006). Terrorists may support almost any cause (Kullberg and Jokinen, 2004). Cinar (2009) argues that religion does not directly cause terrorism, but it may justify it. Cinar argues that religion does not alone cause political radicalism. Religious appeals often explain a dispute to a specific group rather than influencing a strategic choice (Cinar, 2009). According to John Esposito, political and economic grievances are the key catalysts, while religion legitimizes and mobilizes (Cinar, 2009).

Terrorism has complex psychological foundations (Post, 2006) and may have many causes. Without a comprehensive and generally applicable theory, people cannot explain terrorist psychology, including their goals, behaviors, leadership styles, organizational dynamics, and followers (Cinar, 2009). In contrast, a 1970s and 1980s US research on 'terrorist personalities' revealed that underground organization members were immature, mentally distressed, and afraid of the outer world (Porta, 1995). After failing, they felt dejected and sought retribution or isolation from society (Porta, 1995). The psychological explanation of a terrorist shows they do not have clinical psychosis or depression (Post, 2006). Terrorism and terrorist cells may give psychological support, but individual psychology explanations are insufficient (Post, 2006).

3.3 The Development of Threat to the U.S. Focusing on Radical Islam

September 11 and Operation Enduring Freedom, the global war on terrorism, and the Iraq war and its aftermath have profoundly affected the Muslim world and its views of the U.S. (Rabasa et al., 2004). Several factors that are impacting the environment in Muslim nations are also caused by long-standing tendencies (Rabasa et al., 2004). These dynamics complicate Muslim world security management and may increase U.S. political and military needs (Rabasa et al., 2004). Rabasa and colleagues (2004) claim that several factors formed and drove Middle Eastern conservative and extreme fundamentalist tendencies. These factors vary in importance among nations and subregions, and they are interconnected (Rabasa et al., 2004). These elements, they say, include: (i) The decline of

Nasserism/pan-Arabism; (ii) lack of economic growth and unstable population (and governments' inability to deliver services); (iii) inadequate responsibility, widespread corruption, and the lack of political and civil liberties; (iv) inadequate emphasis on tolerance and critical thinking in educational institutions from a young age; (v) systemic opposition to Western and American values, fueled by a feeling of historical deprivation and powerlessness; (vi) the rise of mass media; (vii) divisive tendencies based on tribal and regional affiliations; (viii) methods employed to attract individuals to radical ideologies; and (ix) religious motivation as a source of Islamic terrorism (Bar, 2004).

Israel defeated Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in 1967, ending Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arab socialism in the Middle East (Rabasa et al., 2004). Psychologically, the failure destroyed Arab nationalism and self-image (Rabasa et al., 2004). Israel took advantage of Arabs' indecision and religion, according to Islamists. Indeed, the loss suited conservative views (Rabasa et al., 2004). Stalled economy, demographic transition, and lack of fundamental freedoms have created despair, anger, and wrath in many Arab nations. These conditions fueled Middle Eastern extreme Islamism (Rabasa et al., 2004).

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states depend on oil sales, whereas Egypt and Yemen depend on expat remittances (Rabasa et al., 2004). These nations earn foreign rents instead of domestic taxes, making them rentier. Without money, societies shun politics, resulting in Middle Eastern authoritarianism (Rabasa et al., 2004). If the state breaks its promise, society no longer supports the status quo (Rabasa et al., 2004). Islamists profit from this. Mosques are the only public platform for criticism in many Arab countries without political institutions (Rabasa et al., 2004). Conservative and extreme fundamentalists, some with revolutionary political intentions, dominate this little public arena (Rabasa et al., 2004).

UNDP's 2002 "alternative human development index" (AHDI) research evaluated life expectancy at birth, education, freedom score, gender empowerment, Internet hosts per capita, and CO2 emissions per capita (UNDP, 2002). UNDP rated and analyzed 111 countries' HDIs (UNDP, 2002). Eight states were Middle Eastern. Kuwait scored 70, Lebanon 73, the UAE 74, and Egypt 92, while Jordan scored 68. Syria (103), Sudan (105), and Iraq (110), all Middle Eastern nations, ranked lowest (UNDP, 2002). Unfortunately, some extreme Islamist organizations use these difficult circumstances for political gain (Rabasa et al., 2004). Their message that "Islam is the solution" resonates with those who

see Islam as a bulwark against modernity and globalization (Thaler, 2004). Arab Middle Eastern educational institutions may also malign foreign worldviews and foster extreme and state propaganda (Rabasa et al., 2004; Muasher, 2011). Memorization and rote learning hamper critical thinking (Fareha, 2010). Top students are better at rote memorizing than problem-solving (Fareha, 2010). This helps fundamentalists with a clear message and governments with graduates less inclined to doubt them (Rabasa et al., 2004).

U.S. policy in the Middle East historically fueled anti-Americanism (Glas & Spierings, 2021). U.S. policy has two major issues. First, the US is seen as supporting Israeli goals at the cost of West Bank and Gazans (Rabasa et al., 2004). Newspapers, TV, and internet media covered Palestinian fatalities, citizens imprisoned at Israeli checkpoints, and house destruction during the 2000 intifada. Arabs show minimal compassion for Israeli terrorist victims (Rabasa et al., 2004). The typical Arab sees U.S. apathy or assistance with Israel (Rabasa et al., 2004; Arab Center Washington DC, 2024). These impressions enrage Arabs, especially those unfamiliar with Israeli affairs (Rabasa et al., 2004). The ordinary citizen views the U.S. as backing authoritarian regimes for "stability" while praising democracy (Thaler, 2004). This implies that the U.S. considers Arabs inferior and undeserving of democratic transformation. American interests in the Arab world conflict with American ideals (Thaler, 2004). Due to its support for autocratic Arab governments and stance on the Palestinian dilemma, many Arabs see the U.S. as having a double standard (Thaler, 2004). In certain Middle Eastern countries, tribal culture and allegiance may also affect radical Islamism (Rabasa et al., 2004; Bandara & Dissanayake). Unhappy tribal members have interpreted Islam dramatically (Rabasa et al., 2004). Regionalists may radicalize like tribalists. Disenfranchisement owing to uneven access to government services and a strong sense that the state views a region's inhabitants as inferior might lead to extremism (Rabasa et al., 2004).

Bar (2004) states that although terrorism, including suicide attacks, is not fundamentally Islamic, most terrorist acts, especially the most damaging in recent years, have been committed in the name of Islam. Islamic fanaticism blurs political and religious boundaries (Bar, 2004). Islam governs all elements of human existence and includes religion and government (din wa-dawla). No matter the issue, "Islam is the solution (Bar, 2004)." Bar (2004) also claims that radical Islamist ideology is historical and dichotomous: following the Prophet's teachings and historical events leads to perfection. Thus, religious innovation,

philosophical relativism, and intellectual and political pluralism are strongly opposed (Bar, 2004). This view limits the categories to Dar al-Islam (Muslim countries) and Dar al-Harb (countries ruled by non-Islamic regimes). Islamic fundamentalists oppose these organizations until Islam triumphs (Bar, 2004). Radicals carry these concepts to the extreme, even if they have solid roots in mainstream Islam (Bar, 2004). Wright & McCants et al. (2017) note that Jihadism began in the late 1970s and went through three stages. Sayyed Qutb and his Egyptian jail disciple, who were not Salafi, first supported "takfirism," which excommunicates Muslims (Wright & McCants et al., 2017). As the Brotherhood refused to follow Qutb's doctrine, Muslim brothers were expelled from Arab nations and moved to Saudi Arabia or Kuwait for work or study in the second phase. Salafism influenced jihadism and other ideas and movements in the 1980s and 1990s. This merged violence with religion (Wright & McCants et al., 2017). Finally, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989 and the first Gulf War from 1990 to 1991, which stationed many American forces in Saudi Arabia, galvanized Salafist activist ideologies. According to Wright & McCants et al. (2017), the Awakening began when Saudi Arabia was regarded as forsaking Islam during the Gulf War.

Saudi Wahhabism's promotion of hostility and militancy has also contributed to extreme Islam. Abu Khalil (2004) claims that Saudi Arabia has been dominated by Wahhabism and a severe authoritarian monarchy from its founding. Since the early 1930s, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. have had a strong political, economic, and military cooperation in the Middle East (Dillon, 2009). However, 15 of the 19 September 11 attackers, including Osama Bin Laden, were Saudi Arabians who had participated in Jihadi operations in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, and Iraq (Dillon, 2009). Thus, some academics and policymakers believe Saudi Wahhabism contributes to Islamist violence and jihadism (Dillon, 2009).

Moreover, although Afghanistan is not considered an Arab nation and Arabic is not widely spoken among the majority of its population, the spread of extremist ideology was assisted via the utilization of the Arabic language found in the Quran. Bin Laden, an Arab, advocated an extreme form of Wahhabism Islamic philosophy. For instance, in Al Qaeda's 'Declaration of War' published in 1996, he said that the U.S. had responsibility for the challenges confronting the Muslim world (Schweitzer & Oreg, 2014). Bin Laden offered a justification for the necessity of tackling these concerns and put forward a detailed strategy to accomplish this objective (Schweitzer & Oreg, 2014). Bin Laden employed rhetoric

imbued with Quranic allusions to depict the U.S. and its allies as merciless entities that want the blood of Muslims, possess an affinity for warfare, and are prepared to annihilate the Muslim world (Schweitzer & Oreg, 2014).

Furthermore, the Taliban, founded by former mujahedin groups who moved to Pakistan to study in "madrasas," predominantly follows the "Deobandi" school of Islam (Dillon, 2009). This philosophy resembles Saudi "Wahhabism" and strict Pashtun tribal practices (Dillon, 2009). Given the conditions, Saudi Wahhabism may have promoted antagonism and extremism, which has contributed to the rise of extremist Islam, which threatens the U.S., a longtime Saudi friend. Thus, the U.S. government and its allies must develop a strategy to influence the Muslim world to reduce religious and political extremism and anti-U.S. attitude (Rabasa et al., 2004). This strategy will reduce anti-U.S. sentiment and most significantly combat radical Islam's danger to its national interests locally and internationally.

3.4 Counterterrorism Techniques

Terrorism is the most immediate and asymmetrical danger to U.S. and allied security and global peace and prosperity (NATO, 2023). Global terrorism spans boundaries, nations, and faiths (Agathangelou & Ling, 2004). The Islamic State, al-Qaeda-affiliated groups, Boko Haram, and other extremist factions are the key participants in today's most deadly conflicts, making them harder to settle (International Crisis Group, 2016). They have taken advantage of conflicts, state disintegration, and geopolitical turbulence in the Middle East to establish new positions in Africa and pose a shifting threat in other areas (International Crisis Group, 2016). In summary, it demands international cooperation (NATO, 2023). The development of war zones globally provides transnational terrorist groups like Da'esh (ISIS) and al-Qaeda with several venues for simultaneous operations. Therefore, a variety of methods and approaches are used to combat terrorism, which threatens U.S. and international interests (White House, 2018). The 2018 US National Counterterrorism Strategy (White House, 2018) uses diplomatic, military, intelligence, law enforcement, financial, and cyber capabilities to fight terrorism. These methods aim to eliminate terrorist threats to the U.S., protect borders and all points of entry, prevent terrorism, radical Islamist ideologies, and other violent extremist ideologies from undermining the American way of life, and collaborate with foreign partners to address terrorist threats without compromising U.S. interests.

3.4.1 The Creation of the Department of Homeland Security and Director of National Intelligence

Bush established his new world order to confront terrorism with a worldwide, U.S.-led coalition after September 11. The Department of Homeland Security was established in 2002 by uniting 22 federal departments and organizations to manage national efforts to safeguard Americans from existing and future dangers (Department of Homeland Security, n.d.). Congress also created the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) position to lead and improve information coordination and exchange across intelligence community components and between intelligence agencies and law enforcement (DeVine, 2023). Before the DNI office was created, the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) oversaw the Intelligence Community (IC), led the CIA, and advised the President on intelligence matters.

3.4.2 Diplomacy

The U.S.' anti-terrorism policy relies on diplomacy. This makes it important in all facets of anti-terrorism activities, including mutual agreements and constructive conversations to find peaceful solutions. Politicians and diplomats have substantial power in state and federal bodies, which affects diplomatic anti-terrorism activities. The U.S. combats modern terrorism by conducting timely abroad operations and emphasizing states' need to desist from providing financial or political support. Diplomatic intervention is needed when countries support terrorism for their own gain to strip terrorist organizations of weapons, finance, and other resources to prevent them from causing widespread destruction (Seib, 2009). Regardless of the magnitude or severity of terrorism, the U.S. addresses its core causes as a global power. Despite the terrorist concern, the U.S. has improved its early data and evidence collecting and presentation. This is done to confirm terrorist organizations and groups and seek worldwide support for fighting terrorism. The Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism illustrates how diplomacy combats worldwide terrorism. Under the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Bureau of Counterterrorism develops worldwide terrorism policies. It does this by promoting international cooperation to combat terrorism (Department of State, n.d.).

3.4.3 Military

The military is important to U.S. counterterrorism. The specialized counterterrorism units are entrusted with the responsibility of executing the duties for which they were specifically designed (Stoffa, 2008). Stoffa (2008) notes that U.S. special forces counterterrorism organizations may improve diplomatic and military security overseas. Stoffa claims that these teams have studied terrorist methods to recommend site security solutions. Due to their intensive covert infiltration training, these troops may also evaluate U.S. facility security (Stoffa, 2008). Using intelligence, the military may launch preemptive attacks with its specialized soldiers to avert an attack. This includes intercepting assault supplies and disarming terrorists (Stoffa, 2008). Unfortunately, all terrorism cannot be predicted and prevented (Bakker, 2012; Stoffa, 2008).

Terrorists often take hostages during attacks. Hostages are first used by terrorists to generate fear (Rivers, 1987). They use captives to draw attention and raise awareness. Moreover, hostages are used to force government concessions (Stoffa, 2008; Briggs & Wallace, 2022). Briggs and Wallace (2022) report that France, Germany, and Spain have paid millions of euros to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb for the release of their people in Algeria. Special forces can handle hostage crises and capture terrorists as their actions violate the Geneva Convention and the Law of Armed Conflict (Stoffa, 2008). The U.S. has unimaginable military capability and can defeat most of its enemies (Peterson, 2002). ISIS was defeated in Iraq by the U.S. military and its allies from 2014 to 2017, resulting in the loss of 95% of the land (Department of State, 2024). Additionally, the U.S. military eliminated terrorist leaders such Osama Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and Hamza bin Laden (Barakat, 2022). In contrast, 69% of U.S. adults considered that the U.S. failed to achieve its goals in Afghanistan after the departure, according to Pew Research Center (2022). Former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman retired Gen. Mark Milley called the U.S.-led fight against the Taliban in Afghanistan a "strategic failure" following the 9/11 terror attacks (Guldogan, 2024).

3.4.4 Intelligence

A state's counter-terrorism tactics must include information on terrorists planning and committing actions. Intelligence services are crucial here. Intelligence helps prevent terrorism by lowering its tactical and strategic effect, according to Karmon (2009).

Counterterrorism begins with intelligence tradecraft, according to Richards (2018). Two basic types of conventional clandestine intelligence collecting exist (Richards, 2018). First is human intelligence (Humint), an ancient human activity (Richards, 2018). A state's most valuable intelligence is human intelligence from a terrorist group, according to Jeffery (1987). Human assets get enemy intelligence by convincing individuals to divulge vital information from a target organization or entering a group secretly (Richards, 2018). Second in intelligence tradecraft is technical intelligence collection (Richards, 2018). Technological intelligence includes intercepting transmissions (Sigint) or collecting image data from satellites or other clandestine platforms (Richards, 2018). Open-source intelligence (Osint) uses public resources to acquire and analyze unclassified information (Pearson, 1999), while virtual intelligence (Visint) uses a controlled environment, specified factors, and calculated results to draw scientific conclusions (Mills, 2018). Previously, individuals quietly tracked or watched targets, but today technological means are utilized (Richards, 2018). These include satellite phone geolocation, vehicle tracking, CCTV, and more (Richards, 2018). In this scenario, working with foreign intelligence agencies is crucial (McGruddy, 2013).

Thus, if employed properly, these intelligence tactics can yield positive outcomes, but if misused, they may lead to intelligence failure and a terrorist strike. According to the U.S. Congress Report of the National Commission on Terrorism, "good intelligence is the best weapon against international terrorism" (Karmon, 2009). However, if intelligence services produce false information like Iraq's supposed WMDs, which led to the U.S. invasion, it might harm national security. Thus, by preventing intelligence failure, intelligence organizations can collect vital intelligence to protect the U.S. and its allies from internal and worldwide terrorism.

3.4.5 Law Enforcement

The 9/11 attacks reminded the public of the dangers of terrorism (Council of State Governments et al., 2006). Law enforcement at all levels prioritized preventing future terrorism and planned for large-scale response operations (Council of State Governments et al., 2006). According to a study, 75% of state law enforcement agencies gather, analyze, and disseminate terrorist information (Council of State Governments et al., 2006). Since 9/11, state police have done more to develop their intelligence capabilities, investigate terrorism, and coordinate and strategize homeland security (Council of State Governments

et al, 2006).Conversely, the FBI has successfully investigated and interfered in domestic violent extremist (DVE) acts, plans, and threats (FBI & Department of Homeland Security, 2021). In 2007, the FBI and the Metropolitan Police Department signed a memorandum of understanding to construct Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) under U.S. Presidential directions. These task forces were the main defense against internal and foreign terrorism. These initiatives emphasize the significance of law enforcement in combating terrorism in the U.S. and abroad.

3.4.6 Preventing Terrorist Financing

The U.S. Treasury Department (Treasury) has a robust institutional and legal system to identify and prevent terrorist funding (TF) domestically and abroad (Treasury,2022). This system comprises a robust U.S. AML/CFT framework, legislative authority, and investigative resources to locate and punish terrorist financiers (Department of Treasury,2022). Treasury collaborates and develops capacity bilaterally to help U.S. foreign partners dismantle TF networks and prevent terrorists from accessing the global financial system (Department of Treasury,2022). State, Department of Justice (DOJ), and other interagency partners coordinate (Department of Treasury,2022). Executive Order 13224, as modified, prohibits U.S. citizens from dealing with Specially Designated Global Terrorists' property, including artwork. These methods enable the U.S. government stop terrorist groups from funding their activities inside and abroad.

3.4.7 Cyber Tools

After 9/11, the U.S. government constructed the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB) to recognize and identify known and suspected terrorists (Bjelopera, Elias, and Siskin, 2016). This cyber project seeks to identify and share information with U.S. law enforcement about possible terrorist threats (Bjelopera, Elias, and Siskin, 2016). The FBI-run Terrorist Screening Center (TSC) manages it by presidential authority (Bjelopera, Elias, and Siskin, 2016). The TSDB contains biographical identifiers of accused terrorists (Bjelopera, Elias, and Siskin, 2016). It may also include biometric data on these persons. It has hundreds of thousands of identities (Bjelopera, Elias, Siskin, 2016). Preventing infiltration, eliminating terrorist networks, protecting essential infrastructure, and increasing public safety are part of this approach to protect national security.

3.5 The Legal and Ethical Factors of Combating Terrorism

Terrorism prevention and human rights protection are crucial (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2007). Unless security measures comply with human rights standards, terrorism cannot be eliminated (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2007). On the other hand, worldwide counter-terrorism policies adopted after September 11 have had major effects. Most human rights experts see a conflict between counter-terrorism and human rights (Echeverria & Ferstman, 2004). Improved collaboration and information sharing between police departments and security intelligence services, new laws like the Patriot Act 2001 to address terrorist funding, and national security legislation to give investigative agencies more power are all counter-terrorism measures. This includes isolating terrorists from financial, material, and logistical assistance and attacking major terrorists and terrorist organizations using military and non-military capabilities (White House, 2018). The measures also establish processes for arrests, detentions, and prosecutions for terrorist crimes (Echeverria & Ferstman, 2004). In the name of preventing terrorism, certain governments have suppressed minorities and political opponents using varied methods. Counterterrorism has far-reaching effects beyond criminal law. Gearty (2007) claims that certain anti-terrorism laws violate human rights in concept and practice. Some methods violate legal and ethical norms.

Despite legal and philosophical debate, most bystanders and the worldwide legal community viewed intensified interrogation tactics as torture (Davidovic, 2020). Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart observed, *"We knew it when we saw it."* Stress postures and water boarding constitute torture, and we can see them (Davidovic, 2020). Torture victims and abusers endure lifelong, irreparable suffering. Torture also weakens global values that unite our nations (Davidovic, 2020). According to Rumney (2006), Posner and Vermeule argue that there is no conceptual reason to regulate coercive interrogation apart from other extreme government coercion. They argue that intensified interrogation may provide bad information, hindering terrorist operations (Rumney, 2006). In summary, it violates human rights and the law. However, the CIA noted that improved interrogation methods had helped foil terrorist plans and find Al-Qaeda leaders (Johnson, Mora & Schmidt, 2016). The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) minority views supported the CIA's claims that its detention program saved lives and undermined al-Qaeda. The SSCI minority believed increased interrogation tactics confirmed prisoner information. The Senate Select

Committee on Intelligence Study of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program (U.S. Senate, 2014) questioned the CIA and SSCI Minority Views on enhanced interrogation. Based on his own experience, Senator John McCain believes prisoner maltreatment harms intellect (U.S. Senate, 2014). According to federal precedent, a detainee's self-incriminating statement following enhanced interrogation cannot be utilized in a federal criminal prosecution (Tabrizi, 2018). following the Senate Intelligence Committee's report on CIA interrogation procedures following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, 51% of the public supported them. Only 29% said the tactics were unjustified, while 20% were undecided (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Drones are another example of legal and ethical counterterrorism. The drone may be an effective counterterrorism tool (Farrow, 2016). However, it has major consequences for the general populace where the U.S. fights terrorism. US covert drone activities raise two concerns, according to Shah and Chopra et al. (2012). The first and most typically stated is secrecy, which affects force accountability; second, drone platforms' limitations outside of full-scale military operations affect public protection and injury response. Drones weaken sovereignty, limit accountability due to secrecy, violate international law, and may cause diplomatic crises. Nemer's (2017) study found that Yemeni teenagers targeted by American drone attacks often expressed their fury, hatred, and desire for retaliation against the drone operators. This supports the allegation that drone strikes promote anti-Americanism and radicalize people (Morris, 2019).



Diagram 3: Armed MQ-1 Predator Drone

Source: U.S. Air Force

While drones have drawbacks in counterterrorism, they also have strategic benefits. Drones fulfill several U.S. national security roles (Congressional Research Service, 2023). Armed drones frequently help counterterrorism activities by performing the following tasks, according to the Congressional Research Service (2023):

- Identifying High-Value Targets: Using armed and unarmed drones for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions to identify terrorist leaders and other threats to the U.S.
- Executing Signature Strikes: Engaging in fatal actions against persons whose behaviors, tendencies, and places are frequently linked to terrorist organizations, but whose identities are unknown.
- Targeting Equipment/Facilities: The act of damaging structures or training grounds that are utilized for the purpose of housing or aiding terrorist operations.

Congressional Research Service (2023) further argue that there are many positive aspects to the use of armed drones instead of traditional manned aircraft, including the following:

- Unmanned drones enhance safety by minimizing the potential harm to pilots in the event of damage or destruction of the platform, reducing the danger of injury, capture, or death.
- Precision: Unmanned drones may approach ground targets closer than regular aircraft, improving targeting accuracy. This decreases noncombatant injuries and civilian property damage.
- Loitering: Drones possess the capability to remain in a certain area and conduct surveillance on targets for a longer duration compared to manned aircraft.
- Expense: Drone purchase, maintenance, and operation cost less than manned aircraft and have cheaper training costs and job benefits than human aircraft pilots.

Thus, after reviewing numerous scholars' literature analyses, drones in counterterrorism have both legal and ethical pros and cons. Kinetic attacks are more effective in current anti-terrorism combat. Drone use must be done safely to avoid harming nearby persons and environments. Liz Sherwood-Randall, President Biden's Homeland Security Advisor, says periodic review of the armed drone policy will ensure that the U.S. government is “discerning and agile in protecting Americans against evolving global terrorist challenges... [while] minimizing civilian casualties” (Congressional Research Service, 2023).

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy's Core Principles

To successfully combat domestic and foreign terrorism, the U.S. must build a comprehensive counterterrorism program. To combat the ever-changing danger of terrorism, Bush, Obama, and Trump have made necessary changes to the U.S. counterterrorism policy. US National Strategy for Counterterrorism 2018 has been amended from Bush administration 2006 and Obama administration 2011 editions. According to White House (2018), the 2018 counterterrorism strategy, which is the main subject of this study, is founded on the subsequent fundamental principles that include:

- To ensure that the terrorist threat to the U.S. is eliminated.
- To ensure borders and all ports of entry into the U.S. are secure against terrorist threats.
- To ensure that terrorism, radical Islamist ideologies, and other violent extremist ideologies do not undermine the American way of life; and
- To ensure that foreign partners address terrorist threats so that these threats do not jeopardize the collective interests of the U.S. and her partners.

To fight terrorism, the 2018 strategy put America first (White House, 2018). Despite his "America First" rhetoric, President Trump sought coalitions to combat terrorism and limit U.S. engagement (Jadoon et al., 2024). This strategy is driven by U.S. interests, guided by realistic assessments of her challenges and strengths, and recognizes the considerable contributions of her friends and partners, both worldwide and domestically, in counterterrorism efforts (White House, 2018). The study found that the U.S. must continue coordinating counterterrorism efforts and exchanging intelligence as part of its Middle East policy, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq, due to terrorism. The research also emphasized that U.S. foreign strategies must extend beyond terrorism following 9/11.

4.2 U.S. Counterterrorism Diplomatic Tools

Following the 9/11 attacks in New York and at the Pentagon, the U.S. initiated the Global War on Terror (GWoT) (Jadoon, 2024). In this context, the study found that the U.S. employed both punitive and non-punitive diplomatic techniques in addressing the problems

in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regarding punitive methods, the U.S. utilized sanctions and military intervention in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Afghanistan received 155 U.S. sanctions. 70% (107) targeted terrorism funding (Bartlett, 2021). Iranian authorities (4) and counternarcotics trafficking (41) got the remaining sanctions (Bartlett, 2021). The case study states that UNSCR 1267 sanctioned the Taliban in October 1999. These sanctions were aimed to compel the Taliban to give up bin Laden. The Taliban's foreign assets were blocked and its aircraft were barred from flying (Department of State, 1999). Bush authorized operation "Enduring Freedom" against Afghanistan in October 2001. Joscelyn (2020) argued Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) failed to confront Islamist safe havens in Pakistan and Iran. The main goal of OEF was to eliminate al-Qaeda's Afghan bases. That goal was briefly realized, but the study found that the jihadists established new bases elsewhere (Joscelyn, 2020). This shows that radical Islamic terrorism will continue to threaten U.S. national security.

The study observed that multiple U.N. resolutions were passed to stop Saddam Hussein's aggression, sponsorship of terrorism, and human rights and disarmament violations in Iraq. The research also determined that the U.S. and international community forced Iraq to cooperate with weapons inspections and economic penalties (Gregg, n.d.). However, it is revealed that these methods yielded less results. Gunaratna (2017) claims the U.S. attacked Iraq in 2003 based on fake WMD intelligence that was never located. Thus, although the U.S. uses sanctions to fight terrorism, Jadoon et al. (2024) suggest that multilateral sanctions work better. Jadoon et al. (2024) found that economic sanctions on terrorists or countries that support terrorism lose their efficacy when applied to countries with alternative income sources. According to Jadoon et al. (2024), organizations that make money via extortion, ransom demands, and unlawful trade are exempt from financial sanctions. The analysis showed that the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and disbandment of Iraqi troops produced a power vacuum that elevated terrorist risk. We might conclude that although the U.S. has achieved tremendous success in combatting terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq, it has also worsened the problem, leaving academics and policymakers unsure when it will be addressed.

After 9/11, the U.S. used sanctions waivers, military assistance, and foreign aid for development and governance in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. waived sanctions after 9/11 to gain international support for multilateral counterterrorism (Jadoon, 2024). For

instance, the U.S. eased Pakistan and India sanctions after 9/11 (Hufbauer et al., 2016). The purpose of the sanctions waivers was to encourage cooperation from states who have a more hostile relationship with the U.S. (Jadoon, 2024). It can be argued that the U.S. was purchasing collaboration to participate in its battle against terrorism in the Middle East, specifically in Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet, despite these efforts, it is revealed that the U.S. is largely disliked in the region (Kohut, 2005; Dagher & Kaltenthaler, 2023).

Hoodbhoy (2005) found that the U.S. covertly supported the Afghan resistance, even though former CIA Station Chief Milton Bearden (2001) claimed that the CIA never recruited, trained, or used Arab volunteers who arrived in Pakistan to fight in Afghanistan. Conversely, after demolishing Iraq's military and security apparatus in 2003, the U.S. helped rebuild and retrain its security forces (Katzman, 2015). Military support for training and equipping the Afghan and Iraqi army and police totaled approximately \$90 billion as of late 2015 (Thrall & Goepner, 2017). Afghanistan has received \$104 billion since 2001 and Iraq \$60 billion since 2003 (Thrall & Goepner, 2017). However, the Afghan and Iraqi wars were the costliest in U.S. history, costing \$4 trillion to \$6 trillion (Bilmes, 2014). This amount includes long-term medical care, disability compensation, military replenishment, and social and economic expenditures for military members, veterans, and their families (Bilmes, 2014). Hence, while the U.S. is eager to provide military aid in Afghanistan and Iraq, should also consider the potential consequences of these two wars on its societal and economic dimensions, which might impact a significant number of American taxpayers. Stimson (2018) found that from 2002 to 2017, domestic security, foreign initiatives, and the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria cost \$2.8 trillion. According to Stimson, counterterrorism spending peaked in 2008 at \$260 billion, at the height of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. This is 16 times 2001. Counterterrorism spending rose elevenfold from 2001 to \$175 billion in 2017, but military expenditure fell (Stimson, 2018). These assertions on the financial effects of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars support the hypothesis that as terrorist threats grow, the U.S. will escalate its counterterrorism measures.

According to the World Bank (n.d.), Afghanistan received \$3.79 billion in official development assistance between 2001 and 2018. Between 2003 and 2018, foreign partners, notably the U.S., gave Iraq \$2.3 billion (World Bank, n.d.). However, researchers and professionals argue the relationship between nonmilitary foreign assistance and terrorism

(Jadoon, 2024). Economic development assistance does not diminish terrorism in recipient countries, according to Savun and Tirone (2018). Governance and civil society improvements decreased terrorism more than projected (Savun & Tirone, 2018). Boutton and Carter (2014) found that Washington provides less aid when there is no urgent terrorism threat. According to Jadoon (2024), Washington may send more aid if a state poses a greater terrorism threat. Thus, to successfully fight terrorism, the U.S. must combine security and development initiatives, especially when giving foreign aid for development and governance.

4.3 America's Cooperation in Counterterrorism

Terrorism is a substantial and widespread threat to both domestic and global security (Mansour-Ille, 2021). The U.S. has formed and sustained collaborative alliances, either via bilateral or multilateral means, with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in response to the worldwide battle against terrorism (Mansour-Ille, 2021). However, for this network of collaboration to be successful, it is necessary for it to be organized and managed by multilateral organizations (Park, 2017). It is found that multilateralism creates frameworks for long-term cooperation based on shared principles and precedents that go beyond bilateral ties (Einaudi, 2009).

The U.S. has focused on Arab Gulf states including Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE to combat Al-Qaeda and ISIS (Mansour-Ille, 2021). Israel has also been a staunch U.S. counterterrorism ally (Department of State, 2020). Partner capabilities, border security, intelligence sharing, and information on dangerous terrorist combatants and organizations have been the goals (Levitt, 2018). Washington requires a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that ensures its Arab allies do not utilize U.S. assistance to maintain terrorism and supports Arab nations best capable of fighting radicalization (Dunne & Wehrey, 2014). The Middle East's strong anti-U.S. attitude may hinder collaboration. The fact that the world's most wanted man was hidden in Abbottabad, Pakistan, without security's awareness raises the question of whether Pakistan knew or deliberately sheltered al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. 2013 (Riedel). According to Carlotta (2014), Pakistan openly supported the U.S. fight on terrorism while covertly coordinating Taliban, Kashmiri, and international terrorists associated with Al-Qaeda. If Pakistan knew Osama Bin Laden was in the nation for six years, then the U.S. sanctions

waiver to improve cooperation after 9/11 did not produce desired outcomes as far as the case of Afghanistan and Iraq are concerned.

The U.S. also participates in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, which seeks to defeat the terrorist group militarily, diplomatically, and humanitarily (Global Coalition, n.d.). As a UN member, the U.S. has continually promoted varied tactics to promote global peace and security and fight terrorism (Thomas-Greenfield, 2023). However, the UN (2020) acknowledges that international collaboration is under strain, decreasing the global ability to prevent and resolve all forms of conflict and violence. This underscores that the U.S.' global fight on terror in a state of uncertainty.

4.4 The Policy Shift from Bush, Obama to Trump

The study reveals that Bush administration's reaction to the terrorist attacks on 9/11 has significantly influenced the U.S.' counterterrorism strategy during the last two decades (Jadoon et al, 2024). During President Bush's administration, terrorism was portrayed as more of an act of war rather than a criminal behavior (Badey,2006). Consequently, it was seen necessary to combat terrorism using military strategies (Badey, 2006). The Bush administration saw the battle against terrorism as a part of a broader struggle against autocracy and tyranny (Jadoon et al, 2024). In response, they advocated for freedom and human dignity as alternatives to the terrorists' ideology of oppression and totalitarianism (White House, 2006).

Unlike the Obama and Trump administrations, the study found that they deliberately separated their counterterrorism rhetoric from the promotion of democracy (Jadoon et al, 2024). The Obama administration prioritized the defeat of and defense against al-Qaeda, whereas the Trump administration aimed to combat extremism and placed more emphasis on state sponsors of terrorism focusing on Iran (Jadoon et al, 2024) which the U.S. considers as an adversary in the Middle East geopolitics. This shift in focus away from using democracy as a tactic to defeat terrorism indicates a change in the understanding of the underlying causes of terrorism. Although the administrations' perception of the terrorism issue changed over time due to the evolving nature of the danger, it is established that the presidents had access to the same set of instruments throughout (Jadoon et al, 2024). Each president's strategy has been defined by acknowledging the complex nature of the terrorism threat and the necessity of a comprehensive reaction that incorporates all aspects of national power, such as military, intelligence, diplomatic, economic, and law

enforcement resources (Jadoon et al, 2024). Ultimately, all three governments expressed a readiness to use both punitive and nonpunitive diplomatic methods of exerting power (Jadoon et al., 2024) in the fight against terrorism.

4.5 The Outcomes of the U.S. Strategy: Success or Failure?

Undoubtedly, it can be argued that throughout the last two decades since the commencement of the worldwide war on terrorism, the U.S. has used a comprehensive range of counterterrorism strategies, including both nonviolent and forceful measures, in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Although there are some parallels between the two case studies, there are also notable variances that have resulted in diverse repercussions in relation to the U.S. counterterrorism policy in the Middle East as found in this study. Table 2 below presents a range of parallels and differences observed between Afghanistan and Iraq.

Table 2: The Similarities and Differences of the U.S. invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq

Description	Afghanistan	Iraq
Similarities	1. In Afghanistan, the U.S. used a comprehensive approach, using various counterterrorism measures including military, intelligence, diplomatic, economic, and law enforcement resources. 2. Afghanistan is often regarded as a sanctuary for terrorist organizations like the Taliban and al-Qaeda, which pose a significant danger to the national interests of the U.S. both inside its borders and outside. 3. The U.S. forces managed to kill al Qaeda founder and ringleader Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad,	1. In Iraq, the U.S. used a comprehensive approach, including various counterterrorism measures such as military, intelligence, diplomatic, economic, and law enforcement resources. 2. Iraq is seen as a sanctuary for terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and ISIS, which pose a danger to the national interests of the U.S. both inside its borders and outside. 3. The U.S. forces managed to kill ISIS founder and ringleader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi in northern Syria.

	Pakistan.	4. The U.S. war in Iraq is among the costliest war in America's history.
	4. The U.S. war in Afghanistan is among the costliest war in America's history.	
Differences	1. The primary objective was to apprehend Osama Bin Laden, either dead or alive, and demolish both al-Qaeda and the Taliban, who refused to comply with the U.S. demands to surrender Bin Laden. 2. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was considered a case of self-defense in response to 9/11 attacks. 3. In the case of Afghanistan, the U.S. permanent departure is a strategic failure that led to the return of the Taliban who are known for their brutal violations of human rights and the rule of law. 4. Before the invasion the U.S. has been known to have clandestinely collaborated with Pakistan in training the Afghan resistance forces against the Soviet Union in the context of Afghanistan. This collaboration eventually resulted in the emergence of the Taliban, who subsequently offered refuge to Osama Bin Laden.	1. In the 1st phase of war, the objective was to oust Saddam Hussein, whom the U.S. claimed was in possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and providing support for terrorism. Later on it was ISIS and the other Jihadi-Salafi terror organizations. 2. The U.S. invasion of Iraq was considered illegal and was not sanctioned by the UN security council in accordance with the UN's founding charter. But legitimized by a very broad and impressive coalition. 3. In the case of Iraq, the U.S. forces left then returned to retake back the territory that was controlled by ISIS in Iraq which was a major success to the U.S. counterterrorism efforts. 4. Before the invasion the U.S. has no known connection with the founders of ISIS in Iraq, nor has it collaborated with them in any capacity to

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|---|---|
| <p>5. In Afghanistan, the Taliban maintained a robust alliance with Osama Bin Laden and al Qaeda, who established their training facilities inside the country.</p> | <p>combat foreign forces in the country prior to the U.S. invasion.</p> <p>5. The U.S and her allies did not present proof of a link between Saddam Hussein's regime and al-Qaeda. However, in his speech of October 7, 2002, Bush linked Iraq with al-Qaeda.</p> |
|---|---|

Source: The researcher compiled information from case studies and a study of literature conducted in 2024.

Table 2 shows that the U.S. attacked Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11. There are also substantial variations between the two situations that affected U.S. counterterrorism tactics. Iraq was different from Afghanistan, where international law justified the U.S. intervention. Thus, the U.S.' disregard for the international community's appeals, particularly those of the UN, and its decision to invade Iraq undermined the U.S.'s adherence to an institution it encourages other member states to honor and exacerbated Middle East animosity, preventing counterterrorism efforts. The U.S. exit from Iraq following Saddam Hussein's demise created a power vacuum that allowed ISIS to emerge. This increased the U.S.'s al-Qaeda danger in Afghanistan and Iraq. Consequently, the U.S. war on terror became even more complex and costlier since the government was funding unending wars in two failed states in the Middle East.

In addition, although the U.S. has successfully eliminated the key figures of both al-Qaeda and ISIS in Afghanistan and Iraq, the study found that this accomplishment has not completely eradicated the terrorism threat. In a nutshell, the nature of this threat has evolved and become more intricate, as terrorist organizations forge connections with other radical Islamist groups, posing a greater danger to U.S. interests both at home and abroad. Moreover, Bolan (2021) argues that the U.S. goal of completely eliminating terrorism was never feasible. Instead, the U.S. should have concentrated on weakening and disrupting the terrorist groups that have a worldwide presence by employing a comprehensive approach that integrates military, intelligence, diplomatic, economic, and social tactics. According to

Bolan (2021), the danger of terrorism will need ongoing and consistent management. Bolan (2021) recognizes that the conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq may have hindered the capacity of terrorist organizations to plot and execute extensive acts of violence. However, he believes that al-Qaeda and the Islamic State will persist in attracting followers worldwide and establishing several branches in the region and beyond. Consequently, it is probable that these terrorist organizations and their potential future forms will persistently provide a modest risk to the interests of the U.S. and Western countries (Bolan, 2021). Within this framework, one can contend that the U.S. counterterrorism strategy achieved some of its main goals, but concurrently exacerbated the crisis by causing extensive destruction in Afghanistan and Iraq. This destruction has enabled terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and ISIS to regroup effortlessly and persist in posing a threat to U.S. national interests.

Given that Osama bin Laden's final hiding place was in Pakistan, the question of whether the country's authorities knew about him leads to the conclusion that the U.S. decision to waive sanctions on Pakistan as a counterterrorism measure did not improve relations. According to Carlotta (2014), Pakistan outwardly supported the American fight against terrorism while secretly supporting Taliban, Kashmiri, and Al-Qaeda militants. This shows that the U.S.'s approach of offering sanctions exemptions to Pakistan to win its war on terrorism failed. Drones were economically efficient and achieved their goals in U.S. military action in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, it noted that many individuals had sadly died as inadvertent fatalities. In the future, the U.S. must limit civilian casualties when forces identify a high-priority terrorist target. This can be done by combining accurate targeting that involve the use of small diameter bombs (SDBs) and loitering munitions, sophisticated technology, as well as strict adherence to protocols. Furthermore, the utilization of unethical methods of questioning can also hinder the counterterrorism endeavors of the U.S. This is because enhanced interrogation techniques, as highlighted by Rumney (2006), have the capacity to produce inaccurate information, thus posing a substantial obstacle to the efficacy of counterterrorism efforts undertaken in both Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East at large. Some worry that using severe interrogation techniques will have an impact on the U.S.' support for a global system to combat terrorism (Boyle, 2008). Hence, the U.S. is obligated to safeguard its established collaboration with other parties in the Middle East and beyond, which always has a cost, either in terms of sharing intelligence or limiting freedom of action (Boyle, 2008).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This thesis aims to examine the United States' (U.S.) counterterrorism strategy in the 21st century and evaluate the outcomes and repercussions of these endeavors via the analysis of Afghanistan and Iraq as case studies. Since the September 11th attacks, the U.S. has persistently pursued counterterrorism measures both inside its own borders and internationally. Nevertheless, it is clear that the problem of terrorism will persist and has consistently changed over time, making the task of combating it more intricate and expensive for the U.S. government, its allies and partners. Nevertheless, the U.S. has been employing both punitive and nonpunitive tactics in its counterterrorism endeavors that include the use of diplomacy, military operations, intelligence activities, and law enforcement. However, it is imperative for the U.S. government to guarantee that these measures do not violate human rights and the principles of the rule of law. Simultaneously, they should not pose a threat to national security, as exemplified by the issue of sanctions waivers.

Although there are significant parallels and variations between the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, it is essential for the U.S. to concentrate its counterterrorism operations according to the specific circumstances of each country. This will aid the U.S. in combating terrorism, considering the unique historical, social, political, cultural, and economic conditions that exist in both countries making the efforts more fruitful. Moreover, rebuilding the local governance systems that has been dismantled because of the U.S. invasions would enable both Afghanistan and Iraq to play a role in maintaining security and fostering regional security which is already in peril.

Although the U.S. has already withdrawn its armed forces from Afghanistan and Iraq, it should not entirely abandon the Middle East. This is because terrorists still find refuge in Afghanistan and Iraq. The alternative option would provide them a safe facility to coordinate their attacks, endangering the U.S. and its Western allies and threatening twenty years of counterterrorism success. Both al-Qaeda and ISIS want to recruit abroad and develop branches in the region and elsewhere. Even if the U.S. completely withdrawn its troops from both nations, it should deploy other counterterrorism methods to prevent these

groups from resurfacing in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. The main enablers of terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq are human and financial resources. Terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS would struggle to continue if their funding streams were cut and foreign fighters were barred. Following this strategy, the U.S. should continue to cut off their financial and manpower resources to grow in the Middle East and support their terrorist cells to attack overseas. Finally, the U.S. must improve its Middle East image, especially among locals. By doing this, the U.S. may get actual support that decreases the necessity for a significant military presence in the area for counterterrorism rather than other national security reasons. It is imperative to acknowledge that the concept of radical Islam is a basic issue that necessitates international collaboration. Terrorism has become a global threat, extending beyond national borders. Hence, it is crucial for countries to collaborate in order to combat radicalism, which serves as the primary cause of Islamic terrorism, affecting not just the U.S. but also other nations worldwide. Furthermore, the concept of violent radicalism and terrorism aligns with the occurrence of failed states, as exemplified by the situations in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this context, it is crucial for the U.S. and other global partners to play a role in rebuilding these quasi states. This involves restoring social, political, and economic systems to their normal functioning in order to prevent terrorist groups from exploiting the situation and launching further attacks against the U.S. and its allies.

5.2 Recommendations

The following are some recommendations that the researcher offers, taking into consideration the results of the study. These recommendations are intended to be taken into consideration by counterterrorism practitioners and policymakers in the U.S. establishment:

1. After achieving goals, U.S. soldiers should be withdrawn in phases to prevent terrorist organizations from regrouping and threatening national interests, as seen with ISIS in Iraq and the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. This is to avoid a repeat of the situation in any place where the U.S. would fight terrorists.
2. The U.S. government should guarantee that the counterterrorism instruments it uses align with the country's worldwide stance on democracy, rule of law, and human rights. This will assist the U.S. in safeguarding its reputation both locally and internationally, preventing it from being labeled as a nation that engages in inconsistent practices in its fight against terrorism.

3. Despite its status as a superpower, the U.S. should refrain from participating in a conflict that has lost credibility in the eyes of the global community, similar to the situation with Iraq. By doing the opposite, other superpowers will be encouraged to follow suit, since the U.S. has already established a precedent.
4. When granting sanctions waivers to other Middle Eastern allies, the U.S. should verify that these particular nations do not have any undisclosed motives that may hinder its counterterrorism efforts.
5. In order to reduce the financial burden of war, the U.S. should continue to use kinetic attacks that both limit casualties among U.S. personnel and result in lower expenditures. Considering that terrorist groups often employ human shields as a key tactic, it is crucial to carry out these attacks with a combination of accurate targeting, sophisticated technology, and strict adherence to protocols. This approach aims to minimize any unintended damage to individuals or infrastructure that are not the intended targets.
6. The U.S. should prioritize the reconstruction of the failed states of Afghanistan and Iraq through the provision of training, education, institution-building, civil society development, economic support, and the establishment of law and order. The study revealed that enhancing governance and fostering civic engagement resulted in a greater reduction in terrorism than initially anticipated.
7. The U.S. should develop other methods to prevent terrorist financing, including monitoring illegal commerce, internet crowdfunding sites, and alternate remittance systems. This is consistent with the fact that terrorist groups avoid financial restrictions by earning money via extortion, ransom demands, and illicit trade.
8. To tackle radicalism the U.S. should continue to empower local communities, offering economic and social assistance, and organizing efforts to challenge extremist narratives in collaboration with local stakeholders in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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