

**An Analytical Overview of the U.S War on Terror
Conceptualization and Double Standards**



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Summary:

Since its ascent as a global power, following World War II, the United States has placed an immeasurable worth on Middle East region. However, numerous subsequent international developments since the 1980s have had a considerable effect on U.S foreign policy to protect its burgeoning interests in the area. Nevertheless, the events of 09/11/2001 are considered the major turning point in the American history that led United States to rethink its policy. The latter has adopted "War on Terror" to be a new strategic pillar and highly important objective, and it justified all means including direct military intervention and pre-emptive strike. Thus, this paper analyses this U.S adopted strategy to see whether United States seeks to ensure, through its war on terror, the maximum of worldwide peace and security, or it is just another means to legalize this new policy that goes only in accordance with what fits and ensures the U.S dominance and interests and those of its strategic allies.

Keywords: 9/11 attacks, Middle East, Counter-Terrorism, U.S policy, Pre-emptive Strike

1- Introduction:

In the 1950s, United States' foreign policy was founded on Containment Policy. It focused on developing a security and economic plan to limit the Soviet Union's expansion, influence, and the communist ideology as well. This prompt the two powers to engage in the so-called

"Cold War" that lasted several years, with the third world countries serving as implements of this policy.

In early 1970s, some U.S. policymakers began to reassess this non-interventionist strategy, seeing it as a restraint that raised the challenges to U.S. interests overseas, and that American inaction to minor dangers abroad would foster more major ones later.

Furthermore, the Vietnam syndrome, from an American perspective, had substantially contributed to destabilization by encouraging hostile forces to abuse global security system vulnerabilities. Thus, they asserted that the United States' non-interventionist policy *"is a sign of weakness rather than self-control policy"* (Lesch. D, 2003).

Following the end of the cold war, United States strengthened its position economically, politically and militarily, becoming the world's lone superpower. However, competition among global rivals has increased in order to dominate global trade platforms as well as critical energy supplies.

In this context, they were drawn to the Middle East area because of its prominence as a worldwide source of oil energy and a viable market for their products. In the midst of these developments, United States realized that its containment policy was no longer relevant. Consequently, it began to focus on crystallizing its strategy in order to preserve its position and dominance, as well as to preserve its interests, beginning with the Middle East area, which is regarded as a critical strategic region that matches the U.S. developing goals.

2- Definition of Terrorism:

The concept of terrorism has been the subject of much debate and discussion among politicians and political scientists, as there is, though, when dealing with a text written in a foreign language, say English. The concept of terrorism has been the subject of much debate and discussion among politicians and political scientists, as there is no definition of the latter to be agreed on yet. However, it is defined in U.S Strategy Report as *"a pre-planned violence to achieve political goals and to kill innocent civilians"* (U.S Department of State, 2003).

In fact, the U.S government has initially given the concept of terrorism, through its political discourse, a religious character that is related to Islam. It has made of the two words *"Jihad"* and *"Terrorism"* synonyms, especially, after the growing rejection of American dominance in the international system because of its bias in the management of the international relations between the regimes and groups of opposition in several countries, particularly, the Arab world, due to its constant unconditioned support and protection of its ally, Israel. Therefore, the U.S administration seized the opportunity indicting the Arabs and Muslims, after the events of 09/11, for terrorism.

Notwithstanding, it should be noted that terrorism is a global phenomenon that is not limited to Arabs or Muslims, as promoted by the Western mass media, generally, and the American media and press, particularly. As United States itself

has seen the growth of militias, such as, "*The Michigan Militia*", which was created in 1914, "*The Texas Militia*" that defended the supremacy of the white man of the Anglo-Saxon race over the other races. The bombing of Oklahoma City on April 19th, 1995, was another evidence of American militias' involvement in terrorist activities. (Carol. K, 2006)

In addition, violence and terrorist acts have indeed been ascribed to drug cartels in America, mainly, in Mexico, Colombia and Brazil. In Europe as well, such as, "*The Red Brigades*" in Italy, along with terrorist activities committed by the ETA Organization (Basque Separatists) in Spain and France (Carol. K, 2006). In addition to this, the continuing crimes done by Israel against the Palestinian people that are considered flagrant violation of International Law and Human Rights.

What is noteworthy is that the concept of terrorism has remained ambiguous in the American political discourse for several reasons. Today's world, on one hand, is exposed to the so-called "Organized Crime" that has evolved into a structured regulation with distinct aims and techniques. This phenomenon has grown as a result of worsening socioeconomic conditions and increasing poverty (Derian. J, 1999). The foregoing, henceforth, makes it difficult to isolate any of these phenomena (terrorism, violence, organized crime), whether on a global scale or from conflicts within the same country, and give it a well-established definition.

On the other hand, United States goes much beyond claiming that there are injustices in the world that imperil security and peace, like, the armed struggle and national liberation movements, justifying that conflicts should be handled via democratic means. (U.S Department of State, 2022)

This means that the armed struggle waged by some communities against colonization and aggression to reclaim their independence and sovereignty, and which is legitimized by International Law and norms, is terrorism from a U.S perspective, and that these populations must give up and cease resisting or they will be labelled terrorists.

Accordingly, the world is required to draw parallels between completely distinct things, and to discern differences between two comparable things. For instance, we are asked to draw parallels between the terrorist operations in Algeria, which resulted in the deaths of countless thousands of innocent people and harmed the national economy, and the Palestinian martyrdom operations that are carried out in order to gain the world's attention to their cause and the cruelty of Israel's doings to them and their country, after they were deprived of all means of expression. Therefore, these two different things are equal, in U.S political beliefs, and bear the same label of terrorism.

In addition, we are also asked to differentiate between two similar cases in terms of vileness and brutality by naming them differently. The incident of 09/11, in which over four thousand civilians were killed, and the murdering of thousands of innocent Children and elders, in addition to denying them access to medicine during the occupation of Iraq. The first is called terrorism and the second is given

many other tags rather than terrorism, like, self-defence, international legitimacy defence, or punishing a terrorist dictator governor in Iraq. Hence, a very loud and clear mysterious confusion is depicted in defining the concept of terrorism in the U.S political agenda.

3- The U.S Strategy for Counter Terrorism Policy:

Following the attacks of 09/11/2001 on the World Trade Centre, in New York, and the Department of Defence (Pentagon), the President George Walker Bush made a speech saying: *"No group or nation should mistake America's intention; we will not rest until terrorist groups of global reach have been found, have been stopped, and have been defeated"* (U.S Department of State, 2003).

Paul Wolfowitz, the Secretary of defence then, backed this speech saying: *"what the president wants to achieve can happen only in case we execute direct strikes on terrorism-sponsoring states, terrorist countries and Iraq with the existence of Saddam Hussein on its head"* (Tschigri. D, 2007, p.57). In another speech made on June 06th, 2002 in West Point Military Academy, the President George. W Bush stated that:

We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action and this nation will act. (U.S Department of State, 2003)

All these speeches are clear declarations that the Bush administration reconsidered the U.S policy adopting the pre-emptive strike, despite the fact that this policy is illegal according to the International Law. This shift in U.S strategy from a policy of Containment and Deterrence that proved its ineffectiveness to enemies' early abortion that is based on acting preventively or pre-emptively has marked a watershed in U.S foreign policy.

The Bush administration justified the implementation of this new policy under the guise of fighting terrorism. They claimed that they are not required to return to the legitimacy of the international law because they are in a state of self-defence and that the nature and characteristics of the present threats of terrorism, or dictatorial governments, necessitate the adoption of this new military strategy before they reach the borders of America. (Abramowitz. M, 2008)

As a result, United States launched attacks against Afghanistan, as it was identified to be the headquarters of *Al-Qaeda* terrorist organization that is backed by Taliban regime. Then, in 2003, it declared war on Iraq accusing Saddam Hussein and his *Baath Party* of possessing weapons of mass destruction and of sponsoring terrorism, as they were indicted of having relations with *Al-Qaeda*. Add to this, other justifications ranging from the U.S intention to fight against dictatorship to its humanitarian mission of establishing a democratic system in Iraq to serve as a model for the rest of the Middle East countries.

Despite the fact that Iraq was found to be free of weapons of mass destruction, according to the UN Inspection Committee's reports, the U.S

administration clung to the plan of striking Iraq. This U.S reaction has only one interpretation: that is subjecting Iraq to the American influence had been a long-standing strategic goal of United States to be achieved at any cost.

Furthermore, the U.S government formed a broad multinational alliance in order to track down terrorist organizations, disrupt their global network and deplete their financial resources. However, on the national level, it authorized a legislation passed by the Congress to combat terrorism. This legislation serves as a green light for the use of some methods to handle the situation, like, arrests without warrants, military tribunals, intercepting phone conversations, e-mails and websites. (Abramowitz. M, 2008)

In reports submitted by the former United Nations Secretary Kurt Waldheim, he linked the spread of terrorism phenomenon to factors, such as, the world superpowers' inaction in carrying out their obligations under the United Nations Charter, as well as, their complicity and bias motivated by self-interests. According to Waldheim, these factors have led to the international organization's inability to attain collaborative efforts and troubleshooting. (Terwiliger. G., et al, 2005)

In the face of these changes, the U.S administration has mostly succeeded in putting the war on terror at the forefront of collaboration with all Arab and Middle Eastern countries, on the level of intelligence sharing and security coordination, making this U.S waged war on terrorism the core axis of its foreign policy. However, the hazards of this war, as stated above, stem from the American perception of the phenomenon of terrorism, which affects numerous countries and libertarian organizations fighting for their own lands' independence.

Moreover, along with reinforcing the Congress program for arms control in the region that was issued in 1991, United States upgraded reformist insignia for the Gulf region as unveiled in Bush's address at the University of South Carolina on May 09th, 2003. This U.S project or formula is known as "The Greater Middle East Project", also known as "*The New Middle East Project*".

This initiative encompasses nations ranging from Mauritania to Afghanistan (North Africa and Middle East), and is built on three pillars: political and administrative reforms, social reforms and educational reforms. While the project ultimate objective is to establish a free trade zone in which Israel, with U.S assistance, would play an active role in the area (Jones. S, 2014). In other words, imposing reforms and change, as well as adopting the U.S democratic model envisioned for the region's countries has become part of this new U.S strategy to be achieved by all means, including the use of military force to promote democracy. This project, according to experts, politicians and academics, is just a well-planned strategy to re-map the region and a perfect opportunity to implement its new formula for "The New World Order".

4. Criticism of the U.S Strategy for Counter-Terrorism:

The events of September 11th, 2001 compelled United States to revise its security policy and re-evaluate the functions of the American security institutions,

particularly, the military, in order to meet the new difficulties placed on the country. This was stated by Rumsfeld, the U.S Secretary of defence then, who made a speech in June saying: *"it's been proven in practice that it is necessary to rely on a new strategy consistent with the conditions and requirements of this century"* (Chomsky. N, 2003). Another speech that goes side to side with Rumsfeld's statement, made by the U.S President Bush in 2002, where he underlined the importance of the pre-emptive strike and its role in the future of U.S foreign policy and national defence, as he said:

We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systematically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialized, we will have waited too long. Our security will require transforming the military you will lead_ a military that must be ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world, and our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for pre-emptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives. (Chomsky. N, 2003)

Adopting the pre-emptive attack under the guise of rooting out terrorists, according to academics, has more strategic and political implications than a conventional military dimension. The goal of this strategy was to execute and achieve short and long-term strategic interests in the Middle East. It should be noted that the issue of terrorism began to be of significant importance in U.S foreign policy in early 1980s, notably during Ronald Reagan's administration, when the U.S Secretary of State at that time, Alexander Haig, declared that worldwide terrorism would supplant human rights. However, because of the upheavals that occurred following the events of September 11th, this vision has been attained to a considerable extent in U.S foreign policy. These assaults, clearly, were the finest card the U.S administration had to apply pressure on the rest of the world's governments, making the war on terror a necessary condition for repairing ties with them.

Furthermore, under the pretence of battling terrorism, the U.S administration permitted human rights' violations in favour of its allies. For instance, the New York Times journalist Matt Bai described the situation in Uzbekistan, one of the governments involved in *"The Greater Middle East Project"* and the war waged on terrorism, as follows:

In Uzbekistan, under the rule of President Islam Karimov, there are more than seven thousand (7000) political detainees, most of them were imprisoned for reasons such as growing their beards or distributing religious leaflet. The political opposition has been crashed and the freedom of press does not exist, and the few who dare to talk are constantly exposed to beatings, assault and arrest or they are forced to leave the country. (Jacques. P, Riley. E, Freeman. M, 2008, p.125)

This scenario in Uzbekistan is similar to that of other regimes that have suppressed their citizens under the pretext of combating terrorism. While Israel took advantage of these circumstances to classify the Palestinian resistance as a terrorist organization and to bombard it, killing countless numbers of Palestinian innocent civilians so far.

What is worth noting, is that United States recognizes that democracy is not a comprehensive solution that can be imposed and implemented overnight in any country, particularly, in the Middle East where most countries are deeply divided in terms of national, religious and ethnic ties. As it is likely, either one of factions will seize the chance to control the other groups, or a violent war will erupt claiming the lives of innocent people without constraints.

In fact, this occurred in Iraq following the toppling of Saddam Hussein and his administration. Severe disputes amongst Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds and Turkmen, as well as many foreign interventions with power and influence within these groups, such as, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, Turkey and United States of America (Gompers. D, 2014). Therefore, what kind of democracy does the U.S government intend to establish in such countries split between internal people, organizations and foreign ambitions?

Besides, democracy that United States desires to achieve in the area, has delivered nothing but instability by expanding the phenomenon of extremism and terrorism in all its manifestations, as well as creating hostility towards America in other areas of the world. As it is universally acknowledged that democracy is a culture and an activity that is related to human rights, and it cannot be forced, rather, it develops gradually through the growth of political consciousness and the accretion of political and social practices and experiences.

All these practices have made United States subject to harsh condemnation home and abroad. These criticisms can be summarized in the ramification of its political monopoly and double standards. Also, the use of force to impose this new U.S foreign strategy and a fait accompli policy that is so contradicting to the claim of spreading democracy, because democracy can never be achieved in any state after destroying its infrastructure and institutions along with the fragmentation of its society.

5. Conclusion:

In light of the foregoing data, we can conclude that the new strategy has given the U.S government the opportunity to embody the New Right's philosophical thought, which is based on three fundamental pillars: military superiority, religious fundamentalism and expansion. It has also accelerated the pre-existing U.S tendencies that were already apparent, and the "*Bush Doctrine*" of pre-emptive strike is a case in point. Besides, this new phase of counter-terrorism has enabled United States to put in place measures to control the local population and to implement popularly rejected measures under the cover of fighting terrorism while

exploiting an atmosphere of global fear to pass policies that serve only its objectives and interests.

On the other hand, this new policy has paved the way to establish substantial U.S military outposts in Central Asia and Middle East, both of which have the world's most crucial energy resources, along with extending its military privileges in other parts of the world. In other words, this new strategy has emphasized largely and only the U.S global dominance and control of energy resources meeting its interests and aims as well.

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