UNDERSTANDING US COUNTERTERRORISM POLICY THROUGH POLICYMAKER
PROFILES

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ABSTRACT

The terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 represent a seminal event in American history, catalyzing a 20-year period in which counterterrorism was the top priority for US national security.[1] Yet, our understanding of US counterterrorism policy and the factors driving its evolution remains varied and unclear – from Rosa Brooks characterizing US counterterrorism as "insane" and "doing the same thing, but expecting different results" to Daniel Byman suggesting US counterterrorism as "doing different things, but expecting the same results."[2] [3] These wide-ranging and diametrically opposing analyses suggest a need for a more rigorous understanding of US counterterrorism policy in the post-9/11 era. This led us to ask three key questions: (1) has there been continuity or change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11; (2) what factors led to the continuity or change, and (3) how do we classify any such continuity or change?

In this dissertation, I will argue there has been change in US counterterrorism policy during the 20-year period since 9/11 along two key dimensions:

1) **Policy Perspective.** A shift in the first decade of the study from a focus on removing terrorism through addressing the root cause, societal factors giving rise to terrorism, what we term the structural change policy perspective, during the Bush Administration to a focus on managing terrorism by addressing the terrorist group itself, what we term the threat management policy perspective, during the Obama Administration.

2) **Mode of Thinking.** A shift in the second decade of the study from an intuitive mode of thinking during the Obama (and Bush) Administration(s), which relied on past knowledge to handle crises, to a pragmatic mode of thinking during the Trump Administration, which focused on experimentation to handle the threat.

These shifts can be accounted for through several factors. The shift in policy perspective from the Bush Administration to Obama Administration was driven by: (1) the perceived lack of

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[1] See the following: "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, 2008; "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, 2018; "National Military Strategy for the Global War on Terrorism," *US Department of Defense*, 2006; "National Military Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, 2011; "National Military Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, 2015; "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," *The White House*, 2003; "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," *The White House*, 2006; "National Strategy for Counterterrorism," *The White House*, 2011; "National Strategy for Counterterrorism," *The White House*, 2018; "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2002; "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2006; "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2010; and "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2015.

[2] Rosa Brooks, "U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy Is the Definition of Insanity, Foreign Policy, June 24, 2015; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/24/u-s-counterterrorism-strategy-is-the-definition-of-insanity/.

[3] Robert Malley and Jon Finer, "The Long Shadow of 9/11: How Counterterrorism Warps US Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018.

efficacy of the policy of the previous administration (in this case, the Bush Administration), (2) the factors driving the nature of terrorism during the period studied (broader root cause factors in society versus the terrorist group itself), and (3) other competing crises (such as the housing and financial crisis when President Obama entered office). The shift in mode of thinking from Obama to Trump was driven by: (1) the degree of strategic importance of the issue of terrorism, (2) the perceived salience of the terrorist threat, and (3) the relative acuteness of the crisis at the time of the counterterrorism policymaking.

From the outset of the dissertation, we considered theoretical models that contemplated the perspective of the policymaker, decisionmaking during crisis, and preferred operational approaches. This led us towards creating a 2x2 framework consisting of typologies for classifying counterterrorism policymakers. We termed these typologies "profiles" and identified them through a metaphorical labeling. The 2x2 framework classifies policymakers around their policy perspective – whether a policymaker adopts a perspective based on structural change or threat management – and decisionmaking – whether a policymaker makes decisions during crisis based on past experiences (intuitive mode of thinking) or experimentation (pragmatic mode of thinking). Through these dimensions of policy perspective and mode of thinking, we created four policy profiles. For each of these profiles, preferred operational approaches were also identified.

For a policymaker who focuses on structural change through an intuitive mode of thinking, combined with an operational approach of crushing terrorists and/or going after root causes of terrorism, we apply the metaphorical label of "*The Commander*." For a policymaker who focuses on structural change through a pragmatic mode of thinking, combined with a preferred operational approach of delegitimizing terrorists and improving societal defenses, we apply the metaphorical labeling of "*The Doctor*." For a policymaker who focuses on threat management through an intuitive mode of thinking, combined with a preferred operational approach of targeting terrorist leaders, we apply the metaphorical labeling of "*The Prosecutor*." And for a policymaker who focuses on threat management through a pragmatic mode of thinking, combined with a preferred operational approach of conciliating and negotiating with terrorists, we apply the metaphorical labeling of "*The Negotiator*."

Throughout this dissertation, we apply this 2x2 framework, which I term the Policy Profile Code (PPC). After an introductory chapter, we introduce existing theoretical perspectives that could shed light on counterterrorism policy analysis in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, we take the first step towards adding to these theories by discussing the differences between what we describe as the structural change and threat management policy perspectives. In Chapter 4, we consider decisionmaking and identify intuitive versus pragmatic modes of thinking as critical dimensions for understanding how policymakers make choices during crisis. Also, in Chapter 4, we provide a full outline of the PPC in which we explain the 2x2 framework and its typologies. In Chapter 5, we discuss the methodological approach for this analysis,

data collection and management, and potential limitations of the research approach. Then, in Chapters 6 – 10, we trace the core dimensions of the PPC to understand continuity and change in counterterrorism policy during each of the five presidential administrations that governed US counterterrorism policy in post-9/11 era between 2001 and 2021. Accordingly, we assess continuity and change in US counterterrorism policy through the PPC in each of the presidential administration case studies – Bush (Chapters 6 and 7), Obama (Chapters 8 and 9), and Trump Administrations (Chapter 10). We also provide an overall assessment of the trajectory and evolution of US counterterrorism policy in the post-9/11 era. Through this analysis, we found both continuity and change in US counterterrorism policy and that the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations can be respectively classified as "*The Commander," "The Prosecutor," and "The Negotiator"* through our PPC framework. We also found that none of the five presidential administrations during the 20-year period studied following 9/11 adopted "*The Doctor"* policy profile. We discuss these findings and answer the central research questions in Chapter 11. We also provide a reflection on the implications of these findings for policymaking and future research in Chapter 12.

1 PROBLEM PUZZLE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

"Today we struck back."[4] This statement was made by the President of the United States following a military strike in response to a terrorist attack. But which one? Donald Trump? Barack Obama? George W. Bush? Notably, it could have been any of them. However, interestingly, it was none of them. This statement was made by President Bill Clinton on August 20, 1998 following military strikes in response to an al-Qaeda attack against the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.[5] Codenamed Operation Infinite Reach, this was the first military response to a terrorist attack in US history.

During deliberations at the White House in the lead up to this military strike, President Clinton remarked to then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Hugh Shelton: "Hugh, what I think would scare the shit out of these al-Qaeda guys…would be the sight of US commandos, ninja guys in back suits, jumping out of helicopters into their camps spraying machine guns. Even if we don't get the big guys, it will have good effect." [6]

By conducting a military strike that originated outside of Afghanistan and Sudan, what is known as "stand-off strikes," the Clinton Administration responded to a non-state terrorist group, al-Qaeda, in two sovereign nations. The administration did so without threatening the central governments of those countries through operating below the threshold of retaliatory and escalatory conflict.[7] [8]

The Clinton Administration laid the groundwork for this approach to US counterterrorism earlier in the 1990s. As scholar Chin-Kuei Tsui argues, the Clinton Administration framed the terrorist threat as "new terrorism," or "catastrophic terrorism," suggesting that such terrorism required a military response:

"[President Clinton's] particular interpretation of terrorism and terrorists shaped the administration's material practices of counterterrorism, which shifted from a law enforcement and legislation-based counterterrorism policy to a coercive, military-based approach. Importantly…prior to September 11th, 2001, the Clinton administration had

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[4] "U.S. missiles pound targets in Afghanistan, Sudan," *CNN*, August 20, 1998. Available from: http://www.cnn.com/US/9808/20/us.strikes.01/.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Syria, signaling, and operation infinite reach," *War on the Rocks,* September 5, 2013; available from https://warontherocks.com/2013/09/syria-signaling-and-operation-infinite-reach/.

[7] "Embassy Bombings and Air Strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan," *Clinton Digital Library, National Archives*; available from https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/36094.

[8] Tsui, C. K. (2016). *Clinton, New Terrorism and the Origins of the War on Terror*. Routledge.

already established the discursive and institutional basis for the George W. Bush administration to respond to the 2001 World Trade Center bombings."[9] [10]

Tsui suggested that the 1998 strikes were not only an operational prototype for post-9/11 counterterrorism but also a policy framework for future US Presidents to justify a coercive-based and military-oriented policy for counterterrorism. But was such an approach to US counterterrorism policy adopted in the post-9/11 context? Scholar Rosa Brooks and analysts, Robert Malley and Jon Finer, argued yes. Daniel Byman's analysis suggested no.

1.1 Post-9/11 Counterterrorism: A Consistent Approach?

"Insane."[11] This is how scholar Rosa Brooks summed up US counterterrorism policy following 9/11. Brooks' pithy yet provocative commentary stands as a critical assessment of US counterterrorism policy. Brooks' analysis suggested continuity in US counterterrorism policy during the post-9/11 era towards a coercive, military-led approach – a policy that she described as: "Washington doing the same thing…hoping for a different result."[12]

The "same thing" that Brooks set forth in her commentary was two-fold: (1) stand-off military strikes from manned or unmanned systems and (2) special operation raids consistent with the policy prototype that Tsui suggested the Clinton Administration had established. The "different result" that Brooks referenced was a direct indictment of the relative efficacy of such an approach. In her analysis, Brooks further pointed out that while US counterterrorism was implemented through military strikes and raids (a military-centric, coercive approach), US government figures showed a substantial growth in global terrorism – an increase in terrorist attacks by 39-percent in 2014 coupled with an 83-percent increase in the fatalities from terrorism. Brooks' analysis highlighted that notwithstanding the critical and measurable shortcomings of the described approach, the United States continued this type of counterterrorism: "…we're still relying on ad hoc measures. In Iraq, Somalia, and Afghanistan, it's the same story. The United States continues to rely heavily on airstrikes and targeted killings, while terrorist groups continue to cause mayhem and gain adherents."[13]

Brooks further justified the "doing the same thing, expecting different results" assessment through the on-the-ground insights of the Director of a US Joint Terrorism Task Force, Captain Robert Newson. In an interview, Newson explained: "This 'counterterrorism concept' — the solution that some people champion where the main or whole effort is drone strikes and special operations raids — is a fantasy." Newson further noted that "every military

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[9] Chin-Kuei Tusi, "Tracing the Discursive Origins of the War on Terror: President Clinton and the Construction of New Terrorism in the Post-Cold War Era," Dissertation for qualification of Doctor of Philosophy, April 2014, pg. i.
[10] See also Tsui, C. K. (2016). *Clinton, New Terrorism and the Origins of the War on Terror*. Routledge.
[11] Rosa Brooks, "U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy Is the Definition of Insanity, *Foreign Policy*, June 24, 2015; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/24/u-s-counterterrorism-strategy-is-the-definition-of-insanity/.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

person up-and-down the chain of command acknowledged this."[14] In other words, even though the institution carrying out US counterterrorism knew the approach was insufficient, policymakers consistently chose it. This consistent and perhaps even persistent approach to US counterterrorism policy that yielded ineffective results was what Brooks asserted as "the definition of insanity."[15]

Brooks was not the only analyst who had this perspective. Robert Malley and Jon Finer also argued that post-9/11 counterterrorism had seen continuity in its "character of a military campaign" given the broad political consensus among Democrats and Republicans when it came to counterterrorism: "…in an era of persistent political polarization, countering terrorism has become the area of greatest bipartisan consensus. Not since Democrats and Republicans rallied around containing the Soviet Union during the Cold War has there been such broad agreement on a foreign policy priority."[16]

But has that been the case? Has there been continuity in post-9/11 counterterrorism policy? Given the heightened political polarization in the United States in the post-9/11 era and the substantial differences in each of the post-9/11 Presidents – Bush, Obama, and Trump – from politics, to policy, to worldview – one may well have expected significant discontinuity in US counterterrorism policy.[17] [18] And yet, Brooks, Malley, and Finer suggested the opposite had occurred.

How do we reconcile the continuities Brooks, Malley, and Finer observed in post-9/11 US counterterrorism with the significant differences we can observe among the post-9/11 presidents? Daniel Byman's scholarly analysis suggests an alternative perspective when it comes to post-9/11 counterterrorism – a US counterterrorism that followed a more varied and discontinuous approach.

Byman's study of US counterterrorism following 9/11 identified at least eight different policy approaches, arguing it required a taxonomy simply to understand the United States' "not integrated," "confusing," "garbage pail" approach to counterterrorism.[19] [20] Byman's taxonomy

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[14] See also Brian Dodwell and Marielle Ness, "A View From the CT Foxhole: An Interview With Captain Robert A. Newson, Military Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations, *CTC Sentinel*, February 2015, Volume 8, Issue 2; available from https://www.ctc.usma.edu/a-view-from-the-ct-foxhole-an-interview-with-captain-robert-a-newson-military-fellow-council-on-foreign-relations/.

[15] Rosa Brooks, "U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy Is the Definition of Insanity, *Foreign Policy*, June 24, 2015; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/24/u-s-counterterrorism-strategy-is-the-definition-of-insanity/.

[16] Robert Malley and Jon Finer, "The Long Shadow of 9/11: How Counterterrorism Warps US Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018.

[17] Robert Malley and Jon Finer, "The Long Shadow of 9/11: How Counterterrorism Warps US Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018.

[18] Zack Beauchamp, "Donald Trump said he'd kill terrorists' families at a rally. His crowd went wild." *Vox*, January 25, 2016; available from https://www.vox.com/2016/1/25/10828770/trump-terrorist-family-appeal.

[19] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[20] Note: Byman's study was conducted independent of Brooks and Malley and Finer analyses.

of US counterterrorism included everything from "crushing terrorists," to "targeting terrorist leaders," to "conciliating" with terrorists. As Byman said at the outset of his analysis: "The George W. Bush Administration has tried to fight al-Qaeda and its allies with efforts ranging from aggressive intelligence and military campaigns to programs to win over youth and the Arab world through radio and television broadcasts."[21]

These analyses appear diametrically opposed. On the one hand, Brooks, Malley, and Finer concluded there has been radical continuity in US counterterrorism in the post-9/11 context – such extreme continuity that Brooks suggested US policy was "crazy" while, on the other hand, Byman's analysis suggested wide-ranging variance in post-9/11 US counterterrorism. How can these two seemingly contradictory analyses be reconciled? The challenge lies in the lack of a shared analytical framework and design among these analyses, making it difficult to assess and compare them effectively.

The analyses conducted by Brooks, Malley and Finer, and Byman diverge in their starting points, methodologies, terminologies, and criteria in evaluating post-9/11 US counterterrorism policy. This divergence creates an apparent opposition and contradiction between their conclusions. At best, one might conclude that these analyses are inconsistent and not directly comparable. This raises the question of the utility of such analyses to the academy as well as practitioners, policymakers, and the public at-large – particularly when considering the criticality and strategic, long-term impact of counterterrorism on society. Regrettably, these analyses may not offer practical insights into the trajectory of US counterterrorism policy in the post-9/11 era given the inconsistencies in their conclusions. Given this and to foster a more meaningful and productive discourse about the specific nature of and trajectory with respect to US counterterrorism in the post-9/11 era, it could prove beneficial to provide a comprehensive examination through a consistent set of measurable factors to understand the specific nature and trajectory of US counterterrorism policy since 9/11.

1.2   An Analysis of US Counterterrorism Policy – 2001 - 2021

Given the divergent findings in the analyses of US counterterrorism by Brooks, Malley and Finer, and Byman discussed at the outset of this chapter, this study aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the specific nature and trajectory of US counterterrorism policy since 9/11. This study will be facilitated by developing a theoretically grounded analytical framework, enabling consistent basis for analysis across case studies of US presidential administrations. By juxtaposing the theoretical framework with the actual policy outcomes, we seek to systematically understand through a deductive methodological process the degree of continuity and change in US counterterrorism policy over the last two decades.

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[21] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

Our analysis will concentrate on presidential administrations rather than individual presidents, reflecting a deliberate choice to capture the intricate dynamics of policy formulation and to not only consider the top-down features of policymaking but also the cross-cutting dimensions of the phenomenon. Therefore, by focusing on presidential administrations as the unit of analysis, this study considers not only the president's role but also the roles of the bureaucracy, co-equal branches of government such as Congress, outside influences, and other exogenous considerations. Additionally, this approach of focusing the analysis on presidential administrations recognizes the unique and distinct authority of the President of the United States and his/her administration that, under Article II, Section 2 of the US Constitution, possesses unique standing and authority to safeguard the nation, US persons, and US interests from threats, including terrorism.

1.2.1   Frameworks and Policymaking as Tools for Analysis

As noted, we decided to propose an integrative framework for analysis (we will discuss this framework in greater detail in Chapter 4), which will serve a dual purpose: first, it offers a structured approach for understanding the specific factors driving of counterterrorism policy within each administration; second, it enhances comparability and replicability of the analysis. This approach enables an exploration of how counterterrorism policy continued or changed across various administrations, which constitutes the core objective of this research.

Frameworks serve as valuable tools for structured and systematic analysis. They provide a common basis for assessing and comparing cases by defining terms, establishing shared starting points, and identifying key variables or factors for analysis. Such a lens for analysis provides for a broader set of factors beyond the purely technical and operational features of terrorism and counterterrorism response – to include the emotional and psychological considerations with respect to the phenomenon. Such an approach is critical for understanding the development of counterterrorism given its instrumental and expressive features, which we will discuss further through the seminal scholarship around terrorism in Chapter 2. Through employing a common and consistent analytical approach across cases of US counterterrorism policy through a framework, a more complete understanding of the phenomenon can be achieved – thereby yielding more generalizable insights across cases, which informs theory-building as well as policy and practice.

In additional to leveraging frameworks as a holistic tool for understanding complex phenomena such as counterterrorism, policymaking also represents an important lens through which to understand the unique instrumental and expressive features of counterterrorism given that counterterrorism is influenced not only by the clinical assessments of the threat and associated operational approaches but also broader societal reactions and influences, which are consequentially relevant in democratic societies. An exclusive focus on the clinical features of terrorism – and the potential counterterrorism responses to those specific, clinical features of

the phenomenon – may omit the multitude of other factors impacting how counterterrorism responses are actually formed and implemented. Given that policymaking considers a wide-range of factors influencing and affecting not only the terrorism phenomenon itself but also broader society, the policy lens may be a useful one through which to contemplate the complexities of the phenomenon. Policy and policymaking contemplates public sentiment, alignment with strategic agendas, external influences, and political dynamics. These factors are relevant because terrorism elicits deep emotional reaction and impact on society (which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2, as noted earlier). Thus, understanding counterterrorism through the policymaking process holds the promise of understanding the dynamic dimensions of the phenomenon. Establishing an analytical framework at the outset that considers the instrumental features of counterterrorism combined with the policy decisionmaking considerations associated with the expressive elements of the phenomenon is essential for understanding the complex cross-cutting factors at play with respect to counterterrorism within the democratic systems.

Therefore, our study of counterterrorism will incorporate policymaking as a lens through which to achieve a more holistic view of how counterterrorism unfolds. Even as frameworks carry the risk of oversimplification, we must find ways to achieve a more integrative understanding of counterterrorism as a phenomenon that includes both its instrumental and expressive features while, at the same time, ensure soundness in the analytical approach by grounding the research in established theory and methodological traditions – a practice that will be emphasized throughout this study and discussed in detail in Chapter 5. This brings us to the central research questions of the study.

1.2.2   Key Research Questions

The September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks marked a defining moment in US and global security, prompting a paradigm shift in how nations approach counterterrorism. The United States embarked on a focused effort to recalibrate its counterterrorism policies and strategies. Given this intent for US policy commencing with the Bush Administration, jihadist terrorism emerged as a paramount focus of US national security strategy. Notwithstanding the evolving nature of the terrorism phenomenon during the post-9/11 period, to include far-right, anti-government terrorism and left-leaning extremism, the US government's central, strategic focus remained on jihadist terrorism – as evidenced by the fact that all successive National Security Strategies following 9/11 – from the Bush, to the Obama, to the Trump Administrations – noted this strategic focus. This study, therefore, centers on jihadist terrorism as the primary subject of analysis with respect to US counterterrorism policy.

The study concludes at the end of the Trump Administration in 2021, marking approximately 20 years since 9/11. This decision reflects the Trump Administration's strategic shift away from jihadist terrorism as the focal point of US national security strategy and towards

inter-state competition, stating in the Trump Administration's 2018 National Defense Strategy: "Inter-state strategic competition, **not terrorism**, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security."[22] This strategic shift signified a significant departure from the post-9/11 period for overall US national security policy and strategy.

Given the inconclusive nature of existing research and analysis as noted at the outset of this chapter, the key research questions of this study revolve around discerning the trajectory and evolution of US counterterrorism policy in the post-9/11 context: (1) has there been continuity or change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11; (2) what factors led to the continuity or change, and (3) how do we classify any such continuity or change? These questions will steer the research and form the foundation for this dissertation's analytical insights and findings.

1.2.3 Noting Other Forms of Terrorism

As noted in section 1.2.2, terrorism evolved through the post-9/11 period. Even as successive presidential administrations between 2001-2021 focused on jihadist terrorism as the focal point of US national security policy and strategy, it is incumbent on us to also point out the evolutions in the phenomenon of terrorism during this period because these administrations still had to engage with other such forms of terrorism even if they were not the strategic focal point of US national security in the administrations' national strategy documents.

In particular, during this period, the rise of far-right, anti-government terrorism is noteworthy. This form of terrorism was not only responsible for some high profile attacks during this period, it also accounted for "the majority of all terrorism incidents in the United States since 1994 and the total number of right-wing attacks and plots grew significantly [between 2014 – 2020];" moreover, "right-wing extremists perpetrated two thirds of the attacks and plots in the United States in 2019 and over 90 percent between January 1 and May 8, 2020," according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).[23] Examples of right-wing terrorism attacks include:

- Austin plane attack in 2010 in which Joseph Stack flew a plane into a building in Austin, Texas that had Internal Revenue Service offices. Stack killed one IRS employee and posted a manifesto online.
- Charleston church shooting in 2015 in which Dylann Roof targeted a historically black church in Charleston, South Carolina. Roof killed nine African American individuals.
- Las Vegas shooting in 2014 in which Jerad and Amanda Miller, who espoused anti-government beliefs, killed two police officers in a restaurant before taking their own life.

Additionally, there have been several right-wing terrorism incidents, also noted by CSIS, including:

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[22] "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, January 2018; available from https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf.

[23] Jones, S. G., Doxsee, C., and Harrington, N. (2020). The escalating terrorism problem in the United States.(2020).

"On June 3, 2020, federal authorities arrested three individuals allegedly associated with the 'boogaloo' movement, a loosely-organized group of extremists preparing for a civil war, for conspiring to cause violence in Las Vegas and possessing an improvised incendiary device. Less than a week later, law enforcement officials near Richmond, VA, arrested Harry H. Rogers, a member of the Ku Klux Klan, for driving a vehicle into peaceful protesters. Around the same time, members of a Brooklyn anarchist group urged its supporters to conduct a 'rebellion' against the government."[24]

Consistent with this trend, there has been important scholarship on far-right, anti-government extremism and terrorism in the United States. One such recent example of critical scholarship on far-right, anti-government terrorism comes from Kaitlyn Robinson, Iris Malone, and Martha Crenshaw. This scholarship notes the capacity of far-right groups to organize and mount large-scale attacks against the US government, citing the example of the attack on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.[25] They argue that US policymakers must develop new responses to counter the threat of far-right terrorism given its unique characteristics such as the "deep-seated ideological roots, fluid organizational structure, and mix of violent and non-violent tactics."[26] Robinson et al. point out that the United States' counterterrorism approach is likely to "differ from the modern counterterrorism tools that were initially designed to combat terrorist threats emanating from abroad, such as those posed by al-Qaeda and the Islamic State."[27] This point is noteworthy and informative as it suggests a need to differentiate between different forms of terrorism in policy analysis given the intricacies and differences in how these phenomena manifest – even as they are both forms of terrorism. Therefore, we have chosen to focus our study on jihadist terrorism not only because it was the strategic focal point of US national security as reflected in the national strategy documents of the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations but also because, as Robinson et al. point out, bounding the type of terrorism is critical to the effective understanding and analysis of counterterrorism policy response because such differing forms of terrorism require different policy responses.

We, therefore, will proceed with a focus on jihadist terrorism to understand the evolution of US policy in relation to this form of terrorism, while mindful of the fact that terrorism as a phenomenon evolved throughout this period.

1.2.4   Relevance of Continuity and Change in US Counterterrorism Policy

Over the past two decades, it has become increasingly evident that comprehending not only the phenomenon of terrorism but also counterterrorism is of paramount importance. The far-reaching and enduring consequences of terrorism and counterterrorism responses extend

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Robinson, K., Malone, I., & Crenshaw, M. (2023). Countering Far-Right Anti-Government Extremism in the United States. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, *17*(1), 73-87.
[26] Ibid, page 74.
[27] Ibid., page 73.

beyond the United States. US counterterrorism policies have profound impact on global societies. Since 9/11, US counterterrorism measures have deeply impacted countries across the globe. Consider the wars in sovereign nations such as Iraq and Afghanistan; the complex dynamics in relation to the significant US counterterrorism efforts in countries worldwide, including the Philippines, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Pakistan, Libya, Egypt, Somalia, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and beyond; the tragic loss of life attributed to counterterrorism efforts; the billions of US dollars dedicated to counterterrorism endeavors; and the ramifications for immigration and refugee movements from conflict-stricken regions, particularly across the greater Middle East. This list merely scratches the surface.

Investigating the trajectory of counterterrorism policies across the last two decades allows us to gain insights into the decisionmaking processes when it comes to counterterrorism and the underlying drivers and motivations behind those decisions. Given the inevitability of encountering terrorism in new forms, scales, and methods; delving into the policy choices undertaken in the post-9/11 era holds immense value. The ramifications of these choices have reverberated worldwide. This study aims to investigate the intricacies and evolution of US counterterrorism. In doing so, we hope to inform theory and practice in the years to come – equipping academicians with a comprehensive academic study to inform future research and decisionmakers with a deeper, analytical understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of counterterrorism policymaking.

1.3   Next Steps in Research

We will proceed by reviewing the theoretical gaps, prominent perspectives on counterterrorism policy, and modes of thinking during crisis in Chapters 2 – 4. Also in Chapter 4, we will present a policy profile framework for analysis based on the literature reviews in Chapters 2 - 4. In Chapter 5, we will discuss the methodological approach for this analysis, data collection and management, and potential limitations of the research approach. In Chapters 6 – 10, we will conduct an analysis of US counterterrorism policy across five US Presidential administrations – from Bush, to Obama, to Trump – over a 20-year period from 2001 to 2021. In Chapter 11, we will present our findings and answer the research questions of this dissertation. In Chapter 12, we will provide a final reflection on the implications of this research for both theory and practice.

2 UNDERSTANDING COUNTERTERRORISM POLICYMAKING

Counterterrorism policy encompasses a spectrum of strategies and actions designed to both prevent and respond to acts of terrorism. These policies are crafted and executed by governments not only in reaction to terrorist incidents, aiming to avert such occurrences, but also to safeguard the well-being and tranquility of their populace. The scope of counterterrorism extends beyond singular incidents, as it operates on a comprehensive scale across nations and societies through policies set by governments and international bodies. This intricate relationship between counterterrorism and public policymaking underscores its centrality in comprehending how responses to terrorism manifests.

Counterterrorism policies serve as a tangible reflection of how counterterrorism efforts are actualized. These policies, shaped through governmental actions, encompass a diverse array of considerations extending beyond the immediate factors that give rise to terrorism. Given the nuanced nature of terrorism, which extends to its psychological impact on broader society (further elaborated upon in this chapter), policy formulation must encapsulate a wide spectrum of influences that contribute to its design and execution. By delving into policy, we can attain a more comprehensive grasp of the broader elements shaping counterterrorism responses, including their dynamic interactions with the public.

Lowi and Ginsberg define public policy as "an officially expressed intention backed by sanction, which can be a reward or punishment…[that can take the form of] a law, a rule, a stature, an edict, a regulation, or an order."[28] [29] Public policymaking is extremely complex, inter-disciplinary, and dynamic in nature. It addresses societal level issues and competing interests, and it shapes both public life as well as the overall direction of a community, country, and global society. Given the complexity and encompassing nature of public policy, policy analysis requires a multi-faceted approach that considers both the human agency within policymaking as well as the systemic way in which policymaking unfolds – what we will frame as the agents versus system dimensions of policymaking.[30] [31]

The literature on policy analysis aligns with this agent versus system dimension. Paul Sabatier has noted in his scholarship that policymaking includes process (the system) and

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[28] Fischer, F., & Miller, G. J. (Eds.). (2017). *Handbook of public policy analysis: theory, politics, and methods.* Routledge.

[29] Lowi, T. J., Ginsberg, B., & Shepsle, K. A. (2008). *American government: Power and purpose.* WW Norton & Company Incorporated.

[30] See also Weimer, D. L., & Vining, A. R. (2017). *Policy analysis: Concepts and practice.* Routledge.

[31] Dunn, W. N. (1981). *Public Policy Analysis.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, pg. 183.

human components (the agents) of policymaking.[32] Sabatier's scholarship further suggests that policymaking can be best analyzed and understood through these two dimensions: (1) the agency of policy leaders to make top-down decisions and (2) the policy system itself, which is influenced by a wide array of actors both inside and outside of government including bureaucrats, policy entrepreneurs, elected representatives, appointed political leaders, outside technical experts, the media, and interest groups and other advocacy organizations. Michael Carley, therefore, suggests that a "balanced perspective" is required for good policy analysis, arguing that policy analysis should examine not only the process of policymaking but also the human, value-judgment dimension of the policymaker within the policymaking process, asserting: "No analysis is understood until it is clear what and whose value judgments are part of the analysis."[33] Mindful of Carley and Sabatier's agency versus system distinction when it comes to policy analysis, this suggests we must both understand the rationality of the policymaker (the agent) as well as the policy system that is subject to "the bureaucratic realities of the policymaking process."[34]

2.1   Agent Versus System Theories for Policy Analysis

Interestingly, this agent versus system frame is evident throughout the literature on policymaking. For example, we can see it through Kingdon's "multiple streams framework" in which he describes "policy windows" for policy change.[35] According to Kingdon, when three streams come together – the problem stream, the policy stream, and the politics stream, a "policy window" opens for policy to be adopted. These streams represent both inside and outside the government influences that make up the policy system. Kingdon also notes the role of the policy entrepreneur – one who has agency through one's power and standing within the system to direct and advocate for certain policies within the policymaking process.

There are several other theories for policy analysis beyond Kingdon's "multiple stream framework." One such theory is Lindblom's "incrementalism" which suggests that policy changes are made through incremental adjustments in elements of the policy.[36] [37] This theory suggests incrementalism is what the policy system can withstand rather than wholesale change. It also suggests that incremental change is what the policy agents within the system can be comfortable with given considerations such as political feasibility, existing or past policies, path

[32] Sabatier, P. A. (1991). Toward better theories of the policy process. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *24*(2), 147-156.

[33] Carley, M. (2013). *Rational techniques in policy analysis: Policy studies institute*. Elsevier, pg. 7.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Kingdon, John W. (2011) *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy.* 2nd Edition. New York: Longman Classics in Political Science.

[36] Lindblom, C. E. (1979). Still muddling, not yet through. *Public administration review*, *39*(6), 517-526.

[37] See also Weiss, A., & Woodhouse, E. (1992). Reframing incrementalism: A constructive response to the critics. *Policy Sciences*, *25*(3), 255-273.

dependency and the like. Another such theory for policy analysis is Jenkins-Smith et al.'s "advocacy coalition framework," which describes policy decisionmaking as shaped by coalitions of advocacy groups competing with one-another within the policy system.[38] Under this theory, it recognizes the broadness of the policy systems as a coalition of actors both inside and outside of government. It also recognizes the role of policy agents who play the role of negotiator across these coalitions. Yet another theory for policy analysis is Elinor Ostrom's "institutional analysis and development framework."[39] [40] This theory focuses on institutions and the rules that institutions have within the policy system. These formal and informal rules of institutions within the policy system become the guideposts for decisionmaking by the policy agents. The agent versus system dimensions is not only evident within policy analysis theories, we can also see these dimensions at play within other related fields – for example, criminology.

Criminology is a key field to also note because of its relevance to counterterrorism. Prominent scholars in this field such as David Garland, Michael Torny, Jonathan Simon, Frank Furedi, Katheleen Auerhahn, and Trevor Jones and Tim Newburn all focus on understanding the system features that drive criminal behavior – from the "culture of control" which posits that modern society has moved to a punitive approach for handling crime, to sentencing and punishment, to racial disparities, to the use of surveillance and other measures – which all speak to the system dimensions of policy responses to crime.[41] [42] [43] [44] [45] [46] As well, these scholars discuss the agent aspects of decisionmakers within the policy and law enforcement communities that drive policy responses to crime, including racism and racial disparities in law enforcement, judges and sentencing, political leaders and their political discourse vis-à-vis crime and the loosening of the social welfare safety net, law enforcement and judges and surveillance of the public, business and other public leaders and their pre-occupation with risk or what Furedi describes as a "culture of fear," media leaders and their role in shaping the narrative around crime and criminal justice, and law enforcement leaders and their decisionmaking around policing techniques and technology.[47] As we can see through this

[38] Jenkins-Smith, H. C., Nohrstedt, D., Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. A. (2014). The advocacy coalition framework: Foundations, evolution, and ongoing research. *Theories of the policy process*, *3*, 183-224.

[39] Ostrom, E. (2019). Institutional rational choice: An assessment of the institutional analysis and development framework. In *Theories of the policy process, second edition* (pp. 21-64). Routledge.

[40] Ostrom, E. (2011). Background on the institutional analysis and development framework. *Policy studies journal*, *39*(1), 7-27.

[41] Garland, D. (2012). *The culture of control: Crime and social order in contemporary society*. University of Chicago Press.

[42] Tonry, M. H. (1997). *Sentencing matters*. Oxford University Press.

[43] Simon, J. (2020). Governing through crime. In *Crime, Inequality and the State* (pp. 589-595). Routledge.

[44] Furedi, F. (2006). *Culture of fear revisited*. A&C Black.

[45] Auerhahn, K. (1999). Selective incapacitation and the problem of prediction. *Criminology*, *37*(4), 703-734.

[46] Jones, T., & Newburn, T. (2002). The transformation of policing? Understanding current trends in policing systems. *British journal of criminology*, *42*(1), 129-146.

[47] Furedi, F. (2006). *Culture of fear revisited*. A&C Black.

summary, these criminal justice scholars and theories also align with agent versus system paradigm. This suggests that to best understand public policy in general and counterterrorism policy in specific, consistent with the focus of this dissertation, we can investigate the utility of policy analysis theories through this agent versus system paradigm. But before proceeding with a discussion of policy analysis theories, we will briefly explain further why we intend to pursue this study through the field of political science.

Given we have decided that policy is the best way to understand how counterterrorism is designed and manifests within and across society, as discussed at the outset of this chapter, we must situate the analysis of policy within an academic tradition. We will focus our study within the broad category of political science. The field of political science is interconnected and symbiotic with understanding public policy, policymaking, and policy analysis. Policymaking contemplates aspects of both theory and practice where ideas and beliefs around a particular issue become actions that governments and societies take to address problems on a broad scale. Understanding this dynamic interaction between policy ideation and policy execution is the essence of political science – a field that is focused on unraveling this complex interaction, the interplay of political systems, and the behavior of political institutions. There are relevant sub-fields in political science, which can also inform an understanding of policymaking, including international relations, political theory, comparative politics, and public administration. Therefore, by grounding this study in the field of political science, we are able to access these other fields for insights as we contemplate issues of governance, decisionmaking, politics, and other societal and sociological drivers in relation to counterterrorism policy. Given our decision to focus the study within the tradition of political science, we will start with understanding how policies are analyzed. This will help us begin to understand the explanatory power of such policy analysis theories in relation to the phenomena of terrorism and counterterrorism. We will begin this review of policy analysis theories with two exemplar theories of the agent versus system paradigm we discussed earlier – rational choice theory and bureaucratic politics theory – because they respectively contemplate the human, top-down and systemic, bottom-up and cross-cutting features of policymaking.

These two archetypal theories illustrate the dichotomy between individual agents and systemic factors, which are reflected in rational choice theory and bureaucratic politics theory. Rational choice theory centers on comprehending the decision-making processes of policy agents operating within the policy system. It seeks to unravel how these agents deliberate, evaluate utility, and aim to maximize utility outcomes. On the other hand, bureaucratic politics theory zeroes in on comprehending the intricate machinery of the system in which policymaking unfolds. Its primary focus is to elucidate how bureaucratic structures wield influence over and regulate the entirety of the policy system. We will, therefore, focus the remainder of this chapter's literature review on these two prominent, archetypal theories for

policy analysis to help us understand how they relate to counterterrorism policy. But before doing so, we will first review the phenomenon of terrorism and counterterrorism.

2.2   Understanding Terrorism and Counterterrorism

Research by prominent scholars Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman identified numerous definitions of terrorism.[48] Many of these definitions have been used by governments to inform their respective counterterrorism policies. The many governmental definitions highlight the complexities of the phenomenon and criticality of achieving a rigorous definition of terrorism because it directly relates to how we understand counterterrorism.[49]

Years before September 11th, 2001, Schmid and Jongman conducted a study of the common elements of terrorism through a content analysis.[50] They discovered the most frequent terms used to define terrorism included "violence, political goals, fear, arbitrariness and indiscriminate targeting, and victimization of civilians, noncombatants, neutrals, or outsiders."[51] Building on Schmid and Jongman's work, Hoffman also set forth a broadly shared definition of terrorism in his seminal work, *Inside Terrorism,* in which he described terrorism as "ineluctably political in aims and motives; violent – or, equally important, threatens violence; designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target; and conducted either by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure…"[52] Hoffman further explained the specific elements of terrorism:

> "We may therefore now attempt to define terrorism as the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change. All terrorist acts involve violence or the threat of violence. Terrorism is specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim(s) or object of the terrorist attack. It is meant to instill fear within, and thereby intimidate, a wider 'target audience' that might include a rival ethnic or religious group, an entire country, a national government or political party, or public opinion in general. Terrorism is

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[48] Schmid, Jongman, Stohl, Jongman, Albert J., Stohl, Michael, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts Sciences. Social Science Information-Documentation Centre, & Centrum voor Onderzoek van Maatschappelijke Tegenstellingen. (1988). *Political terrorism: A new guide to actors, authors, concepts, data bases, theories and literature* (2nd rev., expanded and updated ed., Uitgave; no. 12. 811914380). Amsterdam [etc.]: New Brunswick, NJ: North-Holland Publ. Co; Transaction Books.

[49] See also Ganor, B. (2002). Defining terrorism: Is one man's terrorist another man's freedom fighter? *Police Practice and Research*, *3*(4), 287-304.

[50] Schmid, Jongman, Stohl, Jongman, Albert J., Stohl, Michael, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts Sciences. Social Science Information-Documentation Centre, & Centrum voor Onderzoek van Maatschappelijke Tegenstellingen. (1988). *Political terrorism: A new guide to actors, authors, concepts, data bases, theories and literature* (2nd rev., expanded and updated ed., Uitgave; no. 12. 811914380). Amsterdam [etc.]: New Brunswick, NJ: North-Holland Publ. Co; Transaction Books.

[51] Matusitz, J. (2013). *Terrorism and communication*. Sage, pg. 2.

[52] Hoffman, Bruce. (2017). *Inside terrorism* (Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare). Columbia University Press, pg. 40.

designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little. Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence, and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either a local or an international scale."[53]

Hoffman also pointed out the clandestine nature of terrorism and why terrorists often operate in this fashion to achieve their objective of "exploiting fear through violence or threat of violence" towards their political objectives:

"Terrorists further argue that, because of their numerical inferiority, far more limited firepower and paucity of resources compared with an established nation-state's massive defense and national security apparatus, they have no choice but to operate clandestinely, emerging from the shadows to carry out dramatic (in other words, bloody and destructive) acts of hit-and-run violence in order to attract attention to, and ensure publicity for, themselves and their cause."[54]

These common definitional elements of terrorism suggested by Schmid and Jongman and Hoffman enable us to contemplate the core elements of terrorism that policymakers seek to address when developing counterterrorism policies. However, as scholar Rob de Wijk pointed out, there may become a point in which the definition of terrorism no longer holds because non-state actors move from "individuals or isolated groups or cells without broad public support" to governance entities "relying on support of the population."[55] When this occurs, another term is introduced: insurgency.

As terrorist actors "leverage public support and establish extra-judicial governance structures, the definition of terrorism becomes stretched beyond a small, ideological, conspiratorial cell focused on attacking the state and evolves towards a more deliberate effort to change the way society is organized, structured, and/or governed – with the ultimate objective of supplanting the existing government."[56] This extension of terrorist activities can be described as insurgency. For instance, this evolution occurred in Afghanistan when the Taliban, a group the United States removed from formal governance power due to its conduct and support for terrorism and terrorist actors such as al-Qaeda, established shadow governance structures and continued to support terrorism in opposition to the coalition-supported Kabul government following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.[57] We further observed this

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[53] Hoffman, Bruce. (2017). *Inside terrorism* (Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare). Columbia University Press, pg. 40.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Schmid, Alex P. (ed.) Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness, Chapter 5: "Contributions from the Military Counterinsurgency Literature for the Prevention of Terrorism" (The Hague, NL: ICCT Press) 2020, pg. 109.
[56] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4).
[57] Pamela Constable, "The Taliban has successfully built a parallel state in many parts of Afghanistan, report says," *Washington Post*, June 21, 2018; available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/06/21/the-taliban-has-successfully-built-a-parallel-state-in-many-parts-of-afghanistan-report-says/.

phenomenon when ISIS attempted to govern the territory it claimed as a caliphate following its occupation and control of large swathes of land across Syria and Iraq.[58] These two examples from the last two decades are reflective of how terrorism and insurgency as phenomena can support one-another and interact. We will discuss this inter-relationship through the scholarship of David Kilcullen.

David Kilcullen is among the most prominent, contemporary scholars to conceptualize modern terrorism and insurgency in an inter-related way in his seminal work "Countering Global Insurgency."[59] Kilcullen framed al-Qaeda as a "globalized jihad network." He argued that al-Qaeda and its movement are best understood as a global insurgency – "a diffuse confederation of Islamist movements seeking to re-make Islam's role in the world order."[60] Kilcullen defined insurgency as "a popular movement that seeks to overthrow the status quo through subversion, political activity, insurrection, armed conflict, and terrorism."[61] Accordingly, Kilcullen argued that terrorism can be a feature of insurgencies.[62] [63] [64] Because al-Qaeda and its fellow travelers wanted to establish a new governing "supra-national state" to politically supplant the existing Westphalian construct of nation-states, Kilcullen argued that al-Qaeda was not exclusively a terrorist group.[65] Rather, Kilcullen suggested that al-Qaeda can be seen as a global insurgency, which happens to employ terrorism as well as other tactics.[66] This reconceptualization of al-Qaeda led Kilcullen to recommend counterinsurgency as a frame through which to understand and address al-Qaeda's global movement.[67]

Now that we have an overview of the common, critical elements of the terrorism phenomenon and an understanding of how it relates to insurgency, we will next evaluate the efficacy of rational choice and bureaucratic politics theories (exemplar theories of the agent versus system dimensions of public policy) to understand how such theories relate to counterterrorism policymaking.

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[58] Shadi Hamid, "What America never understood about ISIS," Brookings Institution, November 1, 2019; available from https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/11/01/what-america-never-understood-about-isis/.

[59] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4).

[60] Ibid., pg. 614.

[61] Ibid., pg. 603.

[62] See also Thomas A. Marks, 'Ideology of Insurgency: New Ethnic Focus or Old Cold war Distortions?', in Small Wars and Insurgencies 15/1 (Spring 2004) p.107.

[63] But see Smith, Haviland. "Defining Terrorism: It Shouldn't Be Confused With Insurgency." American Diplomacy, 2008.

[64] But see Boyle, M. J. (2010). Do counterterrorism and counterinsurgency go together? *International Affairs (London), 86*(2), 333-353.

[65] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), pg. 604.

[66] See also Kiras, J.D. (2009). Irregular Warfare: Terrorism and Insurgency.

[67] See also Ostlund, W. B. (2012). Irregular Warfare: Counterterrorism Forces in Support of Counterinsurgency Operations. *Irregular Warfare: Counterterrorism Forces in Support of Counterinsurgency Operations*.

2.2.1 Rational Choice Theory

Wittek, Snijders, and Nee tell us the central aim of rational choice theory is to explain "individuals' decisions and the associated social consequences of such decisions."[68] Rational choice theory starts with the core idea that individuals have preferences and accordingly make choices through a process of determining their options. They then choose the option that best satisfies their preferences. This is known as a "utility maximization."[69] At a societal level, utility maximization occurs through seeking the "greatest good for the greatest number."[70] Utility maximization is achieved once "an equilibrium is established such that no individual or organization in society has an incentive to change their behavior."[71]

Rational choice theory has relevance for understanding counterterrorism decisionmaking because terrorism and counterterrorism take place within a strategic context of competition between the state and the terrorist group with each side vying to realize a particular objective. Within this context, various counterterrorism measures are contemplated by the state. Some measures are better than others, suggesting that counterterrorism decisionmaking is subject to rational choice and the objective of utility maximalization. Policymakers consider the universe of options, and, from such options, they can choose the counterterrorism measure that has the greatest perceived utility. However, policymakers may not have enough information to determine which of the policy options yield the greatest utility. Moreover, this process of weighing options and determining relative utility of each option can be short-circuited by an enraged public due to the psychological effects of a terrorist attack. This dynamic may re-orient the policymaker away from the option that holds the greatest perceived utility. In this respect, anger ventilation has limited long-term strategic purpose but significant perceived utility in a context where the public demands an immediate response.[72] This dynamic stems from at least two facets of the terrorism phenomenon reflected in Hoffman's definition discussed earlier in this chapter: (1) the clandestine nature of terrorism and (2) the political nature of terrorism.

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[68] Wittek, Rafael, Snijders, Tom A. B, & Nee, Victor. (2020). Introduction: Rational Choice Social Research. In *The Handbook of Rational Choice Social Research* (pp. 1-30). Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
[69] Jonathan Levin and Paul Milgrom (2004). "Introduction to choice theory;" Available from *https://web.stanford.edu/~jdlevin/Econ%20202/Choice%20Theory.pdf*, pg. 1.
[70] Ibid.
[71] But see Herbert Simon (1982). Models of Bounded Rationality. Cambridge: MIT Press.
[72] Conversation with dissertation advisory, Mark Dechesne, August 2022.

2.2.1.1   The Clandestine Nature of Terrorism and Rational Choice Theory

As discussed by Hoffman, terrorism tends to be conducted clandestinely.[73] [74] Terrorists maintain high operational security so their attack plans are not revealed.[75] Because of the clandestine nature of terrorist operations, information asymmetries are created for the counterterrorism policymaker.[76] [77] [78] [79] [80] [81] Given counterterrorism policymakers lack information, they are thereby severely limited in their ability to fully contemplate the pros and cons of particular courses of action and in achieving utility maximalization. In other words, counterterrorism policymakers are limited in their ability to make a rational choice.

Furthermore, Robert Pape has argued that "many terrorists are…so highly motivated that they are willing to die, and so not deterred by fear of punishment or anything else."[82] Trager and Zagorcheva, who argued that deterrence should be part of the "counterterrorism arsenal," eventually also conceded that not all terrorists are deterrable.[83] And although Paul Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins suggest that terrorist "dislike operational risk" and that attacks under certain conditions may be deterrable, suggesting a responsiveness to cost-benefit analysis; they also assert that "the concept of deterrence is both too limiting and too naïve to be applicable to the war on terrorism."[84] Terrorists themselves "may not be generally deterrable," Davis and Jenkins argue, and, thereby, may not be responsive to the cost-benefit calculation that lies at the heart of rational choice theory.[85]

Policymakers are challenged to achieve perfect information when it comes to the terrorism because perfect information is generally inconsistent with the phenomenon itself. Even though information is limited, public pressure remains on the government to respond to a

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[73] McCormick GH, Owen G. 2000. Security and coordination in a clandestine organization. *Math. Comput. Model.* 31:175–92

[74] Jacob N. Shapiro (2013). *The terrorist's dilemma: Managing violent covert organizations*. Princeton University Press.

[75] Martha Crenshaw. (1981). The Causes of Terrorism. *Comparative Politics,13*(4), 379-399.

[76] McCormick GH, Owen G. 2000. Security and coordination in a clandestine organization. *Mathematics Computer Model.* 31:175–92

[77] Jacob N. Shapiro (2013). *The terrorist's dilemma: Managing violent covert organizations*. Princeton University Press.

[78] Hoffman, Bruce. (2017). *Inside terrorism* (Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare). Columbia University Press.

[79] Charles L. Ruby (2002). The definition of terrorism. *Analyses of social issues and public policy*, *2*(1), 9-14.

[80] Gordon H. McCormick (2003). Terrorist decision making. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *6*(1), 473-507.

[81] Martha Crenshaw (2000). The psychology of terrorism: An agenda for the 21st century. *Political psychology*, *21*(2), 405-420.

[82] Robert A. Pape, "Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism (New York: Random House, 2005), page 5.

[83] Trager, R. F., and Zagorcheva, D. P. (2005). Deterring terrorism: It can be done. *International Security*, *30*(3), 87-123.

[84] Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, "Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A component in the War on al-Qaeda (Santa Manica, CA: RAND, 2002), page xviii.

[85] Ibid, page 59.

terrorist attack or act against a group threatening a state. Policymakers can be forced to make decisions that are inconsistent with the tenets of rational choice theory. To be sure, rational choice theorists have considered the issue of imperfect information. For instance, McKelvey and Ordeshook have noted that within a context of imperfect information, actors can make assessments about their expected utility and still rationally act.[86] McKelvey and Ordeshook have also noted that, even within the context of imperfect information, actors can still act rationally by maximizing the information they do have.[87] This suggests that while rational choice theory assumes perfect information and the ability to weigh choices evenly, actors can still achieve a form of rational choice by focusing on the information they have and discounting the utility they can expect. That said, such an approach for understanding rational choice of an actor, as McKelvey and Ordeshook also suggested, requires the actor to understand his/her information deficit and appropriately discount for the information degradation. Assessing the actor for this knowledge and then evaluating the actor's ability to discount the relative rationality of the act to be taken requires the analyst to control for variables that may be unknown unless they are explicitly communicated by the actor. This suggests that when assessing the value of rational choice theory in relation to counterterrorism, the availability of information about the actor and his/her mindset must be at its maximum and likely require direct access to the actor. When these conditions cannot be achieved within the context of imperfect information, rational choice theory may decrease in its explanatory power. We will now discuss a second shortcoming of rational choice theory – the political nature of terrorism.

2.2.1.2   *The Political Nature of Terrorism and Rational Choice Theory*

Rational choice theory posits that "all social action…can be seen as rationally motivated, as instrumental action."[88] Yet, "instrumental" is a notable term because terrorism is not exclusively instrumental in nature. Terrorism also has expressive, political purposes, as suggested by Hoffman earlier in this chapter. Accordingly, counterterrorism responses may have expressive purposes as well. Indeed, governmental responses to terrorism must not only contemplate the instrumental features of the phenomenon but also its expressive features such as the political, emotive needs of the public.[89] Rational choice theory provides little guidance for considering the expressive, political components of counterterrorism policy. As scholar John Scott writes, humans may not always act in instrumental ways particularly when attacked or during crisis:

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[86] Aghion, P., Fehr, E., Holden, R., & Wilkening, T. (2018). The role of bounded rationality and imperfect information in subgame perfect implementation—an empirical investigation. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, *16*(1), 232-274.

[87] Green, D., & Shapiro, I. (1994). *Pathologies of rational choice theory: A critique of applications in political science*. Yale University Press.

[88] John Scott (2000). Rational choice theory. *Understanding contemporary society: Theories of the present*, pg. *129*.

[89] Jacqueline Hodgson (2013). Legitimacy and state responses to terrorism: The UK and France.

"..many sociologists…have seen rational actions alongside other forms of action, seeing human action as involving both rational and non-rational elements. Such views of action recognize traditional or habitual action, emotional or affectual actions, and various forms of value-orients action alongside the purely rational types of action."[90]

Boudon further explained this shortcoming of rational choice theory through what he described as "the voting paradox."[91] Boudon asserted that rational choice theory would find the instrumental act of a single vote on the outcome of an election as having diminutive impact. This suggests rational actors would not vote.[92] [93] [94] And yet, people still vote.[95] [96] [97] [98] Boudon argued this is because "the voter has an expressive rather than an instrumental interest in voting." [99] [100] [101] We could extend this "voting paradox" analogy to counterterrorism, which may well provide us a useful perspective into a similar paradoxical dynamic within counterterrorism policymaking.

By extending Boudon's concept of the "voting paradox," in what we could term as the "counterterrorism paradox," we can begin to contemplate the rationality of a single response to a terrorist attack. Boudon's insight would suggest that a counterterrorism response can be severely limited and diminutive in its impact because the government may not have enough information to effectively respond given the clandestine nature of terrorist groups, as described earlier. Moreover, any such response may even exacerbate the overall situation. This would suggest a rational governmental actor would not be incentivized to respond to a terrorist attack. But, in practice, government officials tend to immediately respond to terrorism. Boudon's concept of the "voting paradox" when extended to counterterrorism suggests governmental policy and political leaders may have an expressive interest in responding to a terrorist attack. Accordingly, this phenomenon may not be fully explained by rational choice

[90] John Scott (2000). Rational choice theory. *Understanding contemporary society: Theories of the present*, pg. *129*, 671-85.

[91] Raymond Boudon. (2003). Beyond Rational Choice Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 29*(1), 1-21.

[92] See also Timothy J. Feddersen (2004). Rational choice theory and the paradox of not voting. *Journal of Economic perspectives*, *18*(1), 99-112.

[93] John A. Ferejohn and Morris P. Fiorina (1974). The paradox of not voting: A decision theoretic analysis. *The American political science review*, *68*(2), 525-536.

[94] But see John A. Ferejohn and Morris P. Fiorina (1974). The paradox of not voting: A decision theoretic analysis. *The American political science review*, *68*(2), 525-536.

[95] See also Levine, D. K., & Palfrey, T. R. (2007). The paradox of voter participation? A laboratory study. *American political science Review*, 143-158.

[96] Arron Edlin, Andrew Gelman, and Noah Kaplan (2007). Voting as a rational choice: Why and how people vote to improve the well-being of others. *Rationality and society*, *19*(3), 293-314.

[97] Raymond Boudon. (2003). Beyond Rational Choice Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 29*(1), 1-21.

[98] But see Arron Edlin, Andrew Gelman, and Noah Kaplan (2007). Voting as a rational choice: Why and how people vote to improve the well-being of others. *Rationality and society*, *19*(3), 293-314.

[99] Raymond Boudon. (2003). Beyond Rational Choice Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 29*(1), pg. 7.

[100] Schuessler A A. 2000. Expressive Voting. Ration. Soc. 12(1): 87-119.

[101] See also Timothy J. Feddersen (2004). Rational choice theory and the paradox of not voting. *Journal of Economic perspectives*, *18*(1), 99-112.

theory, consistent with what Boudon's "voting paradox" suggested, given the expressive, political interests of the counterterrorism policymaker. Furthermore, because terrorism elicits fundamental political questions about a country or society and even a challenge to the legitimacy of the state, this would also suggest little-to-no space for acceptance of political risk by political leaders. As scholar Arie Perliger noted:

> "...terrorism is first and foremost an attack on the consciousness of decisionmakers and of the public at large, and its threat to the regime's stability or political order results less from its military power and more from its effect on the public and decisionmakers' perception of reality, and from its ability to persuade them that it poses a genuine threat to the regime's stability. Therefore, the state's response to terrorism is not only influenced by terrorism's direct impact but also, or principally, by those same factors that enhance its symbolic power."[102]

In other words, counterterrorism may be best explained "by its meaning to the actor," which can be understood as expressive in nature rather than instrumental.[103] Rational choice analysis does not fully or effectively capture the political, expressive features of counterterrorism response – the "meaning to the actor" – because, simply put, rational choice theory does not contemplate it. This is a significant theoretical gap.[104] Governmental leaders must consider the expressive features of a terrorist attack in their response because it is fundamental to government's stability and political order, as Perliger pointed out.[105]

In counterterrorism policy, then, expressive action plays a critical role given the limited information policymakers have about terrorist acts due to the clandestine approaches of terrorist actors and the political nature of the terrorism itself. Rational choice theory may not fully contemplate these "beliefs, frames, and assumptions" that lead to expressive action.[106] [107] We will now turn to the process features of policymaking through bureaucratic politics theory.

2.2.2   Bureaucratic Politics Theory

Bureaucratic politics theory posits that public policy is formed through a competitive process that occurs inside of government and outside of public view. Roger Hilsman, Samuel Huntington, Richard Neustadt, and Warner Schilling understood decisionmaking within political systems as an internal process in which: (1) "bureaucratic institutions have 'quasi-sovereign powers'; (2) political leadership within and atop these institutions or bureaucracies is primarily

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[102] Arie Perliger (2012). How democracies respond to terrorism: Regime characteristics, symbolic power and counterterrorism. *Security Studies*, *21*(3), pg. 510.

[103] Raymond Boudon. (2003). Beyond Rational Choice Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 29*(1), pg. 18.

[104] John Scott (2000). Rational choice theory. *Understanding contemporary society: Theories of the present*, *129*, 671-85.

[105] John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart (2014). Responsible counterterrorism policy. *Cato Institute Policy Analysis*, (755).

[106] John Scott (2000). Rational choice theory. Understanding contemporary society: Theories of the present, 129.

[107] Boudon, R. (1998). Limitations of Rational Choice Theory. American Journal of Sociology, 104(3), 817–828.

conducted through bargaining; and (3) foreign policymaking is a process of internal consensus building."[108]

As suggested at the outset of this chapter, bureaucratic politics theory has relevance for understanding and explaining counterterrorism due to its particular focus on the process-based features of policymaking.[109] [110] [111] [112] Indeed, counterterrorism brings together various competencies, mandates, capacities, and abilities to deny terrorists their objectives. In this respect, bureaucracies play an important role in the operationalization and conduct of counterterrorism. Therefore, bureaucratic politics is both a relevant and important theoretical lens through which to understand these operational features of counterterrorism policymaking. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, terrorism is not only an operational or instrumental phenomenon but also a phenomenon that is political in nature, which can manifest in expressive ways through a form of political interaction between the state, terrorist groups, and society writ large. Accordingly, terrorist attacks can lead to extreme, emotive, political reactions by the public, leading to governments – particularly in a democracy – coming under pressure by the public to respond to the attack. Therefore, when it comes to counterterrorism, the political component of the dialogue between the state and the public becomes key and perhaps even central.[113]

This public "dialogue" between the government, the terrorist group, and society writ large becomes even more pronounced within the modern context. Mass-casualty events, technology, information flow, emerging terrorist threats, and new modus operandi of terrorist groups have truncated the time available and limited the control bureaucracies have over policymaking. It is within this context of accelerated change, uncertainty, evolving threats, and new technology that Presidents may now carry greater standing than the bureaucracy may once have had.[114] Bureaucracies are often not able to – and are even prohibited from – participating in the expressive, political dialogue. By contrast, Presidents in the modern era not only have standing on political issues, they also have the technological tools necessary such as social media that they can wield over the bureaucracy – call it a "tech bully pulpit" or the

[108] R. J. Art (1973). Bureaucratic politics and American foreign policy: A critique. Policy Sciences, pg. 468.

[109] Morton H. Halperin and Priscilla A. Clapp (2007). Bureaucratic politics and foreign policy. Brookings Institution Press.

[110] Kevin Marsh (2014). Obama's surge: a bureaucratic politics analysis of the decision to order a troop surge in the Afghanistan war. Foreign Policy Analysis, 10(3), 265-288.

[111] Martha Crenshaw (2001). Counterterrorism policy and the political process. Studies in conflict and terrorism, 24(5), 329-337.

[112] Kevin P. Marsh, K. P. (2012). The intersection of war and politics: the Iraq war troop surge and bureaucratic politics. Armed Forces & Society, 38(3), 413-437.

[113] Hoffman, B. (2018). *Inside terrorism*. Columbia university press.

[114] Galen Stolee and Steve Caton (2018). Twitter, Trump, and the base: A shift to a new form of presidential talk? *Signs and Society*, *6*(1), 147-165.

"Twitter Presidency."[115] [116] [117] [118] Yet, even as Presidents may well have the biggest megaphone ever through technology, it comes with increased pressure to solve problems quickly.

Presidents today are seen as the ultimate "decider."[119] They are under pressure to provide solutions to new and emerging challenges.[120] [121] We have seen the President act as "policymaker in chief" or "counterterrorism officer in chief" or even "medical officer in chief"– from 9/11 to the COVID-19 pandemic.[122] [123] In the modern policymaking context, Presidents are viewed as the problem-solver – the one who fixes things. That said, modern presidents may not have thirteen days to develop a policy like President Kennedy had during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.[124] They may only have a couple of days, or perhaps hours, or even just minutes to make decisions – particularly when it comes to counterterrorism. Presidents are under pressure to act fast and often within the context of crisis. As such, US presidents find themselves constantly reacting.[125]

Yet, as noted earlier, bureaucratic politics theory does not contemplate these expressive, political dimensions and pressures of policymakers to rapidly act. On the contrary, bureaucratic politics theory assumes policymakers have the time and space to "debate, negotiate, bargain, and carry out the internal, bureaucratic struggle" for what the policy ultimately becomes, as Art pointed out.[126] Moreover, bureaucratic politics theory puts at the focal point of the analysis the competitive dynamics internal to bureaucracies. Yet, as described above, it is political leaders such as presidents who are under pressure to act and have greater standing than bureaucracies to do so given the fact that a key feature of counterterrorism policymaking is to participate in the public, political dialogue. Furthermore, bureaucratic politics

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[115] Ibid.

[116] Michael Mann and John A. Hall (2011). *Power in the 21st century: Conversations with John Hall*. Polity.

[117] Erin Peterson, "Presidential Power Surges," *Harvard Law Bulletin*, July 17, 2019; available from https://today.law.harvard.edu/feature/presidential-power-surges/.

[118] Henry Gass, "'A too-powerful presidency': Will US ever rein in executive branch?" *Christian Science Monitor*, January 25, 2021; available from https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Justice/2021/0125/A-too-powerful-presidency-Will-US-ever-rein-in-executive-branch.

[119] Al Gini, "The president as 'Decider in Chief,'" National Public Radio, October 18, 2012; available from https://www.wbez.org/stories/the-president-as-decider-in-chief/f81b4031-305a-430d-865b-3b21f97fe825.

[120] Mullan, J. (2015). The Decider: George W Bush and His Use of Presidential Power.

[121] See also Gruber, D. A., Smerek, R. E., Thomas-Hunt, M. C., & James, E. H. (2015). The real-time power of Twitter: Crisis management and leadership in an age of social media. *Business Horizons*, *58*(2), 163-172.

[122] See also Baccini, L., Brodeur, A., & Weymouth, S. (2021). The COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 US presidential election. *Journal of Population Economics*, *34*(2), 739-767.

[123] See also Gostin, L. O., Hodge, J. G., & Wiley, L. F. (2020). Presidential powers and response to COVID-19. *Jama*, *323*(16), 1547-154.

[124] Allison, G. T. (1969). Conceptual models and the Cuban missile crisis. *American political science review*, *63*(3), 689-718.

[125] Bohn, M. (2016). *Presidents in crisis: Tough decisions inside the White House from Truman to Obama*. Skyhorse Publishing, Inc.

[126] R. J. Art (1973). Bureaucratic politics and American foreign policy: A critique. Policy Sciences.

theory assumes that bureaucratic leaders have the tools and standing necessary to be in complete control of the problem and policy remedy. Yet, again, given the legal limitations of bureaucracies to participate in politics, the complexity of modern society through social media and other technological platforms, and the uncertainty associated with the asymmetries of information of terrorists; bureaucracies have limited control over the society.[127]

All of this suggests bureaucratic politics theory is limited in its explanatory power in relation to counterterrorism policymaking because it does not fully contemplate the public, political nature of terrorism and the associated and related urgency and pressures on policymakers to respond. Bureaucratic politics theory also does not contemplate the limited standing and formal restrictions within democracies for bureaucracies to engage in the political dialogue. This, therefore, suggests bureaucratic politics theory requires, as Robert Art puts it: "…too many constraints of a non-bureaucratic nature that must be set" for the theory to have explanatory relevance in relation to counterterrorism policy. Art further pointed out that once such constraints are set, "the paradigm will account for very little, if anything." [128] [129]

Through this exploration of rational choice and bureaucratic politics theories in relation to the phenomenon of terrorism and counterterrorism policymaking, we recognized the need to contemplate both the problem-solving features of counterterrorism (the instrumental component) and the expressive features (the political component) of counterterrorism policymaking. This suggests we need a more integrated and context-based approach to counterterrorism policy analysis.

2.2.3   Moving to a Context-Based Approach for Policy Analysis

Although rational choice and bureaucratic politics theories have relevance towards understanding the phenomenon of counterterrorism policymaking, these theories have important limitations in contemplating the distinct and unique features of the terrorism phenomenon – perhaps overlooking or even missing altogether some of the core definitional dimensions of terrorism, as discussed through Hoffman's definition earlier in this chapter, which counterterrorism policy must address as part of its response. We observed these limitations most acutely through both the clandestine nature of terrorism and its expressive, political features. These theoretical shortcomings would mean that any policy analysis of counterterrorism would have important shortcomings in relation to the phenomenon of terrorism and would be disconnected from the complex reality that the policymaker faces when considering a counterterrorism policy response. Accordingly, this review suggests the criticality of contemplating counterterrorism policy within a broader context of decisionmaking, as

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[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid., pg. 468.

[129] J. Garry Clifford. (1990). Bureaucratic Politics. *The Journal of American History (Bloomington, Ind.),77*(1), 161-168.

Boudon pointed out through his "voting paradox," because policymakers have not only an instrumental purpose but also an expressive purpose in the counterterrorism response.

This review, therefore, suggests we must gain a more precise understanding of the specific instrumental and expressive features of counterterrorism policy perspectives to understand the overall option set policymakers have as well as how such instrumental and expressive features combine and interact. It also suggests we must contemplate counterterrorism policy perspective within the context of choice that may not necessarily be fully rational in nature because policymakers must consider various instrumental and expressive combinations during crisis situations given the unique features of terrorism, as discussed in this chapter.

We will, therefore, proceed by reviewing, in Chapter 3, counterterrorism policy literature with the objective of outlining the major policy perspectives of counterterrorism and the associated instrumental and expressive dimensions for each. This will allow us to understand the various ways that instrumental and expressive components of counterterrorism policymaking may manifest, and the policy perspectives policymakers could adopt in any counterterrorism response. Once we understand the dominant policy perspectives for counterterrorism and their associated instrumental and expressive features, we will then, in Chapter 4, review how policymakers could choose among these instrumental-expressive combinations of policy perspective – thereby situating counterterrorism policy within the critical context of decisionmaking.

3   POLICY PERSPECTIVES OF COUNTERTERRORISM

The goal of this chapter is to describe policy perspectives of US counterterrorism policy. Alexander George tells us we can understand the perspective of a policymaker along two elements – basic beliefs and operational approaches.[130] [131] [132] [133] [134] Basic belief enables us to understand how a policymaker defines the situation. Operational approach provides insight into how the policymaker would act.[135] Through George's recommendation, we can contemplate how the basic beliefs of a policymaker – such as a US president – may inform repertoires of action.

Through a review of the counterterrorism policy scholarship, we created a typology for the policy perspective of the policymaker: (1) the threat management policy perspective and (2) the structural change policy perspective. The threat management perspective manages the terrorist threat by directly countering the terrorist group.[136] The structural change policy perspective focuses on removing the terrorist threat by fundamentally changing the broader, root cause factors in society giving rise to terrorism.[137] We can discern the distinct nature of these two policy perspectives through their basic beliefs and operational approaches, as reflected in Table 1.1 below.

Threat Management Perspective	Structural Change Perspective
Basic Belief: Terrorist threat must be managed.	**Basic Belief:** Terrorist threat must be removed.
Operational Approach: Focus on the terrorist group.	**Operational Approach:** Focus on societal factors.

Table 1.1

The threat manager tends to privilege the instrumental features of terrorism through a focus on the terrorist group's tactics, techniques, and procedures. The structural changer tends to focus on the broader drivers of the terrorism phenomenon such as the political, social, or

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[130] Stephen G. Walker (1990). The evolution of operational code analysis. *Political Psychology*, 403-418.
[131] Alexander L. George (1969). The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making. *International Studies Quarterly,13*(2), 190-222.
[132] See also Brim, O., Glass, D., Lavin, D., and Goodman, N. (1962). *Personality and Decision Processes: Studies in the Social Psychology of Thinking*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif.
[133] See also Holsti, O. (1977) The "operational code" as an approach to the analysis of belief systems. *Final Report to the National Science Foundation*, Grant SOC 75-15368, Duke University, Durham, NC.
[134] See also Holsti, O. (1970) The operational code approach to the study of political leaders: John Foster Dulles' philosophical and instrumental beliefs. *Canad. J. Polit. Sci.* 3: 123-157.
[135] Stephen G. Walker (1990). The evolution of operational code analysis. *Political Psychology*, 403-418.
[136] Schmid, Alex P. (ed.) Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness (The Hague, NL: ICCT Press) 2020.
[137] Ibid.

economic grievances in society. We will next outline how these policy perspectives would interact with the phenomena of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency.

3.1 Counterterrorism, Counterinsurgency, and Policy Perspective

Scholar Rob de Wijk provides a critical distinction between insurgents and terrorists: "insurgents rely on support of the population whilst terrorist are individuals or isolated groups or cells without broad public support."[138] Bruce Hoffman makes a related distinction with respect to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency by noting the respective tactical versus strategic objectives when countering terrorists or insurgents:

"Counterterrorism is more tactical. It's about preventing attacks. It's about killing or capturing or arresting the bad guys. Just generally, making it difficult for terrorist to operate and hardening the potential targets that terrorist might strike at. [Counterinsurgency] is…not only the prevention of terrorism or the prevention of attacks. But it's the re-calibration of societies so that the ideology that gives birth to the desire to join extremist movements to carry out these acts of violence is somehow channeled in a different direction or changed. Basically, you're trying to remake over society so that the thought processes that give rise to terrorist recruitment and radicalization are somehow tamped down or somehow eliminated by these profound changes that bring better governance, education, greater literacy, and a higher socio-economic standard of living."[139]

These distinctions between insurgents and terrorists and counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, as de Wijk and Hoffman suggest, came to fore in the 1970s as the phenomenon of international terrorism was on the rise.[140] [141] [142] [143] Prior to the 1970s, terrorists and insurgents were generally understood as synonymous and treated the same from a policy perspective. Kilcullen explains that in the 1950s the British counterinsurgency manual was titled: "The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya."[144] During this period, the term terrorism was employed to "denigrate acts of political violence to make the insurgent seem illegitimate."[145] By the 1970s, "groups like Baader-Meinhof Group and the Italian Red Brigades

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[138] Schmid, Alex P. (ed.) Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness (The Hague, NL: ICCT Press) 2020.
[139] "Turning Point," *Netflix*, September 2021.
[140] Kilcullen, D. (2011). *The accidental guerrilla: Fighting small wars in the midst of a big one*. Oxford University Press.
[141] See also Hoffman, B. (2018). *Inside terrorism*. Columbia university press.
[142] See also Croft, S., and Moore, C. (2010). The evolution of threat narratives in the age of terror: understanding terrorist threats in Britain. *International Affairs*, *86*(4), 821-835.
[143] See also Merari, A. (1993). Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency. *Terrorism and political violence*, *5*(4), 213-251.
[144] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.
[145] Ibid.

came on the scene; yet, they did not have links to a broader insurgency or larger movement."[146] Rather, they were seen as "cells of alienated individuals within Western society."[147] [148] Given the emergence of groups that were, on the one hand, attempting to use violence for political ends yet, on the other hand, disconnected from a mass movement; there became a recognition of the inter-related features of terrorism and insurgency as well as their distinctions.[149]

To understand these complexities of terrorism and insurgency not only from a phenomena perspective but also from a policy perspective, we decided to review literature related to both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency policy. A richer understanding of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency will help us gain more precision with respect to the distinctions between our threat management and structural change policy perspectives. We will proceed by outlining these two policy perspectives through the relevant respective literature on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency.

3.1.1 Threat Management Policy Perspective

We suggest the goal of the threat management policy perspective is to continuously address the threat of terrorism such that the terrorist group does not have the capability or capacity to conduct attacks and, thereby, no longer strategically threaten the state. The threat manager tends to be pre-occupied with the instrumental features of terrorism, including how a terrorist group manifests acts of terrorism (its tactics, techniques, and procedures) and how such a group understands itself (its operational contexts, characteristics, and objectives). The threat manager would tend to be exclusively focused on groups perpetrating terrorist attacks and less focused on groups shaping the broader environment. Accordingly, we propose the threat manager is focused on managing the effects of terrorism rather than broader root cause factors in society giving rise to terrorism. We observe historical examples that are demonstrative of threat management policy perspective. We will briefly outline each of these examples in the next section.

3.1.1.1 Historical Examples of the Threat Management Perspective

As noted earlier, the emergence of terrorism as a growing threat in the 1970s catalyzed a focus on counterterrorism within the United States government.[150] [151] Between the 1970s and

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[146] Bartali, R. (2007). Red Brigades (1969–1974): An Italian phenomenon and a product of the Cold War. *Modern Italy*, *12*(3), 349-369.

[147] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

[148] See also Orsini, A. (2011). Anatomy of the Red Brigades. In *Anatomy of the Red Brigades*. Cornell University Press.

[149] See also LaFree, G., and Hendrickson, J. (2007). Build a criminal justice policy for terrorism. *Criminology & Pub. Policy*, *6*, 781.

[150] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

[151] See also Byman, D. (2015). *Al Qaeda, the Islamic state, and the Global Jihadist Movement: What everyone needs to know*. What Everyone Needs to Know, 2015.

the 1990s, the United States adopted counterterrorism policies that operated consistent with our proposed threat management perspective. We will proceed by outlining four examples.

3.1.1.1.1   1983 Lebanese Hizballah Attack on the US Marine Corps Barracks in Lebanon

On October 23, 1983, Lebanese Hizballah conducted a suicide bombing attack, detonating a truck filled with 2000 pounds of explosives directed against the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines Regimental Battalion Landing Team barracks in Beirut, Lebanon.[152] [153] [154] The initial report was that 100 Marines, who were members of a multi-national peacekeeping force, were killed.[155] The death toll would soon more than double, rendering this event the deadliest terrorist attack for US Marines since the Battle for Iwo Jima in 1945.[156] [157] The United States was, for the first time, confronted with the question of how to respond to a terrorist attack directly against its interests.[158] The Reagan Administration recognized that Lebanese Hizballah intended to continue to conduct spectacular attacks – particularly given the fact that the US Marines provided a target to achieve such a spectacle.[159] [160] President Ronald Reagan also recognized the limitations of what the United States could achieve in addressing the broader civil war in Lebanon. He, therefore, narrowly tailored the United States' response towards the terrorist threat by ensuring Lebanese Hizballah would not be able to continue to attack US interests in Lebanon.[161] [162] [163] [164]

President Reagan ultimately decided to withdraw the US Marines from Lebanon.[165] The administration's response prevented Lebanese Hizballah – the terrorist group – from achieving the objectives of its attacks by removing the target – the US military presence in Lebanon. The Reagan Administration's response is consistent with our proposed threat management

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[152] Timothy Naftali, <u>Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism</u>, New York: Basic Books, 2005.
[153] "Beirut Marine Barracks Bombing Fast Facts," *CNN*, October 18, 2017; available from https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/13/world/meast/beirut-marine-barracks-bombing-fast-facts/index.html.
[154] Olson, S. P. (2002). *The Attack on US Marines in Lebanon on October 23, 1983*. The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.
[155] Timothy Naftali, <u>Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism</u>, New York: Basic Books, 2005.
[156] "Beirut Marine Barracks Bombing Fast Facts,"*CNN,* October 18, 2017; available from https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/13/world/meast/beirut-marine-barracks-bombing-fast-facts/index.html.
[157] Timothy Naftali, <u>Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism</u>, New York: Basic Books, 2005.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Timothy Naftali, <u>Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism</u>, New York: Basic Books, 2005.
[160] See also Wills, D. C. (2003). *The first war on terrorism: counter-terrorism policy during the Reagan administration*. Rowman & Littlefield.
[161] Micah Zenko, "When Reagan cut and run," Foreign Policy, February 7, 2014; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/02/07/when-reagan-cut-and-run/.
[162] Evans, A. T., and Potter, A. B. (2019). When Do Leaders Change Course? Theories of Success and the American Withdrawal from Beirut, 1983–1984 (February 2019). *Texas National Security Review*.
[163] But see Crenshaw, M. (2001). Counterterrorism policy and the political process. *Studies in conflict and terrorism*, *24*(5), 329-337.
[164] But see LaFree, Gary, & Dugan, Laura. (2009). Research on Terrorism and Countering Terrorism. *Crime and Justice (Chicago, Ill.), 38*(1), 413-477.
[165] Timothy Naftali, <u>Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism</u>, New York: Basic Books, 2005.

perspective because it focused on the terrorist group itself rather than addressing the broader environment in Lebanon.

3.1.1.1.2 1993 World Trade Center Bombing

On February 26, 1993, a rental van packed with 1200 pounds of explosives detonated in a parking garage under Two World Trade Center (WTC) in New York City.[166] [167] Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attack.[168] The attack was directed by a terrorist cell led by Ramzi Yousef who operated within the US homeland in New York and New Jersey.[169] The attack killed 6 people and injured more than 1,000.[170] [171] Like Reagan, President Clinton pursued a conflict avoidance policy to manage the threat rather than a policy geared towards changing the broader, root cause issues in society that were animating al-Qaeda and its grievances.[172] The Clinton Administration focused on apprehending the members of the terrorist group to prevent their ability to conduct future attacks.[173] In doing so, the Clinton Administration was attempting to manage the threat through the judicial process. The terrorists responsible for the attack were ultimately arrested and tried in the US court system.[174]

3.1.1.1.3 Al-Qaeda's 1998 Bombings of the US Embassy in Kenya and Tanzania

On August 7th, 1998, al-Qaeda detonated near simultaneous truck bombs outside the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. This attack killed 224 people and wounded more than 5,000.[175] Twelve of those killed in Nairobi were US citizens.[176] On August 20th, 1998, President Clinton launched cruise missiles from the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea against two al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan (Khost, 90 miles south of Kabul and

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[166] Kean, T. and Hamilton, L. (2004). *The 9/11 commission report: Final report of the national commission on terrorist attacks upon the United States* (Vol. 3). Government Printing Office.

[167] Seth Cline, "The 1993 World Trade Center Bombing: A New Threat Emerges," US News and World Report, February 26, 2013; available from https://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/press-past/2013/02/26/the-1993-world-trade-center-bombing-a-new-threat-emerges.

[168] Kean, T. and Hamilton, L. (2004). *The 9/11 commission report: Final report of the national commission on terrorist attacks upon the United States* (Vol. 3). Government Printing Office.

[169] Mylroie, L. (1995). The World Trade Center Bomb: Who Is Ramzi Yousef? And Why It Matters. *The National Interest*, (42), 3-15.

[170] Timothy Naftali, Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism, New York: Basic Books, 2005.

[171] "1993 World Trade Center Bombing," CNN, February 28, 2018; available from https://www.cnn.com/2013/11/05/us/1993-world-trade-center-bombing-fast-facts/index.html.

[172] Starr-Deelen, Donna G. (n.d.). The Administration of Bill Clinton. In *Presidential Policies on Terrorism* (pp. 83-101). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

[173] Ibid.

[174] "1993 World Trade Center Bombing," CNN, February 28, 2018; available from https://www.cnn.com/2013/11/05/us/1993-world-trade-center-bombing-fast-facts/index.html.

[175] "1998 US Embassies in Africa Bombings Fast Facts," CNN, August 9, 2017; Available from https://www.cnn.com/2013/10/06/world/africa/africa-embassy-bombings-fast-facts/index.html.

[176] "U.S. embassies in East Africa bombed," *History.com*, February 9, 2010; available from https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/u-s-embassies-in-east-africa-bombed.

Jalalabad, 60 miles east of Kabul).[177] [178] [179] [180] [181] In comments broadcasted shortly after Clinton arrived back to the White House from Martha's Vineyard, Clinton stated there was "compelling information they [al-Qaeda] were planning additional terrorist attacks against our citizens and others with the inevitable collateral casualties…"[182] Additionally, U.S. Defense Secretary, William Cohen, revealed the objective of the strikes were to "disrupt and attempt to destroy the suspected training and support facilities used to train hundreds, if not thousands, of terrorists."[183] Here again, we see the Clinton Administration narrow the focus of the counterterrorism response to the terrorist group and on managing threat through precision strikes rather than addressing the broader grievances animating the threat."[184]

3.1.1.1.4 2000 Al-Qaeda Attack on the USS Cole

On October 12, 2000, a small boat filled with explosives detonated just feet from the USS Cole (a US Navy guided missile destroyer) docked in Aden, Yemen for refueling and resupply.[185] The blast ripped a 40-foot hole in the hull of the ship, killing 17 US Navy servicemembers and wounding 39 others.[186] [187] President Clinton ordered the apprehension of the al-Qaeda terrorist cell responsible for the attack – again opting for a response focused on the terrorist group.[188] Clinton employed an expeditionary law enforcement approach by deploying a team of over 100 FBI agents to not only gather evidence in Yemen but also work

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[177] "U.S. missiles pound targets in Afghanistan, Sudan," CNN, August 20, 1998; available from http://www.cnn.com/US/9808/20/us.strikes.01/.

[178] See also Kosnik, M. E. (2000). The military response to terrorism. *Naval War College Review*, 13-39.

[179] See also Bisone, F. (2000). Killing a Fly with a Cannon: The American Response to the Embassy Attacks. *NYL Sch. J. Int'l & Comp. L.*, *20*, 93.

[180] See also Malvesti, M. (2001). Explaining the united states' decision to strike back at terrorists. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *13*(2), 85-106.

[181] See also Hoffman, Bruce. (2002). Rethinking Terrorism and Counterterrorism Since 9/11. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 25*(5), 303-316.

[182] "U.S. missiles pound targets in Afghanistan, Sudan," CNN, August 20, 1998; available from http://www.cnn.com/US/9808/20/us.strikes.01/.

[183] "U.S. missiles pound targets in Afghanistan, Sudan," CNN, August 20, 1998; available from http://www.cnn.com/US/9808/20/us.strikes.01/.

[184] James Bennett, "U.S. Cruise Missiles Strike Sudan and Afghan Targets Tied to Terrorist Network," New York Times, August 21, 1998; available from https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/africa/082198attack-us.html.

[185] Perl, R., O'Rourke, R., and Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division. (2001, January). Terrorist attack on USS Cole: Background and issues for Congress. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress.

[186] "USS Cole attacked by terrorists," *History.com*, July 20, 2010; available from https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/uss-cole-attacked-by-terrorists.

[187] Vern Loeb, "FBI Agents Resume Cole Probe in Yemen," The Washington Post, September 4, 2001; available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/09/04/fbi-agents-resume-cole-probe-in-yemen/16acf8fb-318b-47cc-a54a-1740c1c94da1/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6c70f44ef133.

[188] See also Hoffman, Bruce. (2002). Rethinking Terrorism and Counterterrorism Since 9/11. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 25*(5), 303-316.

with Yemeni law enforcement to locate and apprehend the perpetrators of the attack.[189] Here again, President Clinton did not attempt to address the broader societal issues in Yemen – or beyond – that influenced the attack but, instead, chose to focus on managing the immediate threat through going after the terrorist group and cell that perpetrated the attack.[190]

3.1.1.1.5   Summary of Historical Examples of the Threat Management Perspective

These four examples are reflective of our proposed threat management policy perspective. The response in all four examples demonstrate a basic belief terrorism must be managed as opposed to changing the broader, root cause factors in society that were driving terrorism. Additionally, in each of the responses, the operational approach was focused on the terrorist group itself – its tactics, techniques, and procedures – with an eye towards mitigating or preventing the next attack. We will now turn to reviewing the scholarship on counterterrorism policy to further illuminate the threat management perspective.

3.1.2   Scholarship on Managing Terrorism

Audrey Kurth Cronin's scholarship explained the reasoning behind a counterterrorism policy exclusively focused on the terrorist group rather than broader, root cause factors in society. Cronin offered three purposes for such an approach to counterterrorism. First, Cronin suggested that the central objective for policymakers is to ensure the terrorist group remains at "the level of tactics" such that it does not strategically threaten the state.[191] Second, she argued that such an approach controls for any further exacerbation of the terrorism challenge given the strategy of terrorist groups to induce the state towards a more expansive response, which can lead to making overall terrorist threat worse by "legitimizing the terrorist group within a broader set of supporters with only marginally connected or even unconnected grievances."[192] [193] Third, Cronin pointed out that an approach that is exclusively focused on the terrorist group avoids a more expansive counterterrorism campaign that can lead to an ends-means mismatch thereby making the counterterrorism both more effective and aligned with the state's resources and capacity.[194] [195] We will further explain each of these points.

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[189] USS Cole attacked by terrorists," *History.com*, July 20, 2010; available from https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/uss-cole-attacked-by-terrorists.

[190] Michael Isikoff, "U.S. failure to retaliate for USS Cole attack rankled then — and now," NBC News, October 12, 2010; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna39622062.

[191] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[192]Ibid.

[193] See also Sewall, S. (2006). Modernizing U.S. counterinsurgency practice: Rethinking risk and developing a national strategy. *Military Review, 86*(5), 103.

[194] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[195] See also Bartlett, Henry C., G. Paul Holman, and Timothy E. Somes. "The Art of Strategy and Force Planning." *Naval War College Review* 48, no. 2 (1995): 114-26. Accessed November 17, 2020. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44642773.

Cronin argued that the central objective of counterterrorism is to manage terrorist groups by "returning it to the level of tactics."[196] She assessed this approach "avoids the dysfunctional action / reaction dynamic" between the state and the terrorist group. She also explained that this approach enabled policymakers to manage the terrorist threat and "maintain focus on larger state interests and a balanced longer-term grand strategy that identifies [state] interests, the threats to those interests, and the means available to be deployed."[197] [198] [199]

Next, Cronin explained that terrorist groups employ "strategies of leverage."[200] This refers to when the state attempts to remove the terrorist threat through force. Such an action, Cronin explained, can "bestow legitimacy on the group" – moving it from the "ignoble terrorist group that kills innocent people to the noble, time honored insurgent."[201] [202] [203] [204] [205] [206] If a terrorist group is able to mobilize large numbers of followers, it draws out the campaign, "turning the inherently weak tactic of terrorism into much stronger forms [of warfare] with greater staying power such as insurgency and conventional war."[207] [208] Cronin also believes a more expansive approach to counterterrorism, such as one focused on removing terrorist groups and their supporters, forces the state to prop up illegitimate governments – the very ones terrorists and their supporters are railing against.[209] Therefore, for Cronin, an approach that is exclusively focused on removing the threat and its supporters can have the strategic effect of building legitimacy (and leverage) into terrorist strategy by enlarging their appeal and mobilizing support across society.[210] [211]

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[196] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[197] Ibid.

[198] See also Chowdhury, Arjun, & Fitzsimmons, Scott. (2013). Effective but inefficient: Understanding the costs of counterterrorism. *Critical Studies on Terrorism, 6*(3), 447-456.

[199] See also Bartlett, Henry C., G. Paul Holman, and Timothy E. Somes. "The Art of Strategy and Force Planning." *Naval War College Review* 48, no. 2 (1995): 114-26. Accessed November 17, 2020. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44642773.

[200] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[201]Ibid.

[202] Abrahms, Max. 2006. "Why Terrorism Does Not Work." *Inter- national Security* 31(2): 42–78.

[203] Pape, Robert A. 1996. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

[204] Carr, Caleb. 2002. *Lessons of Terror: A History of Warfare against Civilians*. New York: Random House.

[205] See also Enemark, C. (2011). Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency. *Asian Security (Philadelphia, Pa.), 7*(3), 218-237.

[206] See also Kocher, Matthew Adam, Pepinsky, Thomas B, & Kalyvas, Stathis N. (2011). Aerial Bombing and Counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War. *American Journal of Political Science,55*(2), 201-218.

[207] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[208] See also Arregú ın-Toft, Ivan. 2001. "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict." *International Security* 26(1): 93–128.

[209] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[210] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[211] See also Sewall, S. (2006). Modernizing U.S. counterinsurgency practice: Rethinking risk and developing a national strategy. *Military Review, 86*(5), 103.

Third, Cronin expressed concern that a more expansive counterterrorism campaign focused on removing the terrorist group and its supporters can lead to an ends-means mismatch. Cronin argued that conducting such an approach works against efficient allocation of resources.[212] [213] This is because, as noted earlier, the state can be bogged down in an expansive counterterrorism campaign, which can bring together "formerly disparate forces" against the state, "leading to new dilemmas, creating new enemies, and requiring new and more resources."[214] [215] Therefore, by managing the ends and means of counterterrorism, the policymaker is also managing the state's ability to sustain the response against a terrorist group.

Bryan Price provided a complementary analysis, which illuminated other key examples of counterterrorism consistent with what we propose as the threat management perspective.[216] [217] [218] Price's research suggested decapitation of terrorist group leadership as a way to manage the terrorist threat over time because it affects the capability of terrorist groups to conduct attacks and "significantly increases the mortality rate of terrorist groups."[219] [220] Price's work shows us that terrorist groups not only can be managed through addressing its external strategies but also its internal weaknesses.

Both Cronin and Price focused on the terrorist group itself as the proximate cause for the conflict with the state.[221] A key feature of Cronin and Price's scholarship was to treat the terrorist group as a phenomenon onto itself. Cronin and Price believed a terrorist group's core capability is organic to the organization, leading to a focus on the group's tactics, techniques, procedures, and leadership.[222] [223] [224]

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[212] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[213] See also Ucko, D., and Egnell, R. (2013). *Counterinsurgency in crisis*. Columbia University Press.

[214] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[215] See also Shafer, D. M. (1988). The unlearned lessons of counterinsurgency. *Political Science Quarterly*, *103*(1), 57-80.

[216] Price, B. C. (2012). Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism. *International Security, 36*(4), 9-46.

[217] Also see Cronin, A. K. (2006). How al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups. *International Security, 31*(1), 7-48.

[218] Also see Rubenstein, R. E. (1989). Inside Terrorist Organizations. Edited by David C. Rapoport. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

[219] Price, B. C. (2012). Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism. *International Security, 36*(4), 9-46.

[220] But see Langdon, Serapu, and Wells, "Targeting the Leadership of Terrorist and Insurgent Movements."

[221] But see Moghadam, A., Berger, R., and Beliakova, P. (2014). Say terrorist, think insurgent: Labeling and analyzing contemporary terrorist actors. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, *8*(5), 2-17.

[222] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[223] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[224] Price, B. C. (2012). Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism. *International Security, 36*(4), 9-46.

Through this review, a distinct policy perspective emerges around a basic belief that terrorism must be managed through an operational approach that is focused on countering the terrorist group itself, which is consistent with our proposed threat management policy perspective. Through our review of the counterterrorism policy literature, we also recognized another distinct policy viewpoint in the scholarship— a counterterrorism policy perspective that focuses on removing the terrorist threat through addressing the broader, root cause factors in society that give rise to terrorism. We will proceed by reviewing this second perspective.

3.1.3   Structural Change Policy Perspective

As discussed at the outset of this chapter, we recognized a second, distinct perspective in the counterterrorism policy scholarship. This perspective has two, key characteristics: (1) a basic belief that the threat of terrorism must be removed and (2) an operational approach focused on the societal factors that give rise to terrorism.[225] [226] We proposed terming this the structural change policy perspective.

We suggest the structural changer puts the broader societal factors at the focal point of the approach. Stated another way, the structural changer believes terrorists can increase their political and social support – thereby becoming an even greater threat over time if the expressive features of terrorism are left unaddressed. Therefore, the structural changer is inclined to focus on the political factors that give rise to terrorism – rather than pursuing an approach exclusively focused on the terrorist group. Such a structural change policy perspective is reflected in the following historical examples.

3.1.3.1   *Historical Examples of the Structural Change Policy Perspective*

Returning to the discussion at the outset of this chapter regarding competing paradigms for handling terrorism, we suggested the counterinsurgency paradigm aligns with what we propose as the structural change perspective. As we recall through Kilcullen's scholarship on the counterinsurgency (COIN) paradigm in Chapter 2, insurgencies are understood to be reflective of deeper issues in society, which are optimally addressed through an operational approach focused on "winning the hearts and minds" of some portion of the insurgent

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[225] Alexander L. George (1969). The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making. *International Studies Quarterly,13*(2), 190-222.
[226] Stephen G. Walker (1990). The evolution of operational code analysis. *Political Psychology*, 403-418.

population as well as its broader societal supporters. [227] [228] [229] [230] "Insurgencies require an interlocking system of actions — political, economic, psychological, military — aiming to overthrow the established authority in a country and its replacement by another regime."[231] Insurgents fight through an integrated military-political strategy; therefore, "the objective is to defeat the insurgent's strategy, rather than to 'apprehend the perpetrators' of specific acts."[232] The ultimate outcome of such an approach is a negotiated settlement such that the deeper issues and grievances that gave rise to the insurgency in the first place are addressed.[233]

Key examples of "classical counterinsurgency" comes from "the era of the 'Wars of National Liberation' of the 1960s."[234] Reviewing examples of historical counterinsurgency policy can better help us understand the distinct elements of the structural change perspective. We will proceed by briefly reviewing specific, historical examples of counterinsurgency policy that illuminate the structural change perspective.

3.1.3.1.1 Philippine-American War, "Huk Rebellion," "Mayalan Emergency," and Vietnam War

Examples from "classical counterinsurgency" that can inform the structural change perspective come from the Philippine-American War (1899-1902), "Huk Rebellion" (1946-1954), the "Malayan Emergency" (1948-1960), and the Vietnam War (1955-1975).[235] [236] [237] [238] [239] [240] [241] These counterinsurgency campaigns included "coordinated information operations, development, governance, military and police security operations, and overt and covert counter-guerrilla operations across a geographical area – often a province or region" as we saw

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[227] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

[228] But see Egnell, R. (2010). Winning 'hearts and minds'? A critical analysis of counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan. *Civil Wars*, *12*(3), 282-303.

[229] But see Dixon, P. (2009). 'Hearts and minds'? British counter-insurgency from Malaya to Iraq. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *32*(3), 353-381.

[230] See also Hack, K. (2009). The Malayan Emergency as counter-insurgency paradigm. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *32*(3), 383-414.

[231] Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, trans. Daniel Lee, with an introduction by Bernard B. Fall (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 6.

[232] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

[233] Tomes, R. R. (2004). Relearning counterinsurgency warfare. *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters*, *34*(1), 11.

[234] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

[235] See also Hunt, D. (2010). Dirty wars: Counterinsurgency in Vietnam and today. *Politics & Society*, *38*(1), 35-66.

[236] See also Dixon, P. (2009). 'Hearts and minds'? British counter-insurgency from Malaya to Iraq. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *32*(3), 353-381.

[237] See also Nagl, L. C. J. A. (2008). Counterinsurgency in Vietnam. *MODERN WARFARE*, 131.

[238] See also Marston, D., and Malkasian, C. (Eds.). (2011). *Counterinsurgency in modern warfare*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

[239] See also Wirtz, J. J. (1989). Counterinsurgency Paradigms.

[240] See also Ucko, D. H. (2010). The Malayan Emergency: The legacy and relevance of a counter-insurgency success story. *Defence Studies*, *10*(1-2), 13-39.

[241] See also Welch Jr, R. E. (2016). *Response to Imperialism: The United States and the Philippine-American War, 1899-1902*. UNC Press Books.

in the Philippine-American War and later to counter the Huk Rebellion.[242] Further, these counterinsurgency campaigns were led by what the literature described as a single "supremo" who held the "military, political, and administrative powers to carry out an integrated politico-military campaign at every level of government."[243] [244] [245] Kilcullen suggested that successful counterinsurgency campaigns require "improvements in governance, integrated administrative systems, and joint inter-agency action."[246] [247] One such example was the "de-linking" approach employed during the Vietnam War by the United States that focused on targeting the infrastructure of the insurgency through what was called the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) program.[248] CORDS was a pacification program that "integrated civil-security means to gain the support of rural populations in South Vietnam."[249] CORDS was geared toward countering the grievances that catalyzed insurgencies.[250] [251] Another example of counterinsurgency was during "Malayan Emergency" in which the British countered communist propaganda by establishing political milestones for independence and transition to self-government.[252] This approach ultimately led to the marginalization of insurgents as the broader population's grievances were addressed.[253]

Rather than a traditional counterterrorism approach that focused on "police work, intelligence, and special operations military activities" as we saw in the threat management section; these historical examples suggest a distinct focus on an integrated political-military strategy to both counter the insurgency as well as address the broader, societal factors that gave rise to grievances and the insurgent activity.[254] These distinctions are useful as we endeavor to understand the mindset and logic underpinning these distinctions between structural change and threat management. We will proceed by further grounding our proposed structural change perspective in the scholarship.

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[242] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

[243] Dixon, P. (2009). "Hearts and minds? British counterinsurgency from Malaya to Iraq," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *32*(3), 353-381.

[244] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

[245] See also Hamby, J. E. (2002). *Civil-military operations: joint doctrine and the Malayan Emergency*. JRTC (JOINT READINESS TRAINING CENTER) FORT POLK LA.

[246] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

[247] See also Packer, G. (2006). Knowing the enemy. *The New Yorker*, *18*, 34-49.

[248] See also Nagl, L. C. J. A. (2008). Counterinsurgency in Vietnam. *MODERN WARFARE*, 131.

[249] McCollum, J. K. (1983). The CORDS Pacification Organization in Vietnam: A Civilian-Military Effort. *Armed Forces & Society*, *10*(1), 105-122.

[250] Wells, G. M. (1991). *No more Vietnams: CORDS as a Model for Counterinsurgency Campaign Design*. ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLL FORT LEAVENWORTH KS SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES.

[251] See also Mandy Honn, Farrah Meisel, Jacleen Mowery, and Jennifer Smolin, "A Legacy of Vietnam: Lessons from CORDS," Simons Center for the Study of Interagency Coordination; available from https://thesimonscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/IAJ-2-2-pg41-50.pdf.

[252] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

[253] Hack, K. (2009). The Malayan Emergency as counter-insurgency paradigm. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *32*(3), 383-414.

[254] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

3.1.4   Scholarship on Addressing Root Cause Factors of Terrorism

The scholarship of Bruce Hoffman and David Kilcullen align with the structural change perspective. The events of 9/11 led Hoffman to describe the post-9/11 period as a new era of terrorism.[255] [256] Hoffman outlined the need for paradigm shift in counterterrorism. He also noted that terrorism evolved in the 1990s to include many other actors and supporters, which changed the nature of the terrorist threat itself.[257] [258] [259] Hoffman further explained that supporters in society enabled terrorists to plot, plan, and achieve greater lethality in its attacks, which he suggested culminated with the mass-casualty attack on 9/11.[260] [261] This led him to argue that terrorism had morphed into a more sophisticated and lethal threat relative to what it was – describing it as a "new and destructive" phenomenon ushering in a mass casualty era of terrorism.[262] For Hoffman, these specific conditions for this new terrorism included: (1) the scale of the killing; (2) the sophisticated nature of the attack, including the synchronization, level of planning, professionalism, and tradecraft "rarely seen among the vast majority of terrorists and terrorist movements;" and (3) the new modalities of the attack (such hijacked planes on 9/11).[263] [264] Hoffman believed this "new era of terrorism" required a "sustained and prolonged" counterterrorism campaign that addressed the societal factors driving terrorism.[265]

Kilcullen's perspective is consistent with Hoffman's viewpoint on post-9/11 terrorism. He argued that jihadist terrorism had become "a diffuse confederation of movements seeking to re-make the world order."[266] Kilcullen also described terrorism as "a popular movement that seeks to overthrow the status quo through subversion, political activity, insurrection, armed conflict and terrorism."[267] He further argued that terrorism had grown beyond a singular group

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[255] But see Spencer, A. (2006). Questioning the concept of 'new terrorism'. *Peace, Conflict and Development*, 1-33.
[256] Crenshaw M. (2008) The Debate over "New" vs. "Old" Terrorism. In: Karawan I.A., McCormack W., Reynolds S.E. (eds) Values and Violence. Studies in Global Justie, vol 4. Springer, Dordrecht.
[257] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism After September 11th," The Information Warfare Site, 2001; available from http://www.iwar.org.uk/cyberterror/resources/threat-assessment/pj63hoffman.htm.
[258] But see Duyvesteyn, I. (2004). How new is the new terrorism?. *Studies in conflict & terrorism*, *27*(5), 439-454.
[259] See also Neumann, P. (2009). *Old and new terrorism* (Vol. 4). Polity.
[260] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism After September 11th," The Information Warfare Site, 2001; available from http://www.iwar.org.uk/cyberterror/resources/threat-assessment/pj63hoffman.htm.
[261] See also Crenshaw M. (2008) The Debate over "New" vs. "Old" Terrorism. In: Karawan I.A., McCormack W., Reynolds S.E. (eds) Values and Violence. Studies in Global Justie, vol 4. Springer, Dordrecht.
[262] See also Badey, T. J. (2006). US counterterrorism: Change in approach, continuity in policy. *Contemporary Security Policy, 27*(2), 308-324.
[263] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism After September 11th," The Information Warfare Site, 2001; available from http://www.iwar.org.uk/cyberterror/resources/threat-assessment/pj63hoffman.htm.
[264] Duyvesteyn, I. (2004). How new is the new terrorism?. *Studies in conflict & terrorism*, *27*(5), 439-454.
[265] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism After September 11th," The Information Warfare Site, 2001; available from http://www.iwar.org.uk/cyberterror/resources/threat-assessment/pj63hoffman.htm.
[266] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.
[267] Ibid.

and into a movement – what he described as a "globalized [terrorist] network."[268] [269] This led Kilcullen to re-frame global terrorism as a global insurgency, requiring its dismantlement through counterinsurgency approaches due to the harm such a terrorist network or movement can inflict on nation-states and world order.[270] Kilcullen, therefore, explained that such an approach could occur through disaggregating individual groups within the broader terrorist movement as well as those supporting terrorists within broader society.[271] [272]

Given this new era of terrorism, Hoffman called on policymakers to re-think, re-consider, and pursue different operational approaches to counterterrorism that "utilize the full range of formidable tools at [the United States'] disposal" for a "sustained and prolonged" campaign to remove the terrorist threat.[273] Kilcullen called for the same in his seminal works that brought counterinsurgency scholarship to this modern terrorism problem.[274]

Now that we have gained a better understanding of the distinctions between the threat management and structural change perspectives through the scholarship, we can turn towards understanding how our two proposed perspectives could be operationalized, which we will do through Daniel Byman's scholarship in the next section.

3.1.5 Operational Approaches for Policy Perspectives of Counterterrorism

Daniel Byman outlined eight operational approaches policymakers could employ to address terrorism: "(1) crushing terrorist groups with massive force; (2) targeting terrorist leaders for death and arrest; (3) relying on allies to strike terrorist groups; (4) containing the terrorist group to limit its effectiveness and encourage internal divisions; (5) improving defenses against terrorism; (6) delegitimating the group's cause; (7) conciliating terrorists; and (8) going after supposed root causes of terrorism."[275] We will contemplate these approaches for counterterrorism within our proposed typologies for policy perspective – the structural change and threat management policy perspective – to better understand the ways in which these policy perspectives could be operationalized by policymakers.

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[268] But see Smith, Haviland. "Defining Terrorism: It Shouldn't Be Confused With Insurgency." American Diplomacy, 2008.
[269] See also Kiras, J.D. (2009). Irregular Warfare: Terrorism and Insurgency.
[270] But see Boyle, M. J. (2010). Do counterterrorism and counterinsurgency go together? *International Affairs (London), 86*(2), 333-353.
[271] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism After September 11th," The Information Warfare Site, 2001; available from http://www.iwar.org.uk/cyberterror/resources/threat-assessment/pj63hoffman.htm.
[272] See also Ostlund, W. B. (2012). Irregular Warfare: Counterterrorism Forces in Support of Counterinsurgency Operations. *Irregular Warfare: Counterterrorism Forces in Support of Counterinsurgency Operations*.
[273] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism After September 11th," The Information Warfare Site, 2001; available from http://www.iwar.org.uk/cyberterror/resources/threat-assessment/pj63hoffman.htm.
[274] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.
[275] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

We recognize alignment between the threat management perspective and Byman's operational approaches. This is because such approaches are focused on directly addressing the terrorist group: "targeting terrorist leaders," "relying on allies to strike terrorist groups," "containing the terrorist group to limit its effectiveness and encourage internal divisions," and "conciliating terrorists." [276] [277] [278] [279] We can also recognize the structural change perspective through the following four operational approaches in Byman's analysis: "crushing terrorists across society through massive force," "going after root causes of terrorism," "delegitimating the group's cause," and "improving societal defenses against terrorism."[280] [281] [282] [283] [284] [285] [286] [287] We will discuss each of these operational approaches and the suggested alignment with our proposed policy perspectives in more detail. We will start with the threat management perspective.

3.1.5.1   Operational Approaches for Managing Terrorism – Threat Management Policy Perspective

Byman explains that "killing terrorist leaders" largely relies on drone strikes and special operations raids to manage the terrorist threat through the terrorist group itself by taking terrorists off the battlefield.[288] An upside of this approach is it weakens terrorist groups, as Bryan Price also argues.[289] Another upside of this approach, as Patrick Johnston points out, is it

[276] Ibid, page 623.

[277] See also Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, Stephanie Young, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Joe Hogler, and Christine Leah, What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances? Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013.

[278] See also Zahedzadeh, G. (2017). Containing Terrorism. *Journal of Strategic Security, 10*(2), 48-59.

[279] See also Stevenson, J. (2004). *Counter-terrorism: Containment and beyond* (Adelphi papers; 367. 822386682). Oxford [etc.]: Oxford University Press.

[280] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[281] See also Lum, Cynthia, Kennedy, Leslie W, & Sherley, Alison. (2006). Are counter-terrorism strategies effective? The results of the Campbell systematic review on counter-terrorism evaluation research. *Journal of Experimental Criminology, 2*(4), 489-516.

[282] Eatedali, A. (2011). *Counterterrorism Strategies*. Herndon: University of Nebraska Press.

[283] Herik, Schrijver, Herik, Larissa van den, & Schrijver, Nico. (2014). *Counter-terrorism strategies in a fragmented international legal order: Meeting the challenges*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[284] See also Sandler, T. (2014). Terrorism and counterterrorism: An overview. *Oxford Economic Papers, 67*(1), 1-20.

[285] Lehrke, Jesse Paul, & Schomaker, Rahel. (2016). Kill, Capture, or Defend? The Effectiveness of Specific and General Counterterrorism Tactics Against the Global Threats of the Post-9/11 Era. *Security Studies, 25*(4), 729-762.

[286] Perliger, A. (2012). How Democracies Respond to Terrorism: Regime Characteristics, Symbolic Power and Counterterrorism. *Security Studies, 21*(3), 490-528.

[287] See also Byman, Daniel, & McCants, Will. (2017). Fight or Flight: How to Avoid a Forever War against Jihadists. *The Washington Quarterly,40*(2), 67-77.

[288] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[289] Price, B. C. (2012). Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism. *International Security, 36*(4), 9-46.

increases the likelihood the overall conflict would end in the government's favor.[290] A downside of this approach is it is not always effective due to the resiliency terrorists build into their organizations, as noted by scholar Jenna Jordan.[291] Terrorist organizations can live on even with the loss of key leaders – as evidenced by al-Qaeda's longevity after Bin Laden's death, as Brian Michael Jenkins points out.[292] [293] A further downside of this approach is terrorist groups are able to effectively counteract this counterterrorism approach by "decentralizing their organizations, changing their tactics, and otherwise reducing the value of decapitation."[294]

This leads to Byman's second operational approach, which aligns with managing the terrorist threat: "strengthening allies to crush terrorists."[295] A benefit of this approach is it relies on other countries to carry out counterterrorism against terrorist groups. This has significant upside for non-host country such as the United States particularly when it is concerned about the costs of fighting terrorists – both in terms of money and loss of life.[296] Also, given terrorist groups operate against the host country, this approach incentivizes the will of that country to conduct counterterrorism operations against the terrorist group.[297] The host country can also employ its "domestic law enforcement and intelligence assets in robust and sophisticated ways against terrorist groups" whereas the non-host country would be more limited in its ability to operate in the same way with its intelligence or military assets.[298] The challenge with this operational approach is the efficacy of the host country's operations and capabilities as well as

[290] Johnston, P. B. (2012). Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns. *International Security,36*(4), 47-79.

[291] Jordan, J. (2014). Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark. *International Security, 38*(4), 7-38.

[292] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[293] See also Jenkins, B. M. (2011). Al Qaeda After Bin Laden: Implications for American Strategy. *Al Qaeda After Bin Laden: Implications for American Strategy*.

[294] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[295] See also Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, Stephanie Young, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Joe Hogler, and Christine Leah, What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013.

[296] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[297] Ibid, page 627-628.

[298] But see Byman, D. (2017). US counterterrorism intelligence cooperation with the developing world and its limits. *Intelligence and National Security, 32*(2), 145-160.

in finding ways to partner with such countries if there is a fraught relationship.[299] [300] [301] [302] Moreover, local forces can be corrupt and/or seek revenge against certain segments of society, which can also exacerbate the problem rather than solve it.[303] [304] Finally, this operational approach can be challenged by the perception dynamics between the host country and the non-host country. For example, host countries can be concerned about the non-host country insufficiently protecting its involvement.[305] Also, the slow-moving bureaucracy of the non-host country in providing security assistance to conduct the counterterrorism activity can be another complaint of the host country.[306] [307]

The third operational approach that Byman described is "conciliation with terrorists."[308] This approach is geared towards directly negotiating with terrorist groups and offering concessions.[309] [310] Concessions can weaken and even divide groups – as moderate voices arise within the group advocating for concessions.[311] [312] The downside of this approach is it can be used by terrorist groups for other purposes such as a stalling tactic to re-arm and re-fit

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[299] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[300] Tankel, S. (2018). *With Us and Against Us* (Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare). New York: Columbia University Press.

[301] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[302] But see Odinga, S. (2017). 'We recommend compliance': Bargaining and leverage in Ethiopian–US intelligence cooperation. *Review of African Political Economy, 44*(153), 432-448.

[303] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[304] But see Singh, D. (2014). Corruption and clientelism in the lower levels of the Afghan police. *Conflict, Security & Development, 14*(5), 621-650.

[305] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[306] Tracey, R. S. (2012). Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military. (65), 98.

[307] Wilson, I. (2001). The Problem with Foreign Military Sales Reinvention. *World Affairs (Washington), 164*(1), 26-47.

[308] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[309] See also De Mesquita, E. B. (2005). Conciliation, Counterterrorism, and Patterns of Terrorist Violence. *International Organization, 59*(1), 145-176.

[310] See also Pruitt, D. (2006). Negotiation with terrorists. *International Negotiation*, *11*(2), 371-394.

[311] Chimahusky, R. (2008). Developing effective counterterrorism strategy: Coercion vs. conciliation.

[312] But see Sederberg, P. C. (2016). Conciliation as Counter-Terrorist Strategy. *Journal of Peace Research, 32*(3), 295-312.

themselves for the next phase of the fight. [313] [314] Negotiation also holds the risk of eroding support within the domestic polity because it can be viewed as legitimizing terrorist groups' actions.[315]

The fourth operational approach that we suggest aligns with the threat management policy perspective is "containing terrorism" because, as Byman explains, "a containment strategy assumes the threat is manageable." An upside of this approach is that it has a relatively lower cost when compared to military or intelligence operations. It also requires fewer sacrifices on behalf of the public. A downside of the containment approach is it can make the state appear weak particularly as the public is vengeful or scared following a terrorist threat of attack.[316]

We will now turn to the structural change perspective and describe the operational approaches we suggest align with this perspective.

3.1.5.2   *Operational Approaches for Removing Terrorism – Structural Change Policy Perspective*

As noted earlier, Byman identified a landscape of operational approaches for counterterrorism in the post-9/11 era. We recognize the structural change perspective through four of the operational approaches in Byman's analysis that directly address the broader, root cause factors that give rise to terrorism: (1) "crushing terrorists across society through massive force," (2) "going after root causes of terrorism," (3) "delegitimating the group's cause," and (4)

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[313]Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[314] Duyvesteyn, Isabelle, & Schuurman, Bart. (2011). The Paradoxes of Negotiating with Terrorist and Insurgent Organizations. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 39*(4), 677-692.

[315] But see Hughes, M. (1990). Terror and negotiation. *Terrorism and political violence*, *2*(1), 72-825.

[316]Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

"improving societal defenses against terrorism."[317] [318] [319] [320] [321] [322] [323] [324] We will discuss each of these in more detail and in relation to our structural change policy perspective.

Beginning with the "crushing terrorists," Byman explained that this operational approach is focused on targeting both terrorists and their supporters.[325] [326] It also recognizes that terrorism exists within "a broader ecosystem of political, religious, and social groups animated by grievances such as economic, educational, and social persecution within their community, country, and society."[327] [328] [329] [330] [331] [332] [333] [334] [335] [336] [337] [338] The core assumption

[317] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[318] See also Lum, Cynthia, Kennedy, Leslie W, & Sherley, Alison. (2006). Are counter-terrorism strategies effective? The results of the Campbell systematic review on counter-terrorism evaluation research. *Journal of Experimental Criminology, 2*(4), 489-516.

[319] Eatedali, A. (2011). *Counterterrorism Strategies*. Herndon: University of Nebraska Press.

[320] Herik, Schrijver, Herik, Larissa van den, & Schrijver, Nico. (2014). *Counter-terrorism strategies in a fragmented international legal order: Meeting the challenges*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[321] See also Sandler, T. (2014). Terrorism and counterterrorism: An overview. *Oxford Economic Papers, 67*(1), 1-20.

[322] Lehrke, Jesse Paul, & Schomaker, Rahel. (2016). Kill, Capture, or Defend? The Effectiveness of Specific and General Counterterrorism Tactics Against the Global Threats of the Post-9/11 Era. *Security Studies, 25*(4), 729-762.

[323] Perliger, A. (2012). How Democracies Respond to Terrorism: Regime Characteristics, Symbolic Power and Counterterrorism. *Security Studies, 21*(3), 490-528.

[324] See also Byman, Daniel, & McCants, Will. (2017). Fight or Flight: How to Avoid a Forever War against Jihadists. *The Washington Quarterly,40*(2), 67-77.

[325] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[326] See also Gentry, C. E. (2009). Targeting Terrorists: A License to Kill. *Journal of Military Ethics: James Turner Johnson and the Recovery of the Just War Tradition, 8*(3), 260-262.

[327] But see Krueger, Alan, B., and Jitka Malečková. 2003. "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 17 (4): 119-144.

[328] But see Krueger, A. B. (2017). *What Makes a Terrorist*. Princeton university press.

[329] But see Blair, G., Christine Fair, C., Malhotra, N., & Shapiro, J. N. (2013). Poverty and support for militant politics: Evidence from Pakistan. *American Journal of Political Science*, *57*(1), 30-48.

[330] Hoffman, B. (2017). *Inside terrorism* (Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare). Columbia University Press.

[331] See also Hashim, A. (2013). *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers* (1st ed.).

[332] See also Martin, G. (2016). *Understanding terrorism: Challenges, perspectives, and issues* (5th ed.).

[333] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism After September 11th," The Information Warfare Site, 2001; available from http://www.iwar.org.uk/cyberterror/resources/threat-assessment/pj63hoffman.htm.

[334] Crenshaw, Martha. (2001). Counterterrorism Policy and the Political Process. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 24*(5), 329-337.

[335] See also Davis, Paul K, Cragin, Kim, Noricks, Darcy, Helmus, Todd C, Paul, Christopher, & Berrebi, Claude. (2009). *Social Science for Counterterrorism*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

[336] But see Corum, J. S. (2007). Rethinking US Army Counter-insurgency Doctrine. *Contemporary Security Policy, 28*(1), 127-142.

[337] "US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual," FM 3-24 and MCWP 3-33.5, December 2006.

[338] See also Marston, D., and Malkasian, C. (Eds.). (2011). *Counterinsurgency in modern warfare*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

behind this approach is that the use of force prevents the spread of violence and diminishes the societal, political space for terrorists to organize, recruit, and fundraise.[339] [340] [341] A downside of this approach is "military force could actually increase popular support for terrorists within their local environment, mainstreaming the terrorist cause."[342] Another downside is that the resources and the governmental organization required to carry out a campaign of force is substantial and grows when confronting larger, globally networked groups such as al-Qaeda. This approach generally works best when the government is strong. As the government weakens, the anger from "crushing terrorists" can lead to backlash.[343]

The next operational approach Byman identified is "addressing the root causes of terrorism." The goal of this approach is to disaggregate individual groups within the broader terrorist movement from one-another as well as those supporting terrorists to change the factors in society that give rise to terrorism. [344] [345] [346] The upside of this approach is that it addresses the political factors at play along with the instrumental factors of terrorism. Led by General David Petraeus, the US military embraced this approach through its counterinsurgency doctrine in the US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual.[347] [348] [349] [350] [351] The downside of this approach is the cost and level of commitment required by the state. It is difficult to build democracies, as Byman notes, which has been revealed through the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.[352] [353] Moreover, the population that the policy is trying to

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[339] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism After September 11th," The Information Warfare Site, 2001; available from http://www.iwar.org.uk/cyberterror/resources/threat-assessment/pj63hoffman.htm.

[340] Kilcullen, D. J. (2007). Countering global insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 28*(4), 597-617.

[341] Schmid, Alex P. (ed.) Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness (The Hague, NL: ICCT Press) 2020.

[342] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[343] Ibid, pages 625-626.

[344] Kilcullen, D. (2006). Counter-insurgency redux. *Survival*, *48*(4), 111-130.

[345] See also Hashim, A. (2013). *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers* (1st ed.).

[346] See also Ostlund, W. B. (2012). Irregular Warfare: Counterterrorism Forces in Support of Counterinsurgency Operations. *Irregular Warfare: Counterterrorism Forces in Support of Counterinsurgency Operations*.

[347] Nagl, J. A., Amos, J. F., Sewall, S., & Petraeus, D. H. (2008). *The US Army/Marine corps counterinsurgency field manual*. University of Chicago Press.

[348] Petraeus, D. H. (2006). *Learning counterinsurgency: Observations from soldiering in Iraq*. ARMY COMBINED ARMS CENTER FORT LEAVENWORTH KS.

[349] But see Corum, J. S. (2007). Rethinking US Army Counter-insurgency Doctrine. *Contemporary Security Policy, 28*(1), 127-142.

[350] Jones, S. G. (2008). *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (Vol. 595). Rand Corporation.

[351] See also Nagl, John A. (1999). Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: BRITISH AND AMERICAN ARMY COUNTERINSURGENCY LEARNING DURING THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY AND THE VIETNAM WAR. *World Affairs (Washington), 161*(4), 193-199.

[352] See also the distinction made between focusing on popular support versus elite opinion in fighting counterinsurgency towards democracy. Hazelton, J. L. (2017). The "Hearts and Minds" Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare. *International Security, 42*(1), 80-113.

[353] See also Khalilzad, Z. (2010). Afghanistan & Iraq: Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq. *Journal of Democracy, 21*(3), 41-49.

change is rather small, which means, as scholars such as Will McCants point out, counterterrorism policy must be precise and focused on the specific places and contexts within which terrorist radicalize – such as a prison or extreme religious instruction.[354] [355] [356] And even while being precise, such a counterterrorism approach must also be broad enough to capture what McCants describes as the "law-abiding supporters – those who embrace jihadist ideas on social media or are otherwise clearly at risk of joining a terrorist group but have not yet broken the law."[357] This is because such an approach can have the greatest effect on the broader population by "infecting" that population with the grievance narrative.[358] [359] [360] But striking a balance between being precise yet broad and comprehensive is quite a difficult one that can back-fire. Cronin points out how such an approach can back-fire by explaining that the "means" of treating a terrorist group as part of a global insurgency does not achieve the ends of degrading the support it receives because it risks "painting" broader society with the same counterterrorism "brush" – thereby having the effect of building legitimacy for the terrorist group within the localized context .[361] [362] [363] [364] [365] [366] If a terrorist group can exploit this weakness and mobilize large numbers of followers, it draws out the campaign, "turning an inherently weak tactic of terrorism into much stronger forms [of warfare] with greater staying power such as insurgency and conventional war."[367] [368]

[354] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[355] See also Milla, Mirra Noor, Putra, Idhamsyah Eka, & Umam, Ahmad Naufalul. (2019). Stories From Jihadists: Significance, Identity, and Radicalization Through the Call for Jihad. *Peace and Conflict, 25*(2), 111-121.

[356] But see Jones, C. R. (2014). Are prisons really schools for terrorism? Challenging the rhetoric on prison radicalization. *Punishment & Society, 16*(1), 74-103.

[357] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[358] Williams, J. (2015) "Countering Violent Extremism: Improving U.S. Strategy for the Future," Markaz. Posted 5 Feb, available from http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2015/02/06-countering-violent-extremism.

[359] See also Berger, J. (2015). The Metronome of Apocalyptic Time. *Perspectives on Terrorism (Lowell), 9*(4), 61-71.

[360] See also Hashim, A. S. (2013). *When counterinsurgency wins*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

[361] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[362] Abrahms, Max. 2006. "Why Terrorism Does Not Work." *International Security* 31(2): 42–78.

[363] Pape, Robert A. 1996. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

[364] Carr, Caleb. 2002. *Lessons of Terror: A History of Warfare against Civilians*. New York: Random House.

[365] See also Enemark, C. (2011). Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency. *Asian Security (Philadelphia, Pa.), 7*(3), 218-237.

[366] See also Kocher, Matthew Adam, Pepinsky, Thomas B, and Kalyvas, Stathis N. (2011). Aerial Bombing and Counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War. *American Journal of Political Science,55*(2), 201-218.

[367] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[368] See also Sewall, S. (2006). Modernizing U.S. counterinsurgency practice: Rethinking risk and developing a national strategy. *Military Review, 86*(5), 103.

Another of Byman's operational approaches that addresses the broader societal factors of terrorism is "delegitimization."[369] [370] This approach is geared towards trying to decrease support for a terrorist group by delegitimizing the group's approach and ideology.[371] As an example, this can be achieved through using moderates to carry a message that delegitimizes the group. The government can also explain its policies to society and highlight extreme views of terrorists.[372] This strategy holds the potential of pulling the population to the government's side and even increasing intelligence collection as people come to trust the government.[373] Additionally, delegitimization has relatively lower costs.[374] Yet, critics assert that no amount of media explaining the justness of a government's efforts and moderates calling for calm is going to get hardcore believers to put down their arms.[375] [376] [377]

Now that we have described our suggested alignments between Byman's operational approaches for counterterrorism and our proposed policy perspectives for counterterrorism, this sets the stage for us to investigate how policymakers decide on the policy perspectives and operational approaches they ultimately adopt.

3.2 Moving from Belief to Behavior

Through the review in Chapter 3, we proposed a typology of policy perspectives for counterterrorism. To achieve such a typology, we began by reviewing a framework or policy perspective set forth by Alexander George. George argued that we can understand the

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[369] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[370] Jerry Mark Long, & Alex S. Wilner. (2014). Delegitimizing al-Qaida: Defeating an "Army Whose Men Love Death". *International Security, 39*(1), 126-164.

[371] Ramakrishna, K. (2005). Delegitimizing Global Jihadi Ideology in Southeast Asia. *Contemporary Southeast Asia, 27*(3), 343-369.

[372] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35..

[373] Spalek, B. (2014). Community Engagement for Counterterrorism in Britain: An Exploration of the Role of "Connectors" in Countering Takfiri Jihadist Terrorism. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 37*(10), 825-841.

[374] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[375] But see Chowdhury, Arjun, & Krebs, Ronald R. (2009). Making and Mobilizing Moderates: Rhetorical Strategy, Political Networks, and Counterterrorism. *Security Studies, 18*(3), 371-399.

[376] See also Abrahms, M. (2008). What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy. *International Security, 32*(4), 78-105.

[377] See also Ganor, Boaz. 2005. *The counter-terrorism puzzle: a guide for decision makers*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

perspective of a policymaker through basic belief and preferred operational approach.[378] [379] [380] [381] [382] Basic belief is the way a policymaker understands or defines the situation. Operational approach concerns how policymakers would act on their beliefs. Through this framework, we were able to review the scholarship on counterterrorism and understand the basic beliefs and repertoires of action for various counterterrorism policy perspectives.[383] We recognized and proposed two, distinct policy perspectives in the literature: (1) the threat management policy perspective and (2) the structural change policy perspective. The first is premised on a basic belief that terrorism must be managed through an operational approach of directly addressing the terrorist group.[384] The second is premised on a basic belief that terrorism must be removed through an operational approach of structurally changing the broader, root cause factors in society that give rise to terrorism (Table 1.1).[385] We also situated Byman's operational approaches for counterterrorism within our proposed policy perspectives. We identified four operational approaches consistent with the basic belief and preferred operational approach of the threat management perspective: (1) "targeting terrorist leaders," (2) "relying on allies to strike terrorist groups," (3) "containing the terrorist group," and (4) "negotiating with and/or conciliating terrorists." [386] [387] [388] [389] [390] We were also able to situate four other operational approaches consistent with the basic belief and preferred operational approach of our proposed structural change perspective: (1) "crushing terrorists across society through massive

[378] Stephen G. Walker (1990). The evolution of operational code analysis. *Political Psychology*, 403-418.

[379] Alexander L. George (1969). The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making. *International Studies Quarterly,13*(2), 190-222.

[380] See also Brim, O., Glass, D., Lavin, D., and Goodman, N. (1962). *Personality and Decision Processes: Studies in the Social Psychology of Thinking*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif.

[381] See also Holsti, O. (1977) The "operational code" as an approach to the analysis of belief systems. *Final Report to the National Science Foundation*, Grant SOC 75-15368, Duke University, Durham, NC.

[382] See also Holsti, O. (1970) The operational code approach to the study of political leaders: John Foster Dulles' philosophical and instrumental beliefs. *Canad. J. Polit. Sci.* 3: 123-157.

[383] Stephen G. Walker (1990). The evolution of operational code analysis. *Political Psychology*, 403-418.

[384] Schmid, Alex P. (ed.) Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness (The Hague, NL: ICCT Press) 2020.

[385] Ibid.

[386] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[387] See also Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, Stephanie Young, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Joe Hogler, and Christine Leah, What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013.

[388] See also Zahedzadeh, G. (2017). Containing Terrorism. *Journal of Strategic Security, 10*(2), 48-59.

[389] See also Stevenson, J. (2004). *Counterterrorism: Containment and beyond* (Adelphi papers; 367. 822386682). Oxford [etc.]: Oxford University Press.

[390] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

force," (2) "going after root causes of terrorism," (3) "delegitimating the group's cause," and (4) "improving societal defenses against terrorism."[391] [392] [393] [394] [395] [396] [397] [398]

We now have a basis from which to understand critical distinctions in the counterterrorism policy scholarship between the structural change and threat management perspectives. Consistent with George and Walker's scholarship, once we have this baseline of knowledge around "beliefs" for a particular policy domain and aligned operational approaches, we can now take the next step towards understanding "behavior" – how policymakers choose, make decisions, and act.

[391] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[392] See also Lum, Cynthia, Kennedy, Leslie W, & Sherley, Alison. (2006). Are counter-terrorism strategies effective? The results of the Campbell systematic review on counter-terrorism evaluation research. *Journal of Experimental Criminology, 2*(4), 489-516.

[393] Eatedali, A. (2011). *Counterterrorism Strategies*. Herndon: University of Nebraska Press.

[394] Herik, Schrijver, Herik, Larissa van den, & Schrijver, Nico. (2014). *Counter-terrorism strategies in a fragmented international legal order: Meeting the challenges*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[395] See also Sandler, T. (2014). Terrorism and counterterrorism: An overview. *Oxford Economic Papers, 67*(1), 1-20.

[396] Lehrke, Jesse Paul, & Schomaker, Rahel. (2016). Kill, Capture, or Defend? The Effectiveness of Specific and General Counterterrorism Tactics Against the Global Threats of the Post-9/11 Era. *Security Studies, 25*(4), 729-762.

[397] Perliger, A. (2012). How Democracies Respond to Terrorism: Regime Characteristics, Symbolic Power and Counterterrorism. *Security Studies, 21*(3), 490-528.

[398] See also Byman, Daniel, & McCants, Will. (2017). Fight or Flight: How to Avoid a Forever War against Jihadists. *The Washington Quarterly,40*(2), 67-77.

4 DECISIONMAKING DURING CRISIS

In Chapter 3, we gained an understanding of the core components of policymakers' perspectives in relation to counterterrorism. We learned that our suggested typology for policy perspectives of counterterrorism – the threat management perspective and the structural change perspective – each have a distinct basic belief and preferred operational approach. George and Walker tell us that once basic beliefs and preferred operational approaches are understood, we can begin the process of contemplating how policymakers make decisions.[399] [400] Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to place our suggested policy perspectives for counterterrorism in the context of policymaker decisionmaking styles.

Through this review, we will outline a second, critical typology – one that will organize our understanding of policymaker decisionmaking during crisis. Crisis is a relevant context to contemplate counterterrorism policy given the ambiguity, violence, and uncertainty terrorism can engender.[401] Indeed, as Bruce Hoffman stated in his widely accepted definition of terrorism: "…terrorism is…violent – or, equally important, threatens violence; designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target…"[402] Hoffman's definition implies a connection between terrorism and crisis, uncertainty, and trauma.

Rosenthal et al. defined crisis as "when a group of people, an organization, a community, or a society perceives a threat to shared values or life-sustaining systems that demand an urgent response under conditions of deep uncertainty."[403] Rosenthal and Kouzmin noted that "modern society is susceptible to crisis events, if for no other reason than the complexity of society today."[404] Likewise, Ansell and Boin suggested that "we live in an era of black swans and mega-crises" that put leaders and their institutions to the test.[405] [406] The attacks of September 11th 2001 are among the most emblematic of decisionmaking during crisis.

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[399] Alexander L. George (1969). The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making. *International Studies Quarterly,13*(2), 190-222.

[400] Stephen G. Walker (1990). The evolution of operational code analysis. *Political Psychology*, 403-418.

[401] Hoffman, Bruce. (2017). *Inside terrorism* (Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare). Columbia University Press.

[402] Ibid.

[403] Rosenthal, U., Charles, M. T., & 't Hart, P. (Eds.). (1989). *Coping with crises*.
Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

[404] Rosenthal, U., & Kouzmin, A. (1997). Crises and crisis management: Toward comprehensive government decision making. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 7(2), 277-304.

[405] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

[406] See also Tarrant, M. (2010). The organization: Risk, resilience and governance. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management, 25*(2), 13-17.

4.1 Crisis and Decisonmaking

Ansell and Boin state there are two major types of crises to consider. First, there are "black swan" events – what Ansell and Boin refer to as "unknown unknowns."[407] The second are more "routine" crises – what Ansell and Boin describe as "known unknowns." Given that "known unknowns" are more expected or anticipated, data and information can be gathered beforehand and over time, providing a general understanding of how a crisis could be managed before the event happens. Examples in this respect include events such as floods, fires, or hurricanes. Non-routine or unexpected crises – "unknown unknowns" – are much more difficult to plan and prepare for because both the timing as well as the nature of the crisis itself are unknown. This distinction suggests each type of crisis has different levels of uncertainty given the relative surprise associated with the crisis event itself and known versus unknown information about the crisis.[408] [409] [410] [411] [412] [413] [414] Therefore, to understand how policymakers make decisions during crisis, we must consider how they contemplate uncertainty, which can be first understood through their mode of thinking during crisis.[415] [416]

4.1.1 Modes of Thinking During Crisis

Ansell and Boin are among the leading scholars who study modes of thinking during crisis.[417] They suggested two modes of thinking: intuitive and pragmatic. Intuitive thinking tends to be focused on having a definitive view of the crisis based on observed information and

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[407] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.
[408] Ibid.
[409] Clarke, L. (1999). *Mission improbable: Using fantasy documents to tame disaster*.
Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
[410] Milstein, B. (2015). Thinking politically about crisis: A pragmatist perspective. *European Journal of Political Theory, 14*(2), 141-160.
[411] See also Cordero, Rodrigo, Mascareño, Aldo, & Chernilo, Daniel. (2017). On the reflexivity of crises. *European Journal of Social Theory, 20*(4), 511-530.
[412] Winner, Langdon. 1972 "On Criticizing Technology." *Public Policy* 20:35-59.
[413] Taylor, J. Serge. 1975 "Organizational Complexity in the New Industrial State: The Role of Technology." In Todd R. La Porte, ed. *Organized • Social Complexity: Challenge to Politics and Policy.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
[414] Lagadec, Patrick. 1988 "*Major Technological Risk: An Assessment of Industrial Disasters.*" New York: Pergamon Press.
[415] Beck, U., & Ritter, M. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity* (Theory, culture & society 065778391). London [etc.]: Sage.
[416] Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Macmillan.
[417] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

"scenario-oriented logic" often with the objective of "taming uncertainty."[418] [419] [420] On the other hand, pragmatic thinkers embrace the uncertainty of crisis, according to Ansell and Boin.[421] Pragmatic thinkers believe uncertainty is something to manage rather than to "dispel and conquer." Ansell and Boin explained that pragmatic thinkers make decisions based on a "few core principles" and "continuous revision that diagnoses the nature of the crisis over time through an iterative learning process."[422] Moreover, pragmatists do not start with a mental picture of the situation and then act. Rather, pragmatic thinkers often tend to "learn what their goals are by trying to do things…[acting] their way into an understanding of their environment."[423] [424]

Intuitive thinkers tend to base their judgments on pre-established knowledge, whereas pragmatic thinkers tend to embrace ambiguity to understand the nature of the problem or crisis in a more deep, nuanced, and interdependent way. Accordingly, when it comes to decisionmaking, intuitive thinkers make immediate, definitive judgments during crisis, which provides a "semi-complete" understanding of the situation.[425] [426] Intuitive thinkers tend to make such judgments based on past associations or experiences, which can make intuitive thinker appear more decisive.[427] Pragmatic thinkers, on the other hand, recognize the ambiguity of crisis and make decisions by taking action and learning. Pragmatic thinkers embrace uncertainty and treat everything they discern or uncover about the crisis as a hypothesis that must be iteratively tested and validated through a continuous learning

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[418] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

[419] See also Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Macmillan.

[420] See also Badke-Schaub, P. & Eris, O. 2014 A theoretical approach to intuition in design: Does design methodology need to account for unconscious processes? In *An Anthology of Theories and Models of Design* (ed. Chakrabarti, A. & Blessing, L. T. M.), pp. 353–370. Springer.

[421] See also Boin, Arjen, 't Hart, Paul, Stern, Eric, & Sundelius, Bengt. (2005). *The Politics of Crisis Management*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[422] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

[423] Joas, H. (1996). *The creativity of action*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

[424] Weick, K. E. (1979). *The social psychology of organizing* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

[425] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[426] Taura and Gagai tell us experiential intuition can be employed to discern patterns of experience from the past, and associative intuition integrates various experiences into a whole picture that can be used to understand a problem.

[427] Taura, T. and Nagai, Y. 2017 Creativity in innovation design: the roles of intuition, synthesis, and hypothesis. *International Journal of Design Creativity and Innovation* 5 (3–4), 131–148.

process.[428] [429] [430] [431] [432] [433] [434] [435] [436] Although pragmatic thinkers tend to take more time to make decisions, such thinking holds the promise for understanding the true nature of the problem over time.[437] [438] [439] [440] [441]

We will now build from these modes of thinking to understand how a policymaker may make decisions during crisis. To better understand policymaker decisionmaking tendencies, we will review a parallel concept known as "need for closure."

4.1.2 "Need for Closure" During Crisis

Need for closure has to do with the way people "believe, form impressions, and create categories in order to feel sure and avoid ambiguity" and can be related to the "existential anxiety" individuals experience during crisis.[442] 9/11 presented existential images of mass murder – from large passenger planes flying into buildings, to people jumping or falling to their deaths, to the enflamed World Trade Center towers collapsing.[443] These images broadcast live across the world created what Dechesne and Kruglanski describe as "an age of existential

[428] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

[429] Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Macmillan.

[430] See also Lagadec, P. (1997). Learning Processes for Crisis Management in Complex Organizations. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 5*(1), 24-31.

[431] Milstein, B. (2015). Thinking politically about crisis: A pragmatist perspective. *European Journal of Political Theory, 14*(2), 141-160.

[432] See also Lagadec, P. (1997). Learning Processes for Crisis Management in Complex Organizations. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 5*(1), 24-31.

[433] See also Hogan, John, & Feeney, Sharon. (2012). Crisis and Policy Change: The Role of the Political Entrepreneur. *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy, 3*(2), 1-24.

[434] See also Rosenthal, Uriel, & Pijnenburg, Bert. (1990). Simulation-oriented scenarios. *Contemporary Crises, 14*(4), 277-283.

[435] See also Cordero R (2014) Crisis and critique in Ju¨rgen Habermas's social theory. European Journal of Social Theory 17(4): 497–515

[436] But see Mascaren͂o A, Goles E and Ruz G (2016) Crisis in complex social systems: a social theory view illustrated with the Chilean case. Complexity. DOI: 10.1002/cplx.21778.

[437] Darley, J. (1998). Trust in Organizations: Frontiers of Theory and Research. *Business Ethics Quarterly, 8*(2), 319-335.

[438] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

[439] See also West, C. (1989). *The American Evasion of Philosophy*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

[440] See also Carstensen, M. B. (2017). Institutional bricolage in times of crisis. *European Political Science Review, 9*(1), 139-160.

[441] See also Ansell, Christopher, & Bartenberger, Martin. (2020). Pragmatism and political crisis management—Principle and practical rationality during the financial crisis. *European Policy Analysis, 6*(1), 119.

[442] Dechesne, M., and Kruglanski, A. W. (2004). Terror's Epistemic Consequences: Existential Threat and the Quest for Certainty and Closure.

[443] Engel and Loanes, Ellen. "What Happened on 9/11, 19 Years Ago," *Business Insider*, September 10, 2020.

anxiety," which "mobilized defense responses."[444] [445] [446] 9/11 is, unfortunately, not unique in inducing "existential anxiety" and uncertainty. Across the globe, tragic events including genocide, war, famine, chemical weapons, and the COVID-19 pandemic "imbue everyday experiences with existential uncertainty."[447] It is within this context of the ongoing and daily experience of crisis that the public's handling of "existential anxiety" and uncertainty can be described along a continuum with two poles: high need for closure versus low need for closure.[448]

Kruglanski and Webster described need for closure as a "desire for a firm answer to a question and an aversion toward ambiguity" particularly during crisis.[449] [450] High need for closure individuals have less comfort during times of crisis due to the uncertainty and ambiguity it entails whereas low need for closure individuals tend to have more comfort with crisis because, for them, the crisis provides an opportunity for insight and growth.

The key distinction between high need for closure and low need for closure is how knowledge is used to make decisions.[451] Kruglanksi and Webster explained that individuals with a high need for closure are likely to make early judgments by "seizing " on early information or clues.[452] The individual may then "freeze" on such information to "maintain [closure] for as long as possible."[453] [454] The process of seizing and freezing can catalyze "impression formation, stereotyping, attribution, persuasion, group decisionmaking, communication, and language use

[444] Dechesne, M., and Kruglanski, A. W. (2004). Terror's Epistemic Consequences: Existential Threat and the Quest for Certainty and Closure.

[445] Van den Bos, K. (2001). Uncertainty management: the influence of uncertainty salience on reactions to perceived procedural fairness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *80*(6), 931.

[446] McGregor, I., Zanna, M. P., Holmes, J. G., & Spencer, S. J. (2001). Compensatory conviction in the face of personal uncertainty: going to extremes and being oneself. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *80*(3), 472.

[447] Dechesne, M., and Kruglanski, A. W. (2004). Terror's Epistemic Consequences: Existential Threat and the Quest for Certainty and Closure.

[448] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[449] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[450] But see Houghton, David C, & Grewal, Rajdeep. (2000). Please, let's get an answer—any answer: Need for consumer cognitive closure. *Psychology & Marketing, 17*(11), 911-934.

[451] Dechesne, M., and Kruglanski, A. W. (2004). Terror's Epistemic Consequences: Existential Threat and the Quest for Certainty and Closure.

[452] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[453] Ibid.

[454] See also Webster, Donna M, & Kruglanski, Arie W. (1997). Cognitive and Social Consequences of the Need for Cognitive Closure. *European Review of Social Psychology,8*(1), 133-173.

in intergroup contexts."[455] [456] [457] [458] [459] Seizing and freezing leads to, as Kruglanski and Webster explained, a consideration of fewer hypotheses:

> "Because of the tendency to seize on early information and immediately freeze, [individuals] under a heightened need for closure may process less information before committing to a judgment and generate fewer competing hypotheses to account for available data. Paradoxically, they may feel more assured of those judgments even though they are less grounded in thorough exploration."[460] [461] [462] [463]

Kruglanski and Webster's work demonstrates that the cognitive process of seizing and freezing is instrumental to ambiguity avoidance and the quest certainty discussed earlier.[464] [465]

We suggest that intuitive thinkers align with high need for closure decisionmaking. They rely, or "freeze," on existing knowledge regarding how to deal with a crisis and stick to this knowledge while avoiding ambiguity and minimizing uncertainty. The pragmatic thinker, on the other hand, aligns with low need for closure decisionmaking. They "experiment" at a time of crisis, learning about new possibilities, while accepting ambiguity and being open to uncertainty.

In summary, we identified through the literature two distinct modes of thinking that policymakers can have during crisis. The first is the intuitive thinking. We suggested intuitive thinking is aligned with a high need for closure, which manifests through a "seizing and

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[455] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[456] See also to understand early-cueing and knowledge forming during crisis. Miller, Andrea, & Goidel, Robert. (2009). News Organizations and Information Gathering During a Natural Disaster: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 17*(4), 266-273.

[457] See also to understand the role of non-rational influences in the public policymaking process. Costello, T. W. (1970). Psychological Aspects: The Soft Side of Policy Formation. *Policy Sciences, 1*(2), 161-168.

[458] See also Sturges, D. L. (1994). Communicating through Crisis. *Management Communication Quarterly, 7*(3), 297-316.

[459] See also to understand dynamics between the leader and group that is being led during high need for closure periods. Pierro, Antonio, Cicero, Lavinia, Bonaiuto, Marino, Van Knippenberg, Daan, & Kruglanski, Arie W. (2005). Leader group prototypicality and leadership effectiveness: The moderating role of need for cognitive closure. *The Leadership Quarterly, 16*(4), 503-516.

[460] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[461] But see the following to understand how complex solutions can be formed during conditions of heightened need for closure. Hiel, Alain van, & Mervielde, Ivan. (2003). The Need for Closure and the Spontaneous Use of Complex and Simple Cognitive Structures. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 143*(5), 559-568.

[462] See also Orehek, Edward, Fishman, Shira, Dechesne, Mark, Doosje, Bertjan, Kruglanski, Arie W, Cole, Angela P, Jackson, Tarra. (2010). Need for Closure and the Social Response to Terrorism. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 32*(4), 279-290.

[463] See also Wildavsky, A. (1988), Searching for Safety, New Brunswick, CT: Transaction Books.

[464] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[465] Dechesne, M., and Kruglanski, A. W. (2004). Terror's Epistemic Consequences: Existential Threat and the Quest for Certainty and Closure.

freezing" decisionmaking tendency in which policymakers "seize" on existing and early information or clues – thereby "attaining closure as soon as possible" – and then "freeze" on such information or clues and their preferred operational approach in order to "maintain [closure] for as long as possible."[466] [467] [468] [469] The second is pragmatic thinking, which we suggested was aligned with a low need for closure in which policymakers reserve judgment about a crisis.[470] Pragmatic thinkers embrace the ambiguity of a situation and treat all information as hypotheses that need to be validated over time. Pragmatic thinkers learn by taking action through a process of iterative hypothesis testing.[471] Table 1.2 (below) outlines these elements – mode of thinking, need for closure, and decisionmaking tendency. We propose that these three elements, taken together, can create two, distinct decisionmaking styles for a policymaker.

	Decisionmaking Style 1	Decisionmaking Style 2
Mode of thinking	Intuitive	Pragmatic
Need for closure	High	Low
Decisionmaking Tendency	"Seizing and freezing"	"Learning through action"

Table 1.2

4.1.3   An Integrated Framework for Analysis

The reviews across Chapters 3 and 4 suggest to us that understanding the policymaker's perspective with respect to a particular problem or crisis is critical because it serves as the starting point for understanding how their mode of thinking unfolds – with the intuitive thinker immediately seizing on previously established or early information that aligns with his/her policy perspective and pragmatic thinkers utilizing their perspective as a launch point to learn more about the true nature of the crisis through an iterative, learning process. We suggest integrating these decionmaking styles (outlined in Table 1.2) and the policy perspectives outlined in Chapter 3 to create a framework of policymaker profiles. Such a framework enables us to gain a more contextualized understanding of how policymakers move from beliefs to behavior. We will now outline four profiles of a policymaker.

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[466] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[467] But see Houghton, David C, & Grewal, Rajdeep. (2000). Please, let's get an answer—any answer: Need for consumer cognitive closure. *Psychology & Marketing, 17*(11), 911-934.

[468] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[469] See also Webster, Donna M, & Kruglanski, Arie W. (1997). Cognitive and Social Consequences of the Need for Cognitive Closure. *European Review of Social Psychology,8*(1), 133-173.

[470] See also Boin, Arjen, 't Hart, Paul, Stern, Eric, & Sundelius, Bengt. (2005). *The Politics of Crisis Management*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[471] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

4.2   Developing Policy Profiles

In Chapter 3, we identified two distinct perspectives of the policymaker. The first was the threat management perspective that included a basic belief that the threat must be managed through addressing the terrorist group itself. The second was the structural change perspective that included a basic belief that the threat of terrorism must be removed through addressing the broader societal issues that give rise to terrorism. In Chapter 4, we reviewed the decisionmaking styles of the policymaker. We found that policymakers can have two distinct modes of thinking during crisis. The first is the intuitive thinker who has a high aversion to ambiguity, which aligns with high need for closure, suggesting a seizing and freezing decisionmaking tendency in which policymakers "seize" on early information or clues, thereby "attaining closure as soon as possible," and then "freeze" on such information or clues and their preferred operational approach in order to "maintain [closure] for as long as possible."[472] [473] [474] [475] The second is the pragmatic thinker who has a low aversion to ambiguity, which aligns with low need for closure in which policymakers reserve judgment with respect to the problem or crisis and attempt to understand its true nature through a process of learning by taking action.[476] [477] [478] When we integrate the policy perspectives of a policymaker (Table 1.1) with decisionmaking styles (Table 1.2) into a new 2x2 matrix, we create a contextualized frame for understanding how policymakers move from beliefs to behavior.[479] We will name this framework the Policy Profile Code (PPC).

We propose the PPC as a framework for understanding counterterrorism policy. Employing frames to understand counterterrorism comes with distinct advantages. According to Cukier and colleagues "humans think, contemplate, and engage in the world around them using mental models."[480] Mental models or frameworks can facilitate order and enable humans

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[472] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[473] But see Houghton, David C, & Grewal, Rajdeep. (2000). Please, let's get an answer—any answer: Need for consumer cognitive closure. *Psychology & Marketing, 17*(11), 911-934.

[474] Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna Webster, "Motivated Closing of the Mind: 'Seizing' and 'Freezing,'" *Psychology Review*, 1996, Vol. 103, No. 2, 263-283.

[475] See also Webster, Donna M, & Kruglanski, Arie W. (1997). Cognitive and Social Consequences of the Need for Cognitive Closure. *European Review of Social Psychology,8*(1), 133-173.

[476] Alba-Juez, Laura. (2021). Fast and slow thinking as secret agents behind speakers' (un)conscious pragmatic decisions and judgements. *Journal of Pragmatics, 179*, 70-76.

[477] See also Boin, Arjen, 't Hart, Paul, Stern, Eric, & Sundelius, Bengt. (2005). *The Politics of Crisis Management*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[478] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

[479] Such a frame also integrates the instrumental and expressive components of counterterrorism, as discussed in Chapter 2.

[480] Cukier, K., Mayer-Schönberger, V., & de Véricourt, F. (2022). *Framers: Human advantage in an age of technology and turmoil*. Penguin.

to focus on what they believe to be "the most essential and ignore the non-essential." Frames focus human thinking because they "allow us to discern the most salient elements we want to focus on." Frameworks are also "cognitive short-cuts that shape the mental space in which we decide and make it easier and faster to understand and identify options" and "simplify, fortify, and amplify how we conceive the world so we can act in it." Most critically, frames can provide a foundational understanding of the "options considered, the actions taken, and the outcomes achieved" – the what, how, and why of decisionmaking. Through frameworks, we can make normative judgments regarding decisionmaking, determining whether the frame was good or bad by analyzing what was considered – and what was not – leading to a more detailed evaluation of how the actor understood the context within which he/she was operating.

Frameworks can also enable humans to "learn from individual case studies and come up with generalized rules or understandings that can be applied to new situations or contexts."[481] They support, as Cukier et al. suggest, the human ability to "envision new realities in which there is no data or experience to draw from."[482] With the ability to envision new possibilities through frameworks, people can "solve problems that may have been believed to be unsolvable – thereby progressing humanity."

Therefore, by providing specific frames for counterterrorism policy, the PPC enables us to understand the policy options considered and the decisionmaking approach a of policymaker. Each profile can be understood in greater depth through the policymaker's decisionmaking tendencies and preferred operational approaches. Through integrating policy perspective with modes of thinking, we suggest four distinct policy profiles.

As we reflected on the components of each policy profile, we were confronted with how to relate the essential nature of each profile frame. We chose to label each profile through a metaphorical framing, as reflected in Table 1.3 below. We suggest the following metaphors for each profile: *The Commander, The Doctor, The Prosecutor, The Negotiator*.[483] Each of these profiles represent ways of framing counterterrorism policy. They allow us to relate the underlying factors of each profile as well as the possibilities for counterterrorism policy through the frame that the policymaker chose.

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[481] Ibid.

[482] Ibid.

[483] The idea of employing metaphors to frame counterterrorism was informed by Kruglanski et al.'s metaphors for counterterrorism. In their scholarship, they discussed war, law enforcement, epidemiological, and prejudice reduction metaphors. While there are similarities between Kruglanski et al.'s metaphors and our suggested PPC metaphors, the PPC metaphors are different because they are intended to explain profiles of a policymaker rather than counterterrorism from a purely psychological perspective. See Kruglanski, Crenshaw, Post, Victoroff, Jeff. "What Should This Fight Be Called?: Metaphors of Counterterrorism and their Implications," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*," December 1, 2007.

	Intuitive Mode of Thinking	Pragmatic Mode of Thinking
Structural Change Perspective	**Profile 1: "The Commander"** **Decisionmaking Tendency:** • Seize & Freeze. **Preferred Approaches:** • Crushing terrorists' organizations. • Going after root causes of terrorism.	**Profile 2: "The Doctor"** **Decisionmaking Tendency:** • Learning. **Preferred Approaches:** • Delegitimizing terrorists. • Improving societal defenses and resiliency.
Threat Management Perspective	**Profile 3: "The Prosecutor"** **Decisionmaking Tendency:** • Seize & Freeze. **Preferred Approaches:** • Targeting terrorist leaders. • Allies targeting terrorists.	**Profile 4: "The Negotiator"** **Decisionmaking Tendency:** • Learning. **Preferred Approach:** • Conciliating / negotiating with terrorists. • Containing terrorists.

Table 1.3

While these frames may suggest leader-based policy profiles, the elements of the profiles – from basic belief, to operational approaches, to intuitive versus pragmatic decisionmaking – allow us to contemplate the policymaker not only as an agent but also as an actor within a broader system that requires considerations of the type of operational approaches available within the government, for example, and/or the outside of government, broader contextual features of a crisis and how such factors would be handled within different modes of thinking. In short, the PPC framework is not exclusively a leader-based, top-down approach to understanding counterterrorism policymaking – but rather, it is a tool that would enable the analyst to understand both the agent as well as the system dimensions of policymaking, as discussed in Chapter 2. We suggest we can employ this framework to both categorize policymakers as well as normatively evaluate policymakers' approaches to counterterrorism within a policy system in relation to the idealized, theoretical context that the PPC framework is built on (as per the scholarship in Chapters 2, 3, and 4). We will now describe each profile.[484]

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[484] Arie W. Kruglanski, Martha Crenshaw, Jerrold M. Post, Jeff Victoroff, "What Should This Fight Be Called?: Metaphors of Counterterrorism and their Implications," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*," December 1, 2007. Through Kruglanski et al.'s work, we recognized the value of ascribing metaphors to counterterrorism policy approaches.

4.2.1 Profile 1: "The Commander"

The literature suggested through the review in Chapter 3 that the structural changer holds the basic belief that the terrorist threat must be removed through addressing the broader societal factors that give rise to terrorism. A structural changer can have an intuitive mode of thinking and, thereby, relies on established or known knowledge to avert ambiguity and achieve closure with respect to a problem or crisis. This leads the policymaker towards seizing and freezing on established knowledge, which may be a semi-complete understanding of the problem.[485] [486] Accordingly, we suggest this perspective-decisionmaking intersection aligns with a focus on removing terrorism through a firm viewpoint with respect to what terrorism is and is not. This also suggests an all-encompassing approach to counterterrorism that aligns with sub-set of operational approaches for counterterrorism from Daniel Byman's analysis, including "crushing terrorists" and "going after the root causes of terrorism."[487] One might think of this set of characteristics, ranging from a from a broad perspective to a strong sense of urgency and a vision of a zero-sum competition, as belonging to someone who is seeking command of the situation.[488] In this respect, we think of the decisionmaking profile 1 as that of a "commander."

4.2.2 Profile 2: "The Doctor"

The structural changer can also have a pragmatic mode of thinking. This type of structural changer recognizes the limitations of his/her knowledge with respect to removing terrorism and the factors giving rise to terrorism. This leads the structural changer towards a pragmatic decisionmaking style focused on iterative learning through experimentation. Such a perspective-decisionmaking approach can be operationalized through a comprehensive consideration of the information at hand and a continuous and iterative learning process around the factors that are driving terrorism. We suggest this approach is consistent with Byman's counterterrorism operational approaches of "improving societal defenses and resiliency" and "delegitimizing terrorist groups' causes."[489] One might think of these characteristics of considering the whole of the system while diagnosing the specific nature of

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[485] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.
[486] Arie W. Kruglanski, Martha Crenshaw, Jerrold M. Post, Jeff Victoroff, "What Should This Fight Be Called?: Metaphors of Counterterrorism and their Implications," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*," December 1, 2007.
[487] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.
[488] Arie W. Kruglanski, Martha Crenshaw, Jerrold M. Post, Jeff Victoroff, "What Should This Fight Be Called?: Metaphors of Counterterrorism and their Implications," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*," December 1, 2007. Through Kruglanski et al.'s work, we recognized the value of ascribing metaphors to counterterrorism policy approaches.
[489] Ibid.

the problem as someone trying to ensure a healthy system. In this respect, we think of the decionmaking profile 2 as that of a "doctor."

4.2.3   Profile 3: "The Prosecutor"

Moving the to the threat management perspective, we discovered through the review in Chapter 3 that the threat manager has a basic belief that terrorism must be managed through focusing on the terrorist group itself. If a threat manger has an intuitive mode of thinking, the policymaker would "seize and freeze" on established knowledge with respect to operational approaches that exclusively focus on the terrorist group. We suggest this perspective-decionmaking intersection would lead to operational approaches consistent with Byman's analysis of counterterrorism that continuously "target terrorist leaders."[490] One might think of these characteristics of directly focusing on the perpetrators of the violence as akin to law enforcement pursuing a criminal. In this respect, we think of profile 3 as that of a "prosecutor."

4.2.4   Profile 4: "The Negotiator"

Finally, we can also discern a fourth policy profile in which a threat manager recognizes the limitations of his/her knowledge with respect to the terrorism and, thereby, has a pragmatic mode of thinking that is focused on experimentation and iteratively learning through action. This perspective-decionmaking combination suggests a policymaker would be focused on understanding the terrorist groups' interests and objectives to achieve an understanding between the sides and a mutually agreeable solution.[491] One might think of these characteristics as akin to a negotiation in which each side must learn about the other side's objectives and engage in a back-and-forth dialogue to settle the dispute. In this respect, we think of profile 4 as that of a "negotiator."

4.3   From Literature Review to Methodology

Returning to where we began our overall review in Chapter 2, we investigated the definition of terrorism to understand the core elements that counterterrorism should be designed to address. We found through the review in Chapter 2 that counterterrorism should have both instrumental and expressive features in the idealized context and that policymaking has agent and system dimensions. Through the perspective-decionmaking profiles we developed across Chapters 3 and 4, we aligned metaphorical understandings for counterterrorism through each profile we proposed. The purpose of this was to ensure that each profile frame in the PPC provided a distinct understanding of the courses of action

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[490] Ibid.

[491] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

policymakers could choose to address terrorism as well as the how counterterrorism is interacted with the anxiety and need for closure in public – thereby integrating the essential instrumental and expressive components of counterterrorism that we reviewed in Chapter 2. We suggest the PPC would allow us to understand how policymakers act in different metaphorical ways. But before proceeding with the case study analysis in Chapters 6 - 10, we will first outline the methodology for the analysis.

5 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed understanding of the methodology for analysis in the subsequent case study chapters – Chapters 6 - 10. The literature reviews on policy perspective for counterterrorism and decisionmaking in Chapters 3 – 4 enabled us to build a framework for analysis based on the theory. This framework, which we termed the PPC in Chapter 4, will serve as the central lens to deductively analyze the case studies of US counterterrorism policy between 2001-2021. By applying the specific theoretical elements of the PPC to counterterrorism policy case studies of the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations, we will assess continuity or change in such policy based on whether and how the specific elements of the PPC continue or change over time.[492] This methodological approach will allow us to answer the central questions of this dissertation: (1) has there been continuity or change in post-9/11 US counterterrorism policy; (2) what factors led to the continuity or change; and (3) how do we classify any such change? We will proceed by outlining our philosophy and design for our research.

5.1   Research Philosophy

As discussed in Chapter 1, we do not have a common analytical understanding of how counterterrorism policy has evolved since 9/11. This problem puzzle presented in Chapter 1 is recognized not only by theoreticians but also practitioners. Based on the expert interviews the author conducted, practitioner and policymaking communities have observed a lack of systematic understanding of how US counterterrorism policy has evolved since 9/11. In fact, one of the interviewees, former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy, spoke to the specific need for such an analysis during our interview: "There has not been a comprehensive retrospective analysis of the 20-year period [since 9/11] for US counterterrorism policy."[493] This is significant for both the United States and the global community because if we do not have a common analytical framework and consistent basis from which to understand counterterrorism policy and its evolution (particularly following a catastrophic terrorism event like 9/11), we will surely fail to apply the learnings – both successes and failures – to future policy. Therefore, the

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[492] We will analyze five case studies of US presidential administration counterterrorism policies between 2001 – 2021: two terms of the Bush Administration, two terms of the Obama Administration, and one term of the Trump Administration.
[493] Interview with former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, March 25, 2020.

central theoretical purpose of this dissertation – to understand continuity and change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11 – directly aligns with a deep philosophical objective for not only the United States but also world. Accordingly, this dissertation will: (1) articulate an understanding of the trajectory of US counterterrorism policy since 9/11 to inform how policy is affected in relation to a significant event (the terrorist attacks on 9/11) and (2) propose new approach for answering questions of continuity and change in policymaking in order to push the frontier of ideas around policy analysis within the academy.

5.2   Research Design

The PPC, our central framework for the analysis, was built through a literature review of exemplar analytical approaches for policy analysis, policy perspectives of counterterrorism, and modes of thinking during crisis in Chapters 2 - 4. We employed a two-part criterion to identify relevant scholarly literature: (1) the distinctiveness or mutually exclusivity of the scholarly perspectives and (2) the prominence of the scholarly perspectives within the overall literature. Through the literature reviews, a framework for policy profiles was built in Chapter 4. This framework will be applied to analyze US counterterrorism policy across the five post-9/11 presidential administrations during the period of this study.[494]

Our analysis in the subsequent case study chapters (Chapters 6 - 10) will be conducted through a process tracing methodology. This academically accepted methodology involves tracing potential causal mechanisms through underlying processes and factors driving continuity or change to uncover and explain US counterterrorism policy. It is a powerful methodological approach for complex subjects such as policy, as Kay and Baker note:

> "Causal process tracing has emerged as an important method of causal inference in qualitative social science research, most notably in case study research designs…the methodological advantages casual process tracing offers in building and testing theories

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[494] As noted in Chapter 1, the intertwining of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency as a policy matter, as set forth by Kilcullen, suggested that to understand counterterrorism in the post-9/11 context, one must also contemplate counterinsurgency efforts such as in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. Kilcullen was an influential scholar for both General David Petraeus who oversaw all US counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts in the Middle East region and President George W. Bush who adopted this integrated approach as administration policy. But this integrated understanding of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency continued beyond Bush, to Obama in Afghanistan, and Trump in Syria with the re-taking of Raqqa supporting the Syrian Kurds. In each of these efforts, it was recognized that counterterrorism required the complementary effort of counterinsurgency to take back territory and defeat extra-judicial governmental structures that threatened the state. Therefore, we have determined that the US military efforts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria that included both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations as part of the overall strategy will be germane for the study of continuity and change in US counterterrorism policy for this dissertation.

of policy change, most notably in supporting a theoretical pluralism to address the problem of complexity in policy studies."[495]

Derek Beach notes three components of process tracing that should be considered:

"Process tracing as a method has three core components: theorization about casual mechanisms linking causes and outcomes, the analysis of the observable empirical manifestations of theorized mechanisms, and questions of case selection and generalization."[496]

We will discuss these three core components and how we will handle them in the next section.

5.2.1 Theorization about Casual Mechanisms

In Chapters 3 – 4, we reviewed the theoretical mechanisms that may be responsible for the "causes and outcomes," as Beach suggests, for policy perspective and decisionmaking. These reviews provided us specific elements that are key factors for policy perspective and decisionmaking: (1) basic belief, (2) mode of thinking, and (3) preferred operational approach. We chose to integrate these elements into the PPC because they were the key features identified in the literature in Chapters 3 and 4 for understanding policy perspective for counterterrorism and mode of thinking during crisis. Together, policy perspective and mode of thinking reflect the ideational elements that prescribe a counterterrorism policy and the decisionmaking considerations that describe the counterterrorism policy ultimately chosen during the policymaking process. We integrated these three elements into a 2x2 framework for analysis, which we termed the PPC (discussed in Chapter 4). This leads us to Beach's second component for process tracing.

5.2.2 Analysis of the Observable Empirical Manifestations of Theorized Mechanisms

Given the theoretical elements of the PPC discussed in Chapter 4, we chose to trace those defined elements of the PPC (policy perspective, mode of thinking, and preferred operational approach) through the various observable manifestations within the presidential case studies.[497] This suggests a multifaceted approach to the analysis. This is one of the main reasons we chose process tracing. It enables us to integrate the top-down, bottom-up, and cross-cutting evidence into our research – thereby providing both a realistic and holistic understanding of US counterterrorism policy. More specifically, we will contemplate the presidential administration case studies through the PPC's modes of thinking during crisis, which tend to be top-down in nature. We will also analyze such case studies through basic

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[495] Kay, A. and Baker, P. (2015). What can causal process tracing offer to policy studies? A review of the literature. *Policy Studies Journal*, *43*(1), 1-21.

[496] Beach, D. (2017). Process tracing methods in the social sciences. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of politics*.

[497] These three elements represent the idealized, theoretical frame for policymaking that we identified and developed into a framework based on the literature reviews in Chapters 3 - 4.

belief and preferred operational approach, which has top-down, bottom-up, and cross-cutting elements. Therefore, our research design will include evidence at all levels of analysis – policy, strategy, operational, and tactical – again reflecting the top-down, bottom-up, and cross-cutting nature of our research.

The evidence we will look to for this multi-level analysis will include administration strategy documents for top-down perspective, interviews with counterterrorism professionals at the operational and tactical levels for bottom-up factors, and statements from congressional leaders, journalistic reporting, think tanks and other research center reports, as well as the sentiment of the American public through polling to capture the cross-cutting factors of the analysis. Through process tracing, we can combine multiple sources of evidence including primary source content, interviews, policy documents, and historical accounts.

Accordingly, we will integrate contemporaneous information and retrospective insights from those who participated in the formulation and execution of US counterterrorism policy during each administration in order to inform the process tracing and analysis: (1) content analysis of key US national strategy documents from each presidential administration, including national security strategies, national defense strategies, national military strategies, and national strategies for counterterrorism / combating terrorism and (2) interviews with key stakeholders from across the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations (in the next two sections, we will discuss how and why we chose these strategy documents and expert interviewees to inform the analysis). In doing so, our research reflects the similarly cross-cutting and complex nature of both counterterrorism and policymaking as phenomena, as discussed in Chapter 2.

5.2.3   Questions of Case Selection and Generalization

The cases we selected for this study directly aligned with the 20-year period chosen for the overall study of continuity and change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11. As discussed in Chapter 1, the time period we chose for this study was September 11, 2001 through January 20, 2021 – an approximately 20-year period – because these dates represent strategic inflection points in US counterterrorism policy: (1) September 11th 2001 represents al-Qaeda's terrorist attack on the US homeland, the deadliest terrorist attack in US history, which led to strategic changes in US counterterrorism policy and (2) the end of the Trump Administration, which was marked by the most significant strategic pivot in US national security policy since 9/11 – a change from jihadist terrorism to inter-state competition as the primary, strategic focus for US national security, which was explicitly articulated in the Trump administration's National Defense Strategy: "Inter-state strategic competition, ***not terrorism***, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security."[498] Even as terrorism evolved throughout

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[498] "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, January 2018; available from https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf.

this 20-year period, to include the rise of right-wing and other forms of terrorism, as also noted in Chapter 1, we chose to bound our analysis to jihadist terrorism. This decision was based on the fact that jihadist terrorism remained the central focus for US counterterrorism policy in all US national strategy documents of the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations throughout the 20-year period of the study.

The generalizability of such an analysis may have limitations given there are likely to be intervening variables that are idiosyncratic to the specific case studies chosen. We will discuss these and other limitations of our study in a later section in this chapter. Even as the case selection may have limitation in terms of generalizability, we designed our study more so to achieve comparability across the case studies. That was the most important choice in the research design because we determined it would have a direct impact on our ability to assess continuity and change of US counterterrorism policy over time. By designing a common, consistent framework for the analysis, this allows us to assess and understand the specific factors of continuity or change across the time period of study – thereby privileging comparability over generalizability of the cases selected.

5.2.4   Normative Assessments

Process tracing will help us uncover the sequences of events, actions, and decisions that led to specific counterterrorism policies during each presidential administration case study. Our research approach, therefore, is qualitative to integrate as much information regarding events, actions, and decisions as possible and deductive in nature to facilitate our ability to identify the factors driving continuity or change in relation to the idealized context of the PPC. We chose this approach because it will enable us to discern the factors driving counterterrorism policy in relation to the idealized context. This approach will also allow us to make normative judgments with respect to the decisionmaking of presidential administrations and the policies chosen by each administration within the post-9/11 context.

Given the complexity of the phenomena of counterterrorism and policymaking, we decided it required a structured framework and systematic approach of process tracing the same, core elements across all presidential administration case studies in order to integrate the top-down and bottom-up elements of the counterterrorism policymaking phenomenon, but also the greatest amount of cross-cutting information. To achieve these cross- cutting insights, we will also conducted a content analysis of all national strategy documents (written by the bureaucracy) and expert interviews (from individuals involved in US counterterrorism at all levels of analysis – policy, strategy, operational, and tactical), which we will include in our case study analyses of five US presidential administrations.

5.3 Content Analysis of National Strategy Documents

The content analysis for this dissertation includes all major US national strategy documents – 14 documents in all – across the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations, which, as noted earlier, include national security strategies, national defense strategies, national military strategies, and national strategies for counterterrorism / combating terrorism. All such strategy documents are unclassified and publicly available. These documents were chosen because every presidential administration in this study published such documents, which, once again, enables comparability across presidential case studies. These documents are also critical for understanding US counterterrorism policy because they outline and guide the overall US national security apparatus by providing the key policy and strategy objectives for the United States, to include counterterrorism, as well as the specific ways and means to carry out such objectives. The analysis of these national strategy documents will be integrated to the PPC analysis in Chapters 6 - 10 to inform the factors of continuity or change along the specific elements of the PPC – basic belief, mode of thinking, and preferred operational approach.

5.3.1 Content Analysis Method

Conducting a content analysis of all national strategy documents across the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations was not a small undertaking and required a consistent approach for extracting information. The criteria we employed to code the documents was drawn from C.J. Bennett's framework for policy. Policy is, in Bennett's view, an evolutionary phenomenon that occurs through a contemplation of what came before, what the current situation demands, and what is envisioned to come after.[499] Bennett provides a unique perspective on continuity or change in policy because he is one of the few scholars who developed a specific taxonomy for assessing it, which includes: policy goals, policy content, policy instruments, policy outcomes, and policy style. We applied the Bennett's taxonomy as criteria for extracting key content from all national strategy documents across the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations described in this section. Bennett's taxonomy facilitated comparability of stated policies and strategy across presidential administrations. We will employ this evidence to inform the process tracing of the PPC in the case studies (Chapters 6 – 10). A listing of the national strategy documents we analyzed are as follows:

- 2002 National Security Strategy
- 2003 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism
- 2006 National Security Strategy
- 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism

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[499] Bennett, C.J. (1991). "Review Article: What Is Policy Convergence and What Causes It?" British Journal of Political Science, 21: 215–33.

- 2006 National Military Strategy for the Global War on Terrorism
- 2008 National Defense Strategy
- 2010 National Security Strategy
- 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism
- 2011 National Military Strategy
- 2015 National Security Strategy
- 2015 National Military Strategy
- 2017 National Security Strategy
- 2018 National Defense Strategy
- 2018 National Strategy for Counterterrorism

The content analysis from these documents can be found in Appendix A. In the next section, we will identify the themes we found in these documents through Bennett's taxonomy.

5.3.2   Key Themes from the Content Analysis of National Strategy Documents

We captured the content analysis of the national strategy documents outlined in the previous section in a Microsoft Excel table. This table helped us organize the analysis consistent with Bennett's taxonomy and compare the extracted content across Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations (Appendix A). As noted, the content analysis was coded by employing Bennett's taxonomy. A summary of the key themes identified through the content analysis are included below:

	Bush	Obama	Trump
CONTINUITY			
Framed as a war	X	X	X
Use all elements of national power	X	X	X
Threat must be eliminated / destroyed	X	X	X
Preventing another major attack on the US homeland	X	X	X
Traditional deterrence won't work	X	X	X
Legal Authorities (2001 AUMF and Building Partnership Capacity Authorities)	X	X	X
CHANGE			
"War of ideas"	X		
Democracy promotion as a solution	X		
"Success in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan is vital"	X		
Terrorism is #1 threat	X	X	
Threat: AQ/Affliates only		X	
Threat: AQ / ISIS / Jihadist terrorists		X	X
Low cost, small footprint approaches		X	X
Threat: Global terrorism / VEOS	X		X

We can see through these key themes that the strategy documents signal both continuity and change across the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations. This is an interesting indicator as it suggests each administration was both trying to carve out its own, nuanced path with respect to US counterterrorism policy while, at the same time, perhaps borrowing from a previous administration. As noted earlier and in Chapter 2, policymaking is a complex subject. We, therefore, cannot fully understand a phenomenon exclusively through these key themes extracted from the national strategy documents of each administration. We must consider other evidentiary insights. This led us to explore other cross-cutting factors for the process tracing analysis, including interviews with experts from across the US counterterrorism enterprise, which we will discuss further in the next section.

5.4   Expert Interview Analysis

The case study analysis will also be informed by interviews with key stakeholders responsible for developing, leading, and executing US counterterrorism policy, as discussed earlier in this chapter. We selected and organized the expert interviewees through a three-part framework intended to inform all levels of analysis for counterterrorism policymaking: (1) policy and strategy leaders across the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations; (2) counterterrorism

operational and tactical level leaders from the military and intelligence communities; and (3) counterterrorism experts at research centers and think tanks. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the interviewees' assessments of continuity and change in US counterterrorism policymaking since 9/11 as well as the factors that led to any such continuity or change. A listing of the interviewees are as follows:

Policy and Strategy
- **Ms. Michele Flournoy**, Former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (Obama Administration)
- **General David Petraeus**, Former Commander of US Central Command, Iraq, and Afghanistan and Former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (Bush and Obama Administrations)
- **General Vincent Brooks**, Former DoD Joint Staff Deputy Director for the Global War on Terrorism and Joint Staff Representative to the 9/11 Commission (Bush Administrations)
- **Congressman Mac Thornberry**, Former Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee
- **Mr. Luke Hartig**, Former Senior Director for Counterterrorism at the National Security Council, The White House (Obama Administration)
- **Mr. Peter Villano**, Professional Staff Member, House Armed Services Committee, US counterterrorism policy portfolio.
- **Dr. Joe Felter**, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Trump Administration)
- **Mr. Michael Lumpkin**, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, Former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (Acting), and Former Director of the Global Engagement Center at the Department of State (Obama Administration)

Counterterrorism Operations
- **Colonel (Retired) Tom Nelson**, Director of the Commander's Initiative Group, US Cyber Command — focused on US counter-ISIS cyber operations
- **Colonel (Retired) John Petkosek**, Former Commander of the Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG)
- **Mr. Michael Lumpkin**, Former Special Operations Officer who conducted counterterrorism raids

Research Center / Think Tank
- **Mr. William Braniff**, Director of START, University of Maryland
- **Dr. Bryan Price**, Former Director of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point

- **Mr. Don Rassler**, Author of "Fountainhead of Jihad" on the Haqqani Network, researcher at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, and former embedded advisor to the New York City Joint Terrorism Task Force
- **Dr. Joe Felter**, Hoover Institution and Gordian Knot Center at Stanford University

These interviews with thirteen individuals were conducted over a three-month time frame between January to March 2020. All interviewees listed above were contacted directly by the author to request an interview. The author was able to access these interviewees due to his professional experience and research in the counterterrorism space. All thirteen interviewees agreed to conduct the interview. All signed a consent form for the interview. The consent form noted that the author of this dissertation is a PhD candidate with Leiden University. The consent form also required the interviewees to acknowledge voluntary participation in the research project and noted the fact that they could withdraw from participation in the interview without penalty. Twelve of the interviews were verbal, and one was conducted over email. Of the twelve verbal interviews, nine were interviewed over the phone and three were interviewed in-person. The in-person interviews were conducted in Alexandria and McLean, Virginia, USA. The twelve interviews conducted in-person or over the phone were recorded. The author chose to conduct verbal interviews because that approach best supported a semi-structured interview method, given that verbal conversation enables unstructured follow-ups. The author has retained the recordings for all twelve verbal interviews. The thirteenth interview, reflected in the table below, with former CIA Director David Petraeus was conducted via email. The author chose to conduct this interview through a structured set of questions (the same structured questions for all interviewees, as outlined in the next section) because structured questioning best supported such an interview format. Likewise, the author retained a copy of the email interview with David Petraeus. A table outlining the format and other demographic data for the thirteen interviewees can be found below.

Name	Interview Category	Interview Format	Recorded	Age	Gender	Title
(1) Colonel John Petkosek	CT Operations	Semi-Structured / In-person	Yes	50s	Male	Former Commander of the Asymmetric Warfare Group
(2) Mr. Peter Villano	Policy & Strategy	Semi-Structured / In-person	Yes	50s	Male	Former Professional Staff Member, House Armed Services Committee
(3) Mr. William Braniff	Research Center	Semi-Structured / Telephone	Yes	40s	Male	Director of START, UMD

(4) Dr. Bryan Price	Research Center	Semi-Structured / Telephone	Yes	40s	Male	Former Director of the Combating Terrorism Center
(5) Colonel Tom Nelson	CT Operations	Semi-Structured / In-person	Yes	50s	Male	Director of the Commander's Initiative Group, US Cyber Command
(6) Mr. Don Rassler	Research Center	Semi-Structured / Telephone	Yes	30s	Male	Author of "Fountainhead of Jihad" on the Haqqani Network, researcher at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point
(7) Dr. Joe Felter	Policy & Strategy and Research Center	Semi-Structured / Telephone	Yes	50s	Male	Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Trump)
(8) Chairman Mac Thornberry	Policy & Strategy	Semi-Structured / Telephone	Yes	60s	Male	Former Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee
(9) Undersecretary Michele Flournoy	Policy & Strategy	Semi-Structured / Telephone	Yes	60s	Female	Former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (Obama)
(10) General Vincent Brooks	Policy & Strategy	Semi-Structured / Telephone	Yes	60s	Male	Former DoD Joint Staff Deputy Director for the Global War on Terrorism and Joint Staff Representative to the 9/11 Commission (Bush)
(11) Assistant Secretary Michael Lumpkin	Policy & Strategy and CT operations	Semi-Structured / Telephone	Yes	50s	Male	Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict and Former Director of the Global Engagement Center at the Department of State (Obama)
(12) Mr. Luke Hartig	Policy & Strategy	Semi-Structured / Telephone	Yes	40s	Male	Former Senior Director for Counterterrorism at the National Security Council, The White House (Obama)
(13) General David Petraeus	Policy & Strategy	Structured / Email	No (Email)	70s	Male	Former Commander of US Central Command, Iraq, and Afghanistan and Former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (Bush and Obama)

Table 1.4: Demographic data for expert interviews

The author had access to these interviews given his 20-year career working in US counterterrorism and policymaking. It should be noted that the author worked in prior professional roles with Peter Villano and Michael Lumpkin on counterterrorism policy issues and conducted research with William Braniff and Don Rassler. The author currently works at the same organization as Tom Nelson and John Petkosek. The author does not have any economic ties with Nelson or Petkosek – or any other individual interviewed – and neither Nelson or Petkosek are my direct manager nor subordinate within the organization. Additionally, Bryan Price is an unpaid member of an advisory board for a non-profit that the author runs.

5.4.1 Literature on Expert Interviewing

There is important literature on expert interviewing. Alexander Bogner et al. note that this methodological technique is employed throughout social science and political science.[500] Its advantages include enabling the researcher to increase the efficiency of the data collection process because experts can "crystalize" key knowledge and insights and can serve as proxies for understanding the broader perspectives of experts in the field. Experts also provide access to a practitioner field for a researcher that may be more difficult to achieve given the sensitivities of certain subject matter. The risks and downsides of expert interviews is that the researcher can over-extend the knowledge and standing of the expert, which can introduce new biases and/or skew results. Bogner et al. explain that when expert interviews are not only for grounding the research in basic facts but also for "the reconstruction of latent content," this means expert interviews must follow a sound methodological approach.

Alexander Bogner and Wolfgang Menz present three purposes for expert interviews: (1) exploratory for orientation to the subject matter, (2) systematic for the surfacing of knowledge, and (3) theory-generating for "the reconstructing social interpretative patterns and subjective action orientation criteria."[501] Our purpose in these expert interviews included (1) and (2) because we are focused on gaining the explicit expert knowledge, which Michaela Pfadenhauer suggests is a particularly strong approach for such interviews. Pfadenhauer also points out that for this type of purpose in expert interviews, it is critical that the researcher either achieves "extraordinary levels of knowledge…obtained essentially through an ethnographic inventory of the field research" around the subject matter prior to the interview or already has such expertise in the subject matter area through practice. In other words, Pfadenhauer suggests the interviewer must become a "quasi expert" to achieve a productive expert interview. Pfadenhauer also notes that the expert's impression of the interviewer "influences the type of

[500] Bogner, A., Littig, B., & Menz, W. (2009). *Interviewing experts*. Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
[501] Ibid., page 7.

knowledge the expert will communicate in the interview."[502] Given the author's experience in the counterterrorism field, described in the "author's position" section later in this chapter, we were able to achieve deep insights from the expert interviews, making it both a methodologically sound as well as a productive set of interviews for the overall research purpose of this dissertation.

5.4.2   Interview Structure

As noted, twelve of the thirteen interviews were semi-structured in nature consistent with Steinar Kvale's interview techniques for qualitative research. Kvale defined an interview as: "a conversation that has a structure and a purpose determined by the one party – the interviewer. It is a professional interaction, which goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge."[503] Our semi-structured interviews included a structured set of questions that were developed consistent with Bennett's taxonomy, described earlier in this chapter, and included unstructured follow-ups during the interview. As Kvale recommended, a semi-structured interview "is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire."[504] Kvale explained that semi-structured interviewing allows the interviewer to both test hypotheses through a structured set of questions while, at the same time, interpret meaning through unstructured follow-up questioning. This approach, as Kvale suggested, enables the researcher to qualitatively understand "the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena."[505] The structured set of questions for all thirteen interviews, which were developed through Bennett's five-part taxonomy for public policy, discussed in the content analysis section of in this chapter, were as follows:

- Describe US CT policy following 9/11?
- What have been US CT policy goals since 9/11?
- How would you characterize the evolution of such policies before and after 9/11 and across the post-9/11 Presidential administrations?
- Describe what, in your view, has been the dominant approach to US CT policy overseas since 9/11?
- Why this military centric approach is preferred over other approaches?
- What would alternative approaches be?
- What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

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[502] Ibid., page 8.
[503] Kvale, S. (2007). Introduction to interview research. In *Doing interviews* (pp. 2-10). SAGE Publications, Ltd, pg. 7.
[504] Ibid., pg. 11.
[505] Kvale, S. (2007). Introduction to interview research. In *Doing interviews* (pp. 2-10). SAGE Publications, Ltd, pg. 8.

- Have US CT policies been adopted or borrowed across Presidential administrations? If so, which ones?
- What are the most important governing policies / legislation that influence and govern US CT policy formulation?
- Have prior / existing government policy, statutory law, US Code, regulations, etc become more alike over time? If yes, how have such influenced the formulation of CT policy in the United States?
- How do US CT policymakers evaluate the efficacy of US CT policy?
- What role have policy expertise / think tanks played in the formulation US CT policy post-9/11? Can you provide examples?
- Has there been a policy consensus with respect to the approach within the expert/think tank CT policy community since 9/11? And official.
- Have you observed CT policymakers from prior administrations serve as participants within the US CT policymaking process? If yes, did you observe them influencing the goals and/or mobilizing resources and capabilities within the United States' domestic political process?

Additionally, during each interview, the author took notes on these structured set of questions and any unstructured follow-ups. The author has not included the raw notes from the interviews in the appendices of the dissertation to remain consistent with a provision in the consent form: "Faculty and administrators from my campus will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts." For the purpose of this dissertation, the structured interview questions were intended to provide insight into the interviewees understanding of continuity and change in US counterterrorism policy and the factors driving any such continuity or change. The unstructured questions were oriented towards understanding the specific drivers of continuity and change. As noted, to capture the semi-structured nature of the interview (follow-ups, follow-on questions, and the like), the author recorded each interview (and possesses an email transcription in the case of the interview with former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency David Petraeus). This deliberate data registration process was intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the content and nature of the interview as well as to support the replicability of the study.

To support the data management, the author documented the responses provided by the interviewees through utilizing a Microsoft Excel table that was coded by Bennett's taxonomy. Subsequently, the author discerned patterns and coherence within the interviews, culminating in the development of seven distinct themes extracted from the interview data, which we will describe further in the next section.

5.5   Descriptive Analysis of Expert Interviews

The expert interviews conducted for this study unveiled intriguing consistencies and themes among the interviewees concerning the nature and evolution of US counterterrorism policy. As previously mentioned, these interviews involved individuals who occupied pivotal roles within the counterterrorism policy apparatus, spanning from policy and strategy to the operational and tactical levels. Additionally, it is noteworthy that these key themes emerged not only from interviewees who were directly involved in policymaking process but also experts affiliated with think tanks and research centers. Presented here is a descriptive analysis, highlighting the key themes identified during the expert interviews.

5.5.1   Theme 1: Shifting from Law Enforcement to Military Counterterrorism

One of the most notable observations arising from these interviews was the unanimity of perspective regarding the evolution of US policy from a law enforcement-centric approach to one centered on military operations. Luke Hartig, a former Senior Director of Counterterrorism at the National Security Council, along with General Vincent Brooks, a retired four-star general and former deputy director for the Global War on Terrorism at the Pentagon, and former Chairman Mac Thornberry, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee in Congress, all emphasized that given the urgency and complexity of the post-9/11 threat landscape, it necessitated a more comprehensive response that went beyond traditional law enforcement means, which were deemed insufficient in effectively countering terrorism and terrorist networks and preventing future attacks in the post-9/11 context. General Brooks emphasized: "Prior to 9/11, we looked at terrorism in isolation. Focused on it via a European view that terrorism should be viewed as a law enforcement matter. This was a European view that was influencing US policy from 1997-2001."[506]

5.5.2   Theme 2: Emphasis on Disrupting and Dismantling Terrorist Networks

An overarching goal of disrupting and dismantling terrorist networks emerged as a cornerstone of post-9/11 counterterrorism policies. Peter Villano, former Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, and Michael Lumpkin, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, emphasized this point, stressing the importance of targeting the roots of terrorism to prevent future attacks. Experts noted that disrupting terrorist networks was pivotal to thwarting potential threats. Additionally, experts noted the criticality of on-the-ground realities as what ultimately drove administrations' policies. Former Director of the CIA, General David Petraeus emphasized this point with respect to the Obama Administration: "Different administrations entered office with pre-conceived notions and ideas about how to counter terrorists, and those influence the ultimate policies;

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[506] Interview with former military strategists for the Global War on Terrorism, General (Retired) Vincent Brooks, March 27, 2020.

however, I would contend that reality on the ground played an even bigger role – as, for example, the Obama administration was not reluctant to pull all combat forces out of Iraq in late 2011 when the Iraqis could not provide a parliamentary-approved Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). But, given the threat of ISIS, that same administration left office recommitting some 5,500 US troops [on the ground in Iraq] without a parliamentary-approved SOFA."[507]

5.5.3   Theme 3: Growing Use of Special Operations Forces (SOF) and Drone Strikes

The integration of special operations forces (SOF) and so-called "drone" technology into US counterterrorism policies was a significant development in the post-9/11 era.[508] This approach allowed for targeted strikes against high-value targets, eroding terrorist leadership and the capabilities of terrorist organizations. Michael Lumpkin, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, highlighted the appeal of kinetic operations due to their measurable outcomes. Likewise, Michele Flournoy, former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, highlighted the vigilance and efficiency with which presidential administrations were able to conduct such operations: "The vigilant watching of threat streams to the US homeland has remained. And post-9/11 reforms have made that a more seamless interagency activity — across Bush, Obama, to Trump – watching who are the leaders [of terrorist groups] that need to be taken off the battlefield and disrupting safe havens. This is a very well-oiled machine that has continued across Presidential administrations."[509]

5.5.4   Theme 4: Renewed Focus on Building Partner Capacity

An important shift post-9/11 has been the renewed focus on "building partner capacity" (BPC) efforts conducted in collaboration with international allies. So-called BPC efforts were intended to empower partner nations to tackle terrorism on their soil consistent with US objectives. The perspective across all experts in our study is that this approach not only guarded against the spread of terrorist threats transnationally but also enhanced intelligence gathering and intelligence sharing activities.

5.5.5   Theme 5: Intelligence-Led Prevention of Attacks

The interviewees also highlighted the US government's prioritization of preempting terrorist attacks before they materialize. This objective made intelligence gathering and exploitation a central component of US counterterrorism. Intelligence pertaining to terrorism not only encompassed on-the-ground collection but also its integration with other forms of

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[507] Interview with former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and military commander in Iraq and Afghanistan, General David Petraeus, May 5-6, 2020.
[508] "Drone" is a colloquial term employed by counterterrorism professionals to refer to remotely piloted aircraft by the United States.
[509] Interview with former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, March 25, 2020.

information to construct a more accurate, real-time assessment of the terrorist threat and achieve a more effective and sustained military effort against terrorist groups. This intelligence-driven approach for counterterrorism, particularly exemplified through drone strikes, was aimed at being proactive to thwart future attacks.

5.5.6 Theme 6: Role of Policy Expertise and Think Tanks

The interviewees overall acknowledged the critical role of expertise in addressing terrorism. Perspectives varied regarding the extent to which think tanks and research centers directly influenced US counterterrorism policies. For instance, Michael Lumpkin noted the limited utility of think tank and research center insights: "I cannot think of anything where policies were changed based on an epiphany from a think tank."[510] That said, Luke Hartig, a former Senior Director for US counterterrorism policy, noted in our interview: "I think a well-timed report from a think tank and a scholar you trust can be valuable. Usually think tanks are putting out things that the US government is already thinking of. At the NSC, we had a regular speaker series with think tankers on their research and experiences."[511] However, experts also cautioned that the impact of think tanks and research centers might be more limited than often presumed, as effective policy decisions necessitate a comprehensive grasp of ground realities. Nevertheless, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Mac Thornberry, noted that external experts played a crucial role in informing innovative approaches to counterterrorism, stating: "Congress leaned very heavily on experts and think tanks and academia, to some extent. To deal with terrorism [following 9/11] required an evolution in our thinking and approach. Congress needed to hear from those who thought about it but also experienced it on the ground."[512]

5.5.7 Theme 7: The Significance of the 2001 AUMF

All interviewees emphasized the importance of the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) as a linchpin for enabling the United States to conduct military operations against terrorist groups throughout the 20-year study period. Don Rassler, a researcher at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, stated that the 2001 AUMF served as the "cornerstone" legal authority for US counterterrorism policy following 9/11, remaining a prevailing legal foundation to this day.[513] Michael Lumpkin, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, further emphasized that

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[510] Interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, March 30, 2020.
[511] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.
[512] Interview with Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 24, 2020.
[513] Interview with author of *Fountainhead of Jihad* on the Haqqani Network, Mr. Don Rassler, March 3, 2020.

the 2001 AUMF "anchored the entirety of US policy."[514] In addition, Peter Villano noted the growing significance of the President's Article II Commander-in-Chief authority, particularly as the scope of US counterterrorism expanded beyond its initial focus on the Taliban and al-Qaeda, encompassing military operations against groups like ISIS and Shia-oriented entities such as the Iraqi Shia militias and Lebanese Hizballah.

5.6   Limitations in the Research Design

This research design is intended to integrate multiple data sources to achieve a more complete understanding of the complex phenomenon of policymaking. However, there are limitations to the research design that should be contemplated at the outset of the analysis.

5.6.1   Equifinality

Equifinality (multiple casual factors for an outcome) is a concern in this analysis given the complexity of the phenomenon of policymaking. However, this analysis is strengthened by conducting a process tracing methodological approach on case studies because these approaches are guided by key control variables identified in the literature reviews in Chapters 2– 4 and reflected in the PPC. This orients the research towards evaluating the observable phenomenon against the most important causal factors based on scholarship and theory.

5.6.2   "Many Variables, Small N"

Another critique of this study could include the relatively small number of case studies (case studies of five presidential administrations in total). To control for this issue, this study includes a content analysis of national strategies across the same time period of the study and expert interviews with individuals who were involved with US counterterrorism at the policy and strategy, operational, and tactical levels of analysis, which provides a level of robustness to the case studies because the content analysis and interviews inform the process tracing and yield insights into the considerations and factors driving counterterrorism policy. Additionally, even with a relatively "small n" for case studies in this analysis, the cases selected cut across multiple presidential administrations (again, five in total over a 20-year period), different political parties (presidents from both the Republican and Democratic parties), and presidents with different political bases (Bush, Obama, and Trump were very different personalities and political personas, drew from distinct constituencies, and held differing political objectives and worldviews). Therefore, these case studies analyses were bolstered through both increasing the evidentiary robustness through the content analysis of 14 national strategy documents across five presidential administrations and 13 expert interviews as well as the diversity of the cases

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[514] Interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, March 30, 2020.

themselves – Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations – and the analysis of multiple counterterrorism events within and across the presidential cases analyzed.

5.6.3 Reliability of Sources

Reliability of sources is always an area of concern when conducting analyses that are based on human memory or experiences and content analysis of documents. That said, the trustworthiness of the sources in this study is relatively high because they largely come from official US government documents, public, on-the-record statements from journalistic pieces, and transcribed and /or recorded accountings from primary source interviews. It should be noted that official statements from various political leaders and official government documents such as the national security strategies can have embedded biases because such leaders' statements and documents are designed to provide specific messages to the public and/or create perceptions with respect to the policy. To strengthen the relative trustworthiness of such sources, this study includes interviews with various former government officials who were responsible for both crafting such statements and national security strategies as well as implementing US counterterrorism policy on the ground. This approach of interviewing former government officials provides not only a "behind the scenes" insight into the intent and messaging goals of such statements and documents but also the opportunity and freedom for the interviewees to speak freely given they were no longer serving in an official capacity.

5.6.4 Positionality and Analysis

Understanding the position of the researcher relative to the research is as important as the conduct of the research itself.[515] Dvora Yanow explains that "interpretative analysis" is necessary for controlling for "positionality."[516] Yanow suggests it is the meaning of the phenomenon "not only to the actors in the situation but also the analyst that must also be taken into account to fully understand the interpretative nature of the analysis."[517] In other words, the "positionality" of the analyst in relation to the situation or the phenomenon studied must be of analytical concern. The researcher may shape the events or perhaps may even be shaped by such events, people, and contexts. Therefore, as Yanow further explains, "interpretive policy analysis needs to focus not only on figuring out what…elements carry or convey meaning, what these meanings are, who is making them, and how they are being communicated, but also on the methods through which the analyst-researcher accesses and generates these meanings and analyzes them."[518] Interpretive policy analysis, therefore,

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[515] Yanow, D. (2007). Interpretation in policy analysis: On methods and practice. *Critical Policy Studies*, *1*(1), 110–122.
[516] Ibid.
[517] Ibid.
[518] Ibid.

requires not only the study of meaning in relation to the policy phenomenon but also the identification and development of specific methods to support such an analysis. Our choices in the methodology must, therefore, contemplate the author's positionality.

Controlling for positionality, foremostly, requires transparency in the authors position, experience, and point-of-view relative to the subject matter. We, therefore, will be explicit about the author's professional experience relative to the subject matter to provide transparency on the positionality of the author. This will allow the author's position and analysis in this research to be considered in relation to positions and analyses of other researchers.

5.6.4.1   Author's Position

The author has been engaged in US counterterrorism policy throughout the 20-year period contemplated in this treatise – from the tactical, to the operational, to the strategic, to the policy levels. More specifically, the author served as an infantry officer in combat in Iraq in 2004. This combat service included conducting military operations to counter foreign fighters, insurgents, and terrorists such as al-Qaeda in Iraq. Following this service in the military, the author studied the terrorism phenomenon at Harvard University, which included a thesis on al-Qaeda's communications strategy under the supervision of Dr. Graham Allision. The author then became a professor in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy at West Point and a researcher in the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. During this period, the author taught classes on the phenomenon of terrorism and counterterrorism and conducted field research in Afghanistan in 2009, which included classified analysis on the terrorism threat in Afghanistan and the region. The author then served in a policymaking role on the House Armed Services Committee in the US Congress in which he was responsible for writing the law and conducting oversight of US defense policy in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia-Pacific regions, which encompassed writing counterterrorism policy, legal authorities, and budget authority – to include oversight of US military operations and travel to conflict zones such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, and Libya.

These experiences have provided the author with a perspective on counterterrorism that is largely shaped by the United States' "Global War on Terrorism" approach. This means the author may well be inclined to conduct analyses that view counterterrorism through that lens. To control for this, the author chose to supplement the analysis in this dissertation with US national strategy documents that guide the overall approach to US national security policy across the government – beyond the military and intelligence communities, including diplomacy, treasury, and law enforcement. This allowed the author to gain a broad perspective on how overall national security agencies of the US government engaged in US counterterrorism policy. Additionally, the author sought to conduct interviews that not only included military personnel but also individuals who have worked on counterterrorism from

across the US government, including the intelligence community, homeland security, law enforcement, State Department, Congress, the White House, and outside think tank analysts and other researchers. By providing both transparency about the author's experience and, by extension positionality in relation to the subject matter of this research, as well as integrating other perspectives on US counterterrorism outside the military realm through the national strategy documents and interviews, this enabled a consideration of the author's positionality as the research was designed to include: (1) integrating multiple forms of perspective through content analysis of strategy documents, (2) a wide survey of journalistic pieces and public polling on US counterterrorism, and (3) diversity in experience among the interviewees. Moreover, the author's choice to conduct a process tracing approach was a deliberate with the intent to increase the robustness of information and evidence considered.

5.6.5 Variance in Application of the PPC

Another key limitation of this research has to do with the potential for variance in the analysis through the application of the definitional elements of the PPC. Where one sits in relation to the counterterrorism phenomenon – within, atop, or outside of the national security apparatus – can influence how urgency, ambiguity, and the threat itself are perceived. For example, Luke Hartig, a former White House National Security Council Senior Director, stated in our interview for this dissertation that Obama's small-footprint approach provided a way to roll back the "excesses" of the Bush Administration.[519] While others, such as Michael Lumpkin, a former Assistant Secretary responsible for counterterrorism policy at the Pentagon, asserted in our interview that there was little creativity in US counterterrorism policy and, therefore, "drone strikes" were pursued because the bureaucracy was conditioned to conduct counterterrorism through such an approach during the Obama Administration.[520] Still others such as Michele Flournoy, a former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, suggested in our interview that the Executive Branch was inclined to expand a military-led, drone strike campaign because that is what the Congress was incentivized it to do.[521] In each of these cases, the interpretation of what was occurring may well have been connected to the position from which the interviewee observed the phenomenon. This again suggests that "positionality" in relation to the data collection, as Dvora Yanow points out, affects the analysis itself.[522] Our interpretations in the light of the PPC, therefore, are also subject to the risks of "positionality" from the subjects of our analysis, which could be a limitation of the framework without, over time, developing specific standards to apply the framework, which we will recommend in

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[519] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.
[520] Interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, March 30, 2020.
[521] Interview with former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, March 25, 2020.
[522] Yanow, D. (2007). Interpretation in policy analysis: On methods and practice. *Critical Policy Studies*, *1*(1), 110–122.

Chapter 10. Interpretive policy analysis, therefore, requires not only the study of meaning in relation to the policy phenomenon but also the identification and development of specific methods to support such an analysis.

We assess, therefore, that the choice to develop a new framework for this analysis, even as it is based on theory, presents specific challenges for the research. There is not a tested application for this framework beyond this study. Also, there may be areas of discussion for the integration of the elements of the PPC in relation to the scholarship from which it was derived. To control for these issues, we must first present a robust description of the analysis and application of each element of the PPC in the case studies to ensure the research can be replicated by other researchers. Further, it is critical to capture specific issues in the application of the PPC not only for understanding this study but also future research. We will capture these learnings and recommendations for future research in Chapters 11 – 12. In doing so, we will address the cautions that Yanow suggested in relation to "interpretative policy analysis." Once methods are established and the application of the definitional elements of the PPC become further refined over time, the confidence in the application of the research and the normative judgments made with respect to the observed phenomenon may increase.

5.7   Research Ethics

Employing ethical standards in this research is of paramount importance given the sensitivity of the subject matter. As discussed in Chapter 2, policymaking is a complex phenomenon and counterterrorism is fraught politically and socially in society, so it requires the research design to consider the sensitivities of the information provided and how it may affect the human subjects of the research.

This research followed accepted principles for ethical research. We obtained the informed consent of participants in the research. They understood the research was voluntary, and they were informed that they could withdraw at any time in the interview or research process. The author also assessed the potential risks to the interview subjects and contemplated whether any harm would come to the subjects, including emotionally, socially, and economically. The author sought the clearance from the interviewees to use their information and likeness in this research. Further, the author adhered to the privacy and confidentiality of the interview subjects by using secure approaches to maintain the raw notes and data from the interviews. The author also ensured the participants did not come from vulnerable populations. The author disclosed in this chapter any potential conflicts of interest in terms of his professional experience working in counterterrorism policy. Additionally, the author consulted with his dissertation advisors throughout to ensure the research was carried out ethically. Finally, sound data management ensures the integrity of the study. The author carried out the study through a data management approach reflected in Appendix A.

5.8   Next Steps in Research

We will now turn to applying the PPC framework to analyze continuity and change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11, the central focus of this dissertation. In the subsequent chapters, we will analyze US counterterrorism policy across five presidential administrations – two terms of the Bush Administration, two terms of the Obama Administration, and one term of the Trump Administration. This analysis will be conducted over an approximately 20-year period, beginning on September 11th, 2001 and culminating with the end of the Trump administration on January 20, 2021. We will apply the PPC framework to determine the policy profile of each presidential administration. This analysis will be supplemented by the content analysis and interviews described in this chapter. We will then assess whether there has been continuity or change over the period of study based on the evolution in the specific elements of the PPC across each presidential administration.

The case study analysis of five US presidential administrations in Chapters 6 - 10 will follow a three-part structuring: (1) an overview of the counterterrorism challenges through a description of situation and strategic considerations, (2) a description of the policy response of the administration, and (3) a reflection on what the policy responses indicate in relation to the PPC framework outlined in Chapter 4. We will trace the core elements of the PPC (Table 1.3) – (1) basic belief, (2) mode of thinking, and (3) preferred operational approach – in relation to the prominent counterterrorism policy events during each administration across the 20-year period of this study.

We will now turn to analyzing the counterterrorism policy across the five US presidential administrations from 2001 – 2021, beginning with the first term of the Bush Administration.

6   BUSH ADMINISTRATION: THE POST-9/11 PERIOD

On September 11th, 2001, al-Qaeda terrorists flew three commercial airliners loaded with passengers into the north and south towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, just outside of Washington DC.[523] A fourth hijacked plane believed to be headed towards the White House or the US Capitol was heroically taken down by its passengers in a Pennsylvania field; then, tragically, both the north and south towers of the World Trade Center collapsed.[524] Over approximately a two-hour period, al-Qaeda terrorists killed 2,977 people, injured almost 25,000, and achieved mass-scale destruction of the iconic symbols of American military and economic power.[525] 9/11 was the deadliest attack on the US homeland since Pearl Harbor.[526]

Just hours after being notified of the terrorist attack, President Bush made the following statement:

> "Today we've had a national tragedy. Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our country. I have spoken to the Vice President, to the Governor of New York, to the Director of the FBI, and have ordered that the full resources of the federal government go to help the victims and their families, and to conduct a full-scale investigation to hunt down and to find those folks who committed this act. Terrorism against our nation will not stand."[527]

Following this statement, President Bush decided to return to the White House to again speak to the nation. As Air Force One was landing at Andrews Air Force Base the evening of September 11th, 2001, White House Chief of Staff, Andrew Card, recounted that he and President Bush were looking out the window of the plane and could see "smoke billowing out

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[523] "September 11th Attacks," *History.com*, August 24, 2021; available from https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/9-11-attacks.

[524] "September 11th Attacks," *History.com*, August 24, 2021; available from https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/9-11-attacks.

[525] Rohan Gunaratna, "The 9/11 Effect and the Transformation of Global Security: The Full Circle of Counterterrorism," *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 1, 2021; available from https://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global-memos/911-effect-and-transformation-global-security.

[526] Pamela Engel and Ellen Loanes, "What Happened on 9/11, 19 Years Ago," *Business Insider*, September 10, 2020; available from https://www.businessinsider.com/what-happened-on-911-why-2016-9.

[527] "Remarks by the President After Two Planes Crash Into World Trade Center," Emma Booker Elementary School, Sarasota, Florida, September 11, 2001; available from https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911.html.

of the Pentagon."[528] In that moment, President Bush ominously stated: "That's the face of war in the 21st century."[529]

That evening, President Bush spoke to the nation from the Oval Office at the White House about the horrific terrorist attack on 9/11. Bush immediately expressed to the American people that terrorism represented an existential threat to the United States and its way of life, and such a threat needed to be removed:

"Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes, or in their offices; secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers; moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them…America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism…"[530]

Former White House Chief of Staff, Andrew Card, corroborated the fact that Bush's address to the American public the evening of September 11th, 2001 was consistent with on-going, internal deliberations at the White House:

"[Bush] made it pretty clear that we were going to respond. This would not stand. And there was no doubt in the President's mind that that would mean military action. Alberto Gonzalez, the White House Counsel, had already started looking at what are all of the issues that have to be considered on going to war."[531]

Alberto Gonzalez confirmed this point as well:

"[Bush] knew immediately that this was a war. This was not going to be a law enforcement matter. We weren't going to just use the police, the FBI, to respond to this – to investigate this. We were going to use our military…The best word to describe him [Bush] was determined. He had a job to do. He knew why he was elected President of the United States for this moment."[532]

Through the Oval Office speech, the evening of September 11th, 2001, President Bush immediately enlarged the nature of the struggle by stating that the fundamental sense of freedom core to the United States' way of life was under attack. Bush went on to describe this all-encompassing struggle as "Global War on Terrorism."[533]

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[528] "Turning Point," *Netflix*, September 2021.
[529] Ibid.
[530] "Text of Bush's Address," *CNN*, September 11, 2001.
[531] "Turning Point," *Netflix*, September 2021.
[532] "Turning Point," *Netflix*, September 2021.
[533] "Text of Bush's Address," *CNN*, September 11, 2001.

In the wake of 9/11, the view within the Bush Administration was that terrorism had evolved to a "new and destructive era" not only due to the intent and objectives of terrorist groups but also because of the ability of such groups to plot and plan attacks of strategic surprise given the sanctuary they enjoyed.[534] [535] The Bush Administration immediately pivoted away from the pre-9/11 approach to US counterterrorism and re-framed terrorism as a broader, epic struggle for both world order and the Western way of life. President Bush began a process of articulating the administration's basic belief for counterterrorism policy – foreshadowing a desire remove terrorism by addressing the broader factors that underpinned al-Qaeda's ability to conduct large-scale attacks of strategic surprise against the United States. This is consistent with the typographical elements of the structural change policy perspective that we outlined in our review in Chapter 3. We will discuss this further throughout this chapter.

In the days and weeks that followed 9/11, the Bush Administration began rolling out to the American public its preferred operational approaches – approaches that were consistent with Byman's "crushing terrorists" and "addressing the root causes of terrorism" outlined in Chapter 3. As former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy stated in our interview for the dissertation: "The initial focus was on bringing the perpetrators of 9/11 to justice."[536] Bush's operational approaches for counterterrorism were geared towards directly and immediately addressing the larger contextual factors of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan that enabled al-Qaeda to conduct such an attack. These focus points eventually manifested in the removal of the Taliban as the governance structure in Afghanistan. In fact, President Bush further signaled to the American public his basic belief around removing terrorism through an operational approach of regime change just three days after 9/11 at "Ground Zero" in New York City.

On September 14th, 2001, President Bush went to "Ground Zero," the site of a rescue and recovery operation in the smoldering wreckage of the collapsed World Trade Center Towers. Standing atop the wreckage with firefighters, police officers, and other rescue personnel engaged in the dangerous and emotionally difficult task of recovering bodies within the wreckage, Bush gave a speech that became known as the "bullhorn address."[537] This impromptu speech was an iconic moment in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 – a moment in which Bush attempted to bring a sense of certainty within a context of deep ambiguity, anxiety, and sorrow:

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[534] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2006.

[535] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism After September 11th," The Information Warfare Site, 2001; available from http://www.iwar.org.uk/cyberterror/resources/threat-assessment/pj63hoffman.htm.

[536] Interview with former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, March 25, 2020.

[537] Austin William, "'I can hear you! The rest of the world hears you:' George W. Bush's bullhorn speech still echoes," *Foxnews*, September 11, 2019; available from https://www.fox46.com/news/i-can-hear-you-the-rest-of-the-world-hears-you-george-w-bushs-bullhorn-speech-still-echoes/.

> "I want you all to know that America today is on bended knee, in prayer for the people whose lives were lost here, for the workers who work here, for the families who mourn. This nation stands with the good people of New York City and New Jersey and Connecticut as we mourn the loss of thousands of our citizens..."[538]

As Bush continued, the rescue workers yelled back, "We can't hear you!" Bush responded: "I can hear you! I can hear you! The rest of the world hears you. And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon."[539] In this singular moment, Bush acknowledge the uncertainty and anxiety that was palpable within the American public. Bush then quickly pivoted from the ambiguity of the moment towards a rhetoric of certainty, suggesting the nature of the US counterterrorism response.[540] The American public wanted a leader who would take full and complete control of the situation and rapidly achieve justice for the attacks on 9/11.

Through this "bullhorn address," Bush spoke to the American public's need to avert ambiguity brought on by the terrorist attack and to achieve closure. The American public held the uncertainty, ambiguity, and anxiety; and President Bush, through his constitutional authority, held the means of national power to avert the ambiguity, achieve certainty, and, thereby, realize closure for the American public. To avert this ambiguity and achieve closure within the American public, Bush alluded to past, established knowledge with respect to the United States' struggle against totalitarianism in 20th century:

> "The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise…These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society—and the duty of protecting these values against their enemies is the common calling of freedom-loving people across the globe and across the ages…Today, that task has changed dramatically. Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us…The war against terrorists of global reach is a global enterprise of uncertain duration."[541]

This re-framing of the terrorism certainly reflected an intuitive mode of thinking through a reliance on existing or established knowledge for handling the global challenge of totalitarianism against democracy and democratic values – what Bush described as the "great

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[538] Austin William, "'I can hear you! The rest of the world hears you:' George W. Bush's bullhorn speech still echoes," *Foxnews*, September 11, 2019; available from https://www.fox46.com/news/i-can-hear-you-the-rest-of-the-world-hears-you-george-w-bushs-bullhorn-speech-still-echoes/.

[539] Ibid.

[540] Ibid.

[541] "The National Security Strategy of the United States," September 2002.

struggles of the twentieth century." This catalyzed significant changes in US counterterrorism policy such that, over time, it had little resemblance to pre-9/11 US counterterrorism.[542] [543] Through a policy perspective focused towards removing terrorism via an operational approach of regime change, coupled with an intuitive mode of thinking geared towards averting ambiguity by relying on past, established knowledge on how the United States fought global threats, we argue President Bush became a "*commander.*"

It was not only President Bush who "commanded" the post-9/11 response. His entire administration carried the same message. For example, just days after 9/11, Secretary of State Colin Powell stated: "We want to respond. You don't attack America like this and get away with it."[544] This quest for certainty even transcended party lines, which was quite notable in a Washington DC often seized with political gridlock. Then Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton stated on the Senate floor: "Not only those who harbor terrorist, but those who in any way, provide any aid or comfort whatsoever, will now face the wrath of our country."[545] Republican Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, joined Clinton with call for immediate action: "Now the time for talking is over, and the time for action to start."[546]

Global leaders also rallied around the United States in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks – from Prime Minister Tony Blair stating that "the world's democracies must 'fight this evil…,'" to the European Union Commissioner Chris Patten stating "'this is an act of war by madmen'…[It was] one of those few days in life that one can actually say will change everything," to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stating "the fight against terrorism is an international struggle of the free world against the forces of darkness."[547] These leaders re-framed terrorism as an epic struggle requiring fundamental change to counterterrorism policy around the world. This international support provided political space for the Bush Administration's rapid and fundamental pivot away from pre-9/11 counterterrorism. The administration embraced this opportunity by deciding to remove of terrorism rather than manage it.

9/11 drove what would become a fundamental change in US counterterrorism policy – from a threat-centric, law enforcement-oriented, episodic, localized, and reactionary approach of the pre-9/11 period to a zero-sum, war-oriented, global, and pre-emptive approach during the post-9/11 era – the latter of which is consistent with of the basic belief and operational

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[542] Stephen Walt, "The Borden Promises of W. Bush, Clinton, and Obama," Foreign Policy, September 16, 2016; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/18/broken-foreign-policy-promises-bush-clinton-obama-iraq-syria/.

[543] Ivo Daadler and James Lindsay, "Bush's Foreign Policy Revolution: A Radical Change," *Brookings Institution*, September 26, 2004; available from https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/bushs-foreign-policy-revolution-a-radical-change/.

[544] "Turning Point," *Netflix*, September 2021.

[545] Ibid.

[546] Ibid.

[547] "World Shock Over US Attacks," *CNN*, September 11, 2001; available from https://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/09/11/trade.centre.reaction/index.html.

approach elements of the structural change perspective discussed in Chapter 3. Prior to 9/11, terrorism was viewed as a criminal matter and the decisionmaking tendency and mindset around counterterrorism was more aligned with the pragmatic mode of thinking outlined in Chapter 3.[548] [549] [550] As Don Rassler of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point and author of the *Fountainhead of Jihad* stated in our interview: "Prior to 9/11, US counterterrorism policy was guided by a law enforcement approach."[551] General Vincent Brooks reinforced this perspective in our interview: "What we didn't see prior to 9/11 was the need for…collaboration across different agencies of government. It was a case-by-case approach – action-reaction – not a systematic and integrated approach," which we will discuss further later in this chapter.[552]

We will proceed by tracing the core elements of the PPC framework (basic belief, mode of thinking, and operational approach) to understand the specific factors that guided the transition from the pre- to post-9/11 era counterterrorism.

6.1   Strategic Considerations: Responding to a Global Terrorist Network

Responding to a global terrorist network that has the capability to conduct attacks of strategic surprise that inflict mass-casualties on the public became the primary strategic concern for policymakers following 9/11. It led to an extreme urgency within the Bush Administration to rapidly and decisively respond to the 9/11 attack – as former special operations officer and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Dr. Joe Felter, stated in our interview:

> "9/11 was a big wake-up call…The policy was [terrorism] as a global threat, requiring a global response. And the United States had to lead that global response…There was a recognition immediately that the goal was to defend Americans and to do that, we needed to go abroad [to fight terrorism]…At the end of the day, governments are there to protect their people. We were punched in the face on 9/11, so the government decided that it had a responsibility to respond."[553]

Former Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Mac Thornberry, who was at the Pentagon with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on 9/11 shortly before the plane hit the building, echoed this point in our interview:

> "The first questions were who did this to us and how do we hit them back and make sure it doesn't happen again. It was out of the blue. People who have been watching

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[548] Naftali, T. (2005). US counterterrorism before bin Laden. *International Journal*, *60*(1), 25-34.

[549] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Pete Villano, January 20, 2020.

[550] Interview with former military strategists for the Global War on Terrorism, General (Retired) Vincent Brooks, March 27, 2020.

[551] Interview with author of *Fountainhead of Jihad* on the Haqqani Network, Mr. Don Rassler, March 3, 2020.

[552] Interview with former military strategists for the Global War on Terrorism, General (Retired) Vincent Brooks, March 27, 2020.

[553] Interview with former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Dr. Joe Felter, March 18, 2020.

have seen terrorist activities in the Middle East before 9/11. But after it happened, it was such a shocking attack; there was a reflexive reaction to strike back."[554]

General Vincent Brooks, a retired four-star general and former Joint Staff Deputy Director for the War on Terrorism following 9/11, expressed concern in our interview that the United States was not ready for such a massive change both within the bureaucracy and the broader American society:

"The Intelligence Community was stove-piped prior to 9/11. DIA, FBI, CIA (and to a lesser extent, Department of State analysis branches) were looking at different parts of the terrorism picture – not viewing it as a global, complete picture…Our search was to find the right kind of policy that protected the United States from subsequent attack but, at the same time, did not restrict the American way of life – commerce, freedom of movement, etc."[555]

The Bush Administration decided it had to demonstrate that it was in full control of the situation following 9/11, as highlighted at the outset of this chapter, and that it could achieve closure within the American public around the attack on 9/11 and any future, large-scale terrorist attack against the US homeland.

The allusion to the United States' fighting totalitarianism during World War II and the Cold War suggested a need to completely and totally remove the threat: "The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise…"[556] Such a framing based on established knowledge, reflective of an intuitive mode of thinking, fostered a counterterrorism policy approach geared towards removing al-Qaeda and its entire support structure and sanctuary through regime change of the Taliban government in Afghanistan. As Colonel John Petkosek, former commander of the Asymmetric War Group, stated in our interview: "Policymakers believed they had to change the way they approached counterterrorism following 9/11, and they had to show tangible results in its aftermath."[557] For the Bush Administration, fighting modern, global terrorism was the essential purpose of the United States and the West in the 21st century. That said, to understand the fundamental nature of this shift in policy following 9/11, we must first understand it within the context of pre-9/11 counterterrorism, which we will discuss in the next section.

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[554] Interview with Chairman / Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 24, 2020.
[555] Interview with former military strategists for the Global War on Terrorism, General (Retired) Vincent Brooks, March 27, 2020.
[556] "The National Security Strategy of the United States," September 2002.
[557] Interview with Colonel (Retired) John Petkosek, January 21, 2020.

6.1.1   Pre-9/11 US Counterterrorism

In the decade preceding 9/11, US policymakers tended to have a basic belief that terrorism was a criminal act that could be managed. As Bryan Price of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point stated in our interview: "Prior to 9/11, the terrorism problem was not viewed as existential or transnational."[558] This led to a defensive, law enforcement-oriented, and reactive approach to terrorism. Such an approach was further reflected in the Clinton Administration's 1999 and 2000 National Security Strategies:

> **Clinton 1999 National Security Strategy:** "As threats to our national security from terrorism, drug trafficking, and other international crime increase, U.S. and foreign law enforcement and judicial agencies must continue to find innovative ways to implement a concerted, global plan to combat international crime."[559]

> **Clinton 2000 National Security Strategy:** "In the event of a terrorist incident, our consequence management ability to significantly mitigate injury and damage may likely deter future attacks…Whether at home or abroad, we will respond to terrorism through defensive readiness of our facilities and personnel, and the ability of our terrorism consequence management efforts to mitigate injury and damage."[560]

An initial analysis of these national security strategies from the Clinton Administration viewed through the lens of core elements of the PPC – basic belief, decisionmaking style, and operational approach – suggests President Clinton's counterterrorism policy was consistent with a threat manager's basic belief given the focus on mitigation and the orientation towards a law enforcement approach. We also see an operational approach focused on the terrorist group itself rather than the broader factors given we do not see reference to root cause factors. General Vincent Brooks reinforced this point in our interview:

> "Where we were prior to 9/11 was looking at terrorism in isolation – influenced broadly by a European view that terrorism should be dealt with as a law enforcement matter and not as a military or operational matter. Not as an integrated matter…This is a European view that was influencing U.S. policy from about 1996…up through 9/11."[561]

We will now further illuminate pre-9/11 counterterrorism through three examples – the 1993 World Trade Center (WTC) bombing, the 1998 US embassies bombing in Kenya and Tanzania, and the 2000 USS Cole bombing.

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[558] Interview with former Director of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Dr. Bryan Price, February 11, 2020.
[559] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House,* 1999.
[560] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House,* 2000.
[561] Interview with former military strategists for the Global War on Terrorism, General (Retired) Vincent Brooks, March 27, 2020.

6.1.1.1   Examples of Pre-9/11 Counterterrorism

In the case of the 1993 World Trade Center attack, US policymakers viewed this attack as a domestic law enforcement event. Ramzi Yousef and Eyad Ismoil conceptualized the attack, acquired the materials, and executed the attack within the United States.[562] [563] The US objective in its counterterrorism response was to apprehend the attackers and bring them into the US judicial system for trial. The 1993 World Trade Center attack is a clear example of the domestic law enforcement approach to managing terrorism. The terrorists went on trial; yet, the broader factors and grievances that gave rise to this terrorist attack remained unaddressed by US counterterrorism policy.[564]

In the case of the bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, US policymakers viewed this attack through the lens of a foreign or overseas terrorist event. The US objective in its counterterrorism response was to manage terrorism by preventing al-Qaeda's ability to train terrorists for further attacks. The Clinton Administration chose to achieve this objective through stand-off, military strikes against al-Qaeda's training camps and logistics in Afghanistan and Sudan.[565]

A little over one-year later, al-Qaeda bombed the USS Cole in the port in Sanaa, Yemen, killing 17 US sailors and wounding 39 others. The US objective in its counterterrorism response was to "bring the attackers to justice."[566] But the Clinton Administration did not want the process of arresting the terrorists and trying them to be drawn out over many years (which is what had occurred in the case of the 1993 World Trade Center attack). This led to the Clinton Administration conducting counterterrorism through an expeditionary law enforcement approach, which was focused on aiding the Yemeni government to apprehend those who perpetrated the USS Cole attack.[567]

This overview of pre-9/11 US counterterrorism suggests the Clinton Administration focused on managing terrorism by directly addressing the terrorist group itself and its members rather than removing terrorism by addressing the broader factors driving terrorism. This pre-9/11 policy perspective was consistent with the threat management perspective outlined in Chapter 3. Also, the decisionmaking tendency appeared to be pragmatic in nature because, during this period, the Clinton Administration responded to terrorist attacks using different

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[562] "World Trade Center is bombed," History.com; available from https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/world-trade-center-bombed.
[563] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Pete Villano, January 20, 2020.
[564] "1993 World Trade Center Bombing Investigation," The 9/11 Museum and Memorial; available from https://www.911memorial.org/connect/blog/1993-world-trade-center-bombing-investigation.
[565] "U.S. missiles pound targets in Afghanistan, Sudan," *CNN*, August 20, 1998. Available from: http://www.cnn.com/US/9808/20/us.strikes.01/.
[566] Pete Erickson, Seth Loertscher, David C. Lane, Paul Erickson, "Twenty Years after the USS Cole Attack: The Search for Justice," October 2002, Volume 13, Issue 10.
[567] Ibid.

approaches to fit both the operational context – first through a domestic law enforcement approach, then a military approach, and finally an expeditionary law enforcement approach. These operational approaches suggest the Clinton Administration operated within a threat management paradigm and attempted to iteratively learned about the various terrorist actors and their associated contexts, enabling a continuous adjustment of its counterterrorism policy along the way. What we do not see in the United States' pre-9/11 approach to counterterrorism is a comprehensive view and consideration of not only the terrorist group itself but also the support structure surrounding such groups. The Bush Administration attempted to address this shortfall in US counterterrorism policy through an enlargement of the policy aperture with the objective of understanding the broader context of drivers and other root cause factors giving rise to terrorism.

6.1.1.2   *Moving from Pre-9/11 to Post-9/11 Counterterrorism*

The Bush Administration believed it had to re-make US counterterrorism. They wanted counterterrorism policy to be more systemic rather than reactive, expansive rather than narrow, and long-term rather than short-term. Top Bush Administration counterterrorism official, Richard Clarke, reinforced this point given the vulnerabilities in the post-9/11 context:

> "We had so many vulnerabilities in this country. We had a very long list of things, systems, that were vulnerable because no one in the United States had seriously considered security from terrorist attacks. At the time, officials were worried that al-Qaeda could use chemical weapons or radioactive materials or that the group would target inter-city trains or subway systems. We had a very long list of things, systems, that were vulnerable because no one in the United States had seriously considered security from terrorist attacks."[568]

Given the scale of the attack on 9/11, the president received new monies and new legal authorities from Congress to counter terrorism. As former special operations officer and professional staff member for counterterrorism policy in the US Congress, Pete Villano, stated in our interview: "After 9/11, with more resources and authorities dedicated and realigned, the law enforcement centric approach that occurred before 9/11 became a more military centric approach after 9/11."[569] With these new resources and authorities, the Bush Administration embraced a pre-emptive approach to stop terrorist attacks and remove terrorism, as reflected in its first National Security Strategy following 9/11:

> "The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction— and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains

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[568] Ryan Lucas, "The World Has Changed Since 9/11, And So Has America's Fight Against Terrorism," *National Public Radio*, September 10, 2021; available from https://www.npr.org/2021/09/10/1035588542/9-11-fight-terrorist-attack.
[569] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Pete Villano, January 20, 2020.

as to the time and place of the enemy's attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively."[570]

To preempt and remove terrorism, the United States could no longer exclusively focus on the terrorist group itself. It now had to contemplate the broader structural factors in society driving terrorism because these became the indicators and warnings and contextual factors around which any decision to take preemptive action would be made. Furthermore, the Bush Administration believed it could not iterate and learn about the terrorist group over time, a hallmark of the pragmatic mode of thinking, because it would take too long, appear indecisive, and put the United States at too great of risk given the mass-casualty terrorism capability al-Qaeda demonstrated on 9/11.

Therefore, to take preemptive action, the Bush Administration would no longer accept the ambiguity and uncertainty of terrorism but instead act with an aura of decisiveness to achieve certainty about the nature of terrorism and how to respond. With decisiveness and certainty came a new set of operational options for US counterterrorism. As William Braniff, Director of START at the University of Maryland, stated in our interview: "9/11 had a massive impact on the level of attention and resources and freedom of maneuver of the US government to use more tools to dismantle terrorist networks."[571] As we will see, each of the core elements of the PPC – from basic belief, to decisionmaking style, to operational approach – changed from the pre- to post-9/11 period to achieve the Bush Administration's desired outcome of removing terrorism. These changes unfolded through the specific actions the Bush Administration took in the aftermath of 9/11.

6.1.2   The Bush Administration's Post-9/11 Decisionmaking

9/11 catalyzed both the domestic and global support for the Bush Administration to fundamentally change the way terrorism was addressed. As Bryan Price, former Director of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, stated in our interview: "The mantra became never again."[572] 9/11 established a new context and a different set of assumptions with respect to strategic surprise, mass-casualty attacks by global terrorist organizations.[573] This mindset shift suggested policy leaders in the Bush Administration assessed the post-9/11 operating environment to be a fundamentally different crisis from that of the pre-9/11 period – what

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[570] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2002.
[571] Interview with Director of START, University of Maryland, Mr. William Braniff, February 7, 2020.
[572] Interview with former Director of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Dr. Bryan Price, February 11, 2020.
[573] Interview with Chairman / Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 24, 2020.

Ansell and Boin describe as to as "unknown unknowns."[574] Bush's Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, spoke to this point, in reference to intelligence reporting:

> "There are known knowns — there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns — that is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tends to be the difficult ones."[575] [576]

The Bush Administration also discussed these "unknown unknowns" in its first National Security Strategy following 9/11:

> "Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank."[577]

This mindset shift – from contemplating terrorism as routine crises prior to 9/11 to now contemplating terrorist events as "black swan" crises following 9/11 drove a process of reconceptualizing and re-making US counterterrorism policy. Such a rapid reconceptualization of US counterterrorism suggests a need for closure at work through definitive judgment ("it is this and nothing else"), re-establishing significance, and dichotomous thinking which leads to a maximalist view of the threat. We will explain each of these further in the next section.

6.1.2.1   Need for Closure and the Bush Administration Following 9/11

Responding to heightened need for closure can be understood through rapid judgments based on semi-complete information. President Bush made rapid judgments about the terrorist threat as early as 9/11. These judgments continued in the days and weeks that followed.

As discussed at the outset of this chapter, the Bush Administration's most immediate judgment in the days and weeks following 9/11 was to define the struggle against terrorism through the widest aperture possible – an existential fight between good versus evil, requiring evil's removal: "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them…America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism…"[578] Second, in the aftermath of 9/11, President Bush immediately attempted to establish closure

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[574] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

[575] Dan Zak, "'Nothing ever ends': Sorting through Rumsfeld's knowns and unknowns," Washington Post, July 1, 2021; available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/rumsfeld-dead-words-known-unknowns/2021/07/01/831175c2-d9df-11eb-bb9e-70fda8c37057_story.html.

[576] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

[577] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2002.

[578] "Text of Bush's Address," *CNN*, September 11, 2001.

within the American public.[579] Bush "seized and freezed" on early clues from 9/11 such as the mass-casualty objectives of the terrorists to frame the struggle as one between "good versus evil."[580] Third, the Bush Administration expressed a maximalist view of the threat and a zero-sum approach to handling it: "Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done."[581] In that same speech, Bush goes on to express the dichotomous thinking consistent with Dechesne and Kruglanski scholarship in Chapter 4: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."[582] These three elements of the Bush Administration's decisionmaking style following 9/11 – rapid judgments, attempts to establish closure, and dichotomous thinking catalyzed aggressive operational approaches to remove terrorism based on established knowledge of fighting totalitarianism in the 20th century (reflective of an intuitive mode of thinking discussed in Chapter 4). These elements of intuitive mode of thinking and a seize and freeze decisionmaking tendency, geared towards addressing a high need for closure within the American public, are, taken together, reflective of the first decisionmaking style (Table 1.2) also outlined in Chapter 4. Next, we will discuss the specific operational approaches the Bush Administration chose after 9/11.

6.1.3   Developing New Operational Approaches for Post-9/11 Response
Consistent with the Bush Administration's structural change policy perspective, which is geared towards removing or "destroying" terrorism, as discussed earlier in this chapter, as well as an intuitive mode of thinking leading to rapid, maximalist judgments about 9/11, as discussed in the last section; the Bush Administration pursued two operational approaches that align with Byman's taxonomy for counterterrorism discussed in Chapter 3: (1) "crushing terrorists" and (2) "addressing the root causes of terrorism."[583] We will start with the Bush Administration's approach of "crushing terrorists."

6.1.3.1   "Crushing Terrorists"
The Bush Administration's first National Security Strategy following 9/11 stated: "The United States of America is fighting a war against terrorists of global reach."[584] [585] Given the

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[579] Dechesne, M. (2015). Radicalization and Mass Violence from a Beckerian Perspective: Conceptual and Empirical Considerations. *Journal for Deradicalization*, (3), 149-177.
[580] "The National Security Strategy of the United States," September 2002.
[581] "Bush: 'You Are Either With Us, Or With the Terrorists'" VOA News, October 27, 2009; available from https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-a-2001-09-21-14-bush-66411197/549664.html.
[582] Ibid.
[583] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.
[584] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2002.
[585] "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," *The White House*, 2003.

scope of the challenge and perceived on-going nature of the threat, this first led the Bush Administration towards having to "crushing terrorists."[586] This is because without such an approach, the administration would not be able to protect the US homeland and structurally change society overseas to make it inhospitable for terrorism. Former Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Mac Thornberry, spoke to this approach in our interview:

> "After [9/11] happened, it was such a shocking attack, there was a reflexive reaction to strike back. Shoe bomber and anthrax attacks amplified the view that we had to respond forcefully. The mindset was this is going to be a permanent feature of life. So, we must strike them over there."[587]

Former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, reinforced this point in our interview, stating: "Bush talked about a multi-dimensional strategy, but the most immediate and urgently implemented portions were intelligence and military" to address terrorism.[588] Colonel John Petkosek also highlighted this approach, and particularly the expressive side of it, in our interview for this dissertation: "There became consensus in going after networks and 'man-hunting.'"[589] Petkosek goes on to say:

> "[The United States] did not worry about the veneer of deniability. Some of the barriers that may have constrained us before 9/11 eroded because of the focus on kinetic operations. After 9/11, the United States got hit, and the United States decided to hit back. After 9/11, we decided your interests are not going to supersede our [the United States'] interests. We would not have seen this prior to 9/11."[590]

Pete Villano echoed this point in our interview:

> "The policy goals since 9/11 became denying safe havens, taking direct action to reduce the threat, and taking action overseas to minimize plots unfolding against the US homeland…The United States' ability to operate unilaterally as a matter of counterterrorism has been a continuum throughout."[591]

This is because as Villano further explains:

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[586]Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[587] Interview with Chairman / Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 24, 2020.

[588] Interview with former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, March 25, 2020.

[589] Interview with Colonel (Retired) John Petkosek, January 21, 2020.

[590] Interview with Colonel (Retired) John Petkosek, January 21, 2020.

[591] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Pete Villano, January 20, 2020.

"The way the United States evaluated the efficacy of its policy was by preventing any future attacks like 9/11…There has been a consensus that we need to fight them over there, so we don't fight them over here – specifically due to 9/11."[592][593]

Villano also pointed out that through the process of "crushing" and removing terrorists, the US government recognized the need for "relative security and stability of a country in a region," which required a contemplation of the broader political factors that drove terrorism.[594][595] This led to the Bush Administration's second preferred operational approach – a focus on the societal, root cause factors of terrorism.

6.1.3.2 Addressing the Root Causes of Terrorism

We see the Bush Administration adopt a second operational approach of addressing the root causes of terrorism. This approach was reflected in the administration's first National Security Strategy following 9/11:

"Supporting moderate and modern government, especially in the Muslim world, to ensure that the conditions and ideologies that promote terrorism do not find fertile ground in any nation; diminishing the underlying conditions that spawn terrorism by enlisting the international community to focus its efforts and resources on areas most at risk; and using effective public diplomacy to promote the free flow of information and ideas to kindle the hopes and aspirations of freedom of those in societies ruled by the sponsors of global terrorism."[596]

Michele Flournoy suggested an explanation for the general reasoning behind this second operational approach during our interview:

"…there was concern we were in a "whack-a-mole" exercise. We knew we needed to disrupt threats. But, at some point, we needed to start addressing the underlying issues. What is causing radicalization? What is causing violent extremism?"[597]

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[592] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Pete Villano, January 20, 2020.

[593] However, William Braniff, Director of START at the University of Maryland, cautioned in our interview that the "fight them over there" approach led to a focus on the terrorist group rather than the broader political factors giving rise to terrorism: "US CT policy, after 9/11, remained reactive to already mobilizing groups that threaten US national security interests," which, according to Braniff, "led to the United States trying to 'kill or capture' its way out of the problem, looking at level of violence as the focal point rather than the psychological or political impact of violence…In the special operations domain, they view CT narrowly as disrupting the next attack on the US homeland and that is a very defensive approach using offense to defend the continental United States. It became, after 9/11, easier to drop a bomb on a terrorist than to take on political approaches."

[594] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Pete Villano, January 20, 2020.

[595] Interview with Chairman / Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 24, 2020.

[596] "The National Security Strategy of the United States," September 2002.

[597] Interview with former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, March 25, 2020.

The Bush Administration recognized the need to address the factors that drove terrorism but attempted to do so through an approach focused on changing the structural factors in society, as Bush stated following 9/11: "The policy of my government, our government, this administration is regime change."[598] The Bush Administration received withering criticism for adopting this approach to counterterrorism. The administration pursued a policy of regime change because it no longer framed terrorist attacks as isolated events but, instead, conceptualized them as "unknown unknown" crises enabled by a broader ecosystem of supporters and grievances. In particular, the Bush Administration focused on the root causes of terrorist ideology. Bush believed such an ideology must be defeated like totalitarianism was in the 20th century, as reflected in his administration's National Security Strategy:

> "The United States of America is fighting a war against terrorists of global reach. The enemy is not a single political regime or person or religion or ideology. The enemy is terrorism — premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents...The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise…"[599]

The Bush Administration fundamentally changed the US approach to counterterrorism – from the pre-9/11 basic belief that terrorism could be managed through an exclusive focus on the terrorist group itself to a post-9/11 basic belief that terrorism must be removed through "crushing" terrorists and addressing the broader, societal factors giving rise to terrorism, which, for the Bush Administration, included those governments that were harboring, supporting, or leveraging terrorism. This is what drove the Bush administration's regime change approach to counterterrorism policy. The administration also demonstrated an intuitive mode of thinking by associating the security context following 9/11 to past events such as World War II, using such a justification for the global military actions it took. The Bush Administration fully embraced this change in approach through the policy instruments it chose.

6.1.4   Implementing Post-9/11 Operational Approaches – Moving from Belief to Behavior

A key tool the Bush Administration leveraged for its approach to counterterrorism was the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF). This legal authorization was identified in our interviews with former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) David Petraeus, former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy, former House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry, and former Assistant Secretary of Defense

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[598] "Turning Point," *Netflix*, September 2021.
[599] "The National Security Strategy of the United States," September 2002.

Michael Lumpkin as the most important policy instrument for US counterterrorism following 9/11.[600]

Just days after 9/11, the Bush Administration requested a new AUMF from Congress. This authorization provided the President of the United States the authority to conduct military action "against those responsible for the...attacks launched against the United States."[601] And just days after 9/11, Congress passed this AUMF, and the President signed it into law (Public Law 107-40)."[602] [603] Notwithstanding the fact that the Republican Party controlled both chambers of Congress, the 2001 AUMF passed overwhelmingly with both bipartisan and bicameral support, including 97-percent of the US House of Representatives and 98-percent of the US Senate voting in favor – an anomalous event in Washington DC in the modern era.[604] [605] The 2001 AUMF provided the following authority to the President:

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—That the President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons.

The 2001 AUMF served as the legal basis for the Bush Administration's Global War on Terrorism. Moreover, the 2001 AUMF – and the eventual war authorization for Iraq, the 2002 AUMF – informed the operational approaches preferred by the Bush Administration, including regime change, which it ultimately pursued in both the Afghanistan and Iraq.

6.1.4.1   Regime Change in Afghanistan

As discussed at the outset of this chapter, President Bush immediately determined that the US response would not only be oriented towards al-Qaeda but also those who harbored the terrorist group. Alberto Gonzalez, White House Counsel, explained this in an interview:

"The President understood that this could not be possible except for the fact that in Afghanistan the Taliban had provided safe haven for al-Qaeda to plan successfully [the 9/11] attack. And the President made the decision very quickly that not only would we go after those responsible for the attacks, but we would also go after those who

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[600] Interviews with former CIA Director General Petraeus, former Undersecretary for Policy Michele Flournoy, HASC Chairman Mac Thornberry, and former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin; May 5-6 2020, March 25, 2020, March 24, 2020, and March 30, 2020 respectively.

[601] Public Law 107-40, *Congress.gov*, September 18, 2001.

[602] Public Law 107-40, *Congress.gov*, September 18, 2001.

[603] Based on author's congressional Armed Services Committee experience, responsible for conducting oversight of military operations whose legal basis is the "2001 AUMF."

[604] H.J. Res 64 (107th), *GovTrack.us*.

[605] S.J. Res 23 (107th), *GovTrack.us*.

harbored and help plan, gave people opportunity to carry out these attacks. We believed in order to rid, or at least diminish the capabilities of al-Qaeda, it would be important to hurt the Taliban."[606]

By October 2001, the Bush Administration conducted an invasion of Afghanistan to remove the Taliban regime from power. The Bush Administration believed this would enable the United States to remove al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan and, thereby, end its ability to plot, plan, and execute further attacks against the US homeland.[607] The United States initially contemplated a diplomatic option that would call on the Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden and expel al-Qaeda.[608] The Taliban signaled they would not do this unless the United States provided evidence that al-Qaeda was responsible for 9/11.[609] The United States and its allies, including the United Kingdom, quickly determined this was a delay tactic and immediately pivoted towards launching an invasion and regime change in Afghanistan. This military operation was known as Operation Enduring Freedom.[610]

In early October 2001, US special operations and CIA forces linked up with the Northern Alliance, an opposition group in northern Afghanistan. Over the course of weeks, the United States, in partnership with the Northern Alliance, ejected the Taliban from power.[611] Following the removal of the Taliban regime, NATO established the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) to oversee on-going military operations and train the Afghan National Security Forces.[612][613] [614][615][616]

The initial counterterrorism actions in Afghanistan suggested that US policymakers viewed the best way to achieve retribution, prevent terrorists from conducting further attacks, and deny al-Qaeda the freedom of maneuver to cultivate its organization and movement was to

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[606] "Turning Point," *Netflix*, September 2021.
[607] Ibid.
[608] U.S. Congressional Research Service. U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions (R48679; August, 27, 2021).
[609] Michael A. Lev, "Taliban maintains refusal to turn over bin laden," Chicago Tribune, October 3, 2001; available from https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/sns-worldtrade-taliban-chi-story.html.
[610] "The U.S. war in Afghanistan: 1999 – 2021," *Council on Foreign Relations*; available from https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan.
[611] "Key dates since the start of the 2001 war in Afghanistan and efforts to broker peace," Reuters, August 9, 2020; available from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban-timeline/key-dates-since-the-start-of-the-2001-war-in-afghanistan-and-efforts-to-broker-peace-idUSKCN2550G5.
[612] "International Security and Assistance Force," *Institute for the Study of War*; available from http://www.understandingwar.org/international-security-assistance-force-isaf.
[613] "Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts," CNN.com, October 4, 2020; available from https://www.cnn.com/2013/10/28/world/operation-enduring-freedom-fast-facts/index.html.
[614] "Resolute Support;" available from https://rs.nato.int/rsm.
[615] ORS no longer remains in effect as of the writing of this chapter.
[616] ISAF remained in existence for 13 years, transitioning on January 1, 2015 to Operation Resolute Support (ORS), which continued the training and equipping of 352,000 Afghan National Security and Defense Forces and conducted military CT operations in Afghanistan.

invade Afghanistan and remove the Taliban regime from power.[617] This was consistent with the structural change perspective in which removing terrorism by removing the regime was the primary approach to counterterrorism. We find a similar logic and approach through the Bush Administration's regime change approach in Iraq just 18-months later. Saddam Hussein became the next target in the Bush Administration's quest to remove terrorism and achieve certainty for the American public.

6.1.4.2 *Regime Change in Iraq*

In parallel to the war in Afghanistan, the Bush Administration began contemplating how to address a separate but on-going challenge from Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The Global War on Terrorism policy paradigm, the perceived success of the regime change approach in Afghanistan, and the precedent of the legal authorization for the use of military force through the 2001 AUMF provided both a predicate as well as an operating model for addressing threats posed by Saddam Hussein. In fact, it is within this post-9/11 paradigm that the Bush Administration re-framed the challenge from Saddam Hussein and his regime from a regional challenge to a global counterterrorism challenge such that the administration connected the Hussein regime to al-Qaeda, which, Bush argued, heightened the risk of WMD getting in the hands of terrorists. Villano makes this point in our interview: "[The war] in Iraq became a form of counterterrorism folded into [overall] US counterterrorism policy."[618]

The acuteness of the uncertainty driving the survivalist mindset within the American public catalyzed a more aggressive regime change approach by the Bush Administration. By 2002 and 2003, regime change in Iraq became an overriding objective of the administration. As Bill Braniff, Director of START at the University of Maryland stated in our interview: "The Bush Administration was initially limited and targeted…This all changed after the engagement in Iraq. Iraq was much more broad and far-reaching."[619] Regime change to structurally change society became the Bush Administration's core counterterrorism policy perspective and objective.[620] We will proceed by understanding how the threat from Saddam Hussein was understood and treated prior to 9/11 to better understand how the Bush Administration re-framed the threat posed by Saddam Hussein in the post-9/11 context.

Following the 1991 Gulf War, the United States chose a policy of containment when it came to Saddam Hussein. This containment policy manifested in Northern and Southern no-fly zones over Iraq.[621] Operation Southern Watch began in 1992 and lasted through the invasion of

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[617] Interview with Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 24, 2020.
[618] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Pete Villano, January 20, 2020.
[619] Interview with Director of START, University of Maryland, Mr. William Braniff, February 7, 2020.
[620] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2006.
[621] Silliman, S. L. (2001). The Iraqi Quagmire: Enforcing the No-Fly Zones. *New Eng. L. Rev.*, *36*, 767.

Iraq in 2003. The purpose of Southern Watch was to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 688 to ensure Saddam Hussein (a Sunni) respected the human rights of the Iraqi Shia in Southern Iraq and integrate them into Iraq politics.[622] By 1997, Operation Northern Watch began with the United States, the United Kingdom, and Turkey to prevent Saddam Hussein from repressing the Kurdish populations in northern Iraq.[623]

Following 9/11, the United States and partner and allied intelligence services became concerned that Saddam Hussein was pursuing weapons of mass destruction.[624] In the 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush reinforced this new framing of Saddam Hussein by arguing he and his regime were part of an "Axis of Evil" — a rogue actor who was part of a global network of other rogue actors building "Weapons of Mass Destruction" (WMD) and supporting terrorists:

> "Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens – leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections – then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world. States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic."[625]

Bush's national security team also presented a nexus between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda, culminating with Secretary of State Colin Powell's now infamous speech at the United Nations:

> "What I want to bring to your attention today is the potentially much more sinister nexus between Iraq and the al-Qaeda terrorist network – a nexus that combines classic terrorist organizations and modern methods of murder."[626]

Reinforcing Powell's presentation at the United Nations, Vice President Dick Cheney asserted in a speech: "The United States made our position clear. We could not accept the grave danger of Saddam Hussein and its terrorist allies turning weapons of mass destruction

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[622] Shenon, P. (1999). U.S. and Iraqi Jets Tangle in the Southern 'No Flight' Zone. *The New York times*, 1999-01-06.

[623] Gregory Ball, "1991 - Operation Provide Comfort and Northern Watch," *Air Force Historical Support Division*, September 18, 2012; available from https://www.afhistory.af.mil/FAQs/Fact-Sheets/Article/458953/1991-operation-provide-comfort-and-northern-watch/.

[624] "Saddam Hussein's Development of Weapons of Mass Destruction," *The White House*; available from https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/decade/sect3.html.

[625] State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush, January 29, 2002; available from https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html.

[626] "Turning Point," *Netflix*, September 2021.

against us or our friends and allies."[627] Bush himself framed the Hussein regime in the most ominous terms: "The US cannot wait for final proof in the form of a mushroom cloud."[628] Framing Saddam Hussein as part of the "War on Terrorism" established the predicate for the US military invasion of Iraq and the regime change approach, consistent with the structural change perspective outlined in Chapter 3. And Congress agreed.

Like Afghanistan, counterterrorism (and counterinsurgency) in Iraq led to a multi-year military campaign to remove the regime and deny terrorist safe haven. In 2002, Congress provided a new, legal authority to the President for the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime known as the 2002 AUMF.[629] Below are the operative sections of the 2002 AUMF:

SEC. 2. SUPPORT FOR UNITED STATES DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS.

The Congress of the United States supports the efforts by the President to—

(1) strictly enforce through the United Nations Security Council all relevant Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq and encourages him in those efforts; and

(2) obtain prompt and decisive action by the Security Council to ensure that Iraq abandons its strategy of delay, evasion and noncompliance and promptly and strictly complies with all relevant Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES.

(a) AUTHORIZATION.—The President is authorized to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to—

(1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and

(2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

The removal of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 was consistent with the approach the administration took in Afghanistan with the Taliban. This also became the culminating counterterrorism endeavor for the Bush Administration because it consumed the bandwidth of the US government writ large – particularly the US military – throughout the remaining years of Bush's first term in office.

By 2004, Bush's last year of his first term, the administration adopted a full and complete focus on the broader factors that were giving rise to terrorism. Moreover, the Bush Administration fully embraced being a "*commander*" in the 2004 State of the Union Address, beginning with Afghanistan:

"As we gather tonight, hundreds of thousands of American service men and women are deployed across the world in the war on terror. By bringing hope to the oppressed and

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[627] Ibid.

[628] "The US cannot wait for a smoking gun," *The Guardian*, 2002.

[629] Public Law 107-243, *Congress.gov*, October 16, 2002.

delivering justice to the violent, they are making America more secure…As part of the offensive against terror, we are also confronting the regimes that harbor and support terrorists and could supply them with nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. The United States and our allies are determined: We refuse to live in the shadow of this ultimate danger. The first to see our determination were the Taliban, who made Afghanistan the primary training base of al Qaeda killers. As of this month, that country has a new constitution, guaranteeing free elections and full participation by women. Businesses are opening, health care centers are being established, and the boys and girls of Afghanistan are back in school. With help from the new Afghan army, our coalition is leading aggressive raids against the surviving members of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The men and women of Afghanistan are building a nation that is free and proud and fighting terror. And America is honored to be their friend."[630]

Bush, in parallel, touted the war in Iraq in the same way:

"Since we last met in this chamber, combat forces of the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Poland and other countries enforced the demands of the United Nations, ended the rule of Saddam Hussein, and the people of Iraq are free. Having broken the Baathist regime, we face a remnant of violent Saddam supporters. Men who ran away from our troops in battle are now dispersed and attack from the shadows. These killers, joined by foreign terrorists, are a serious, continuing danger…The work of building a new Iraq is hard and it is right. And America has always been willing to do what it takes for what is right. Last January, Iraq's only law was the whim of one brutal man. Today our coalition is working with the Iraqi Governing Council to draft a basic law, with a bill of rights. We are working with Iraqis and the United Nations to prepare for a transition to full Iraqi sovereignty by the end of June. As democracy takes hold in Iraq, the enemies of freedom will do all in their power to spread violence and fear. They are trying to shake the will of our country and our friends, but the United States of America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins."[631]

Over the course of this period, the Bush Administration changed US counterterrorism policy along all three of the core dimensions of the PPC framework: (1) basic belief, (2) decisionmaking style, and (3) operational approach. US counterterrorism policy moved from a threat management policy perspective during the pre-9/11 period to a structural change policy perspective in this post 9/11 period; from a pragmatic, learning decisionmaking style in the pre-9/11 period to an intuitive, seizing and freezing decisionmaking style in this post-9/11 period; and from an operational approach focused on the terrorist group during the pre-9/11 period to an operational approach focused on root cause factors that give rise to terrorism during the

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[630] "State of the Union Address to the 108th Congress, Second Session," *United States Capitol*, January 20, 2004.
[631] Ibid.

post-9/11 period. Given this PPC analysis, we assess the Bush Administration operated consistent "*The Commander*" policy profile.

6.2   Reflection: First-Term Bush Administration Policy Profile

The process of moving from beliefs to behavior for the Bush Administration can be first recognized over a period of weeks from September 11th, 2001 to the invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 and then fully realized through the invasion of Iraq just 18 months later. The Bush Administration rapidly framed the terrorist threat as a fight against modern totalitarianism in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, as reflected through Bush's statements on 9/11 as well as the "bullhorn address" just days after 9/11. Bush wanted to immediately avert ambiguity and achieve certainty and closure in relation to the perceived existentiality of the threat within the American public. The administration did so by relying to established knowledge around fighting totalitarianism in the 20th century, consistent with an intuitive mode of thinking discussed through our review in Chapter 4.

This led to the Bush Administration "seizing" and then ultimately "freezing" on three pieces of information that catalyzed this pivot: (1) 9/11 conceptualized as a "new era of destructive terrorism" and a global insurgency; (2) the sanctuary that al-Qaeda enjoyed from the Taliban that allowed it to plot, plan, and execute 9/11, and (3) the intelligence with respect to al-Qaeda's continued plotting, planning, and execution of terrorist attacks; and.[632] [633] [634] This analysis allows us to begin to answer the central questions of this dissertation: (1) has there been continuity or change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11; (2) what factors led to the continuity or change, and (3) how do we classify any such continuity or change?

First, we see change in US counterterrorism policy from the Clinton Administration to the Bush Administration in which counterterrorism was no longer viewed as a purely criminal matter but instead as a strategic, all-encompassing struggle the likes of which the administration associated with the fighting totalitarianism in the 20th century. The Bush Administration communicated this fundamental shift from managing terrorism to removing terrorism both privately with his White House staff such as his White House Chief of Staff and General Counsel as well as publicly in speeches from the Oval Office, to Congress, to "Ground Zero" itself. The Bush Administration also adopted an intuitive mode of thinking that led to a "seizing" on an existential understanding of the terrorist threat. The Bush Administration also began pursuing operational approaches that aligned with this maximalist view of the struggle – most obviously depicted through the regime change policy approach in both Afghanistan and Iraq, reflecting a tendency towards relying on past knowledge by conceptualizing the struggle

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[632] "Osama Bin Laden's Confession;" available from https://abcnews.go.com/2020/video/osama-bin-laden-interview-1998-13506629.
[633] "Turning Point," *Netflix*, September 2021.
[634] Emma Sky, "American After 9/11," *PBS Frontline*, September 2021.

against terrorism as akin to fighting totalitarianism in the 20th century during World War II or the Cold War – maximalist struggles that required a maximalist response. The key factors that led to this change included the surprise nature of the 9/11 attack as well as survivalist mindset that was catalyzed within society. This survivalist mindset required Bush to re-establish control over terrorism by structurally changing the factors that were giving rise to terrorism. We, therefore, classify the first-term Bush Administration as "*The Commander"* within our PPC framework.

During his second-term in office, President Bush remains a "*commander*" by adopting the same policy perspective, decisionmaking style, and operational approach. This occurs within the context of his administration continuing to enlarge the Global War on Terrorism, which culminated in "the surge" strategy in Iraq. We will explain this through the PPC framework in the next chapter.

7 BUSH ADMINISTRATION: THE IRAQ SURGE

The ambiguity, anxiety, and survivalist mindset stemming from the perceived existential threat of mass-casualty terrorism continued to manifest within the American public during President Bush's second-term in office due to continued terrorist attacks both in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as against the US homeland and US interests abroad. To address this existential anxiety within the American public, the Bush Administration chose to "go it alone" when it came to counterterrorism, even when partners and allies opposed the United States' approach, as reflected through the "surge" in Iraq. The Bush Administration pursued this "go it alone" approach to protect the United States at all costs. In doing so, the Bush Administration further sought to solidify its "*command*" over the terrorism.

The extreme decisiveness and expansion of the "go it alone" approach to US counterterrorism during the Bush Administration's second-term in office was not a foregone conclusion – to a considerable extent because his re-election in 2004 was not a foregone conclusion. There were key contextual factors at play that put into question Bush's re-election as President of the United States, including: (1) the decision to invade Iraq, (2) the human rights abuses at Abu Ghraib and policy questions surrounding the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and (3) al-Qaeda's continued ability to conduct attacks. These key issues were "on the ballot" during the 2004 presidential election – the outcome of which would determine both President Bush's future mandate as president and the overall policy approach for US counterterrorism over the next four years.

The 2004 general election for President of the United States was between then US Senator John Kerry and presidential incumbent President George W. Bush. As noted, the decision to invade Iraq was front and center in this presidential election. One of the key issues animating the election had to do with whether the United States was safer from terrorism with 49-percent of Americans identifying it as among the most salient issues. Another key issue had to do with the security situation in Iraq with 46-percent of Americans identifying it as the second most salient national security issue during that election cycle.[635] Bush argued during the 2004 election cycle that the United States had to remain resolute and decisive in removing terrorism. Bush's suggested approach during the campaign was to "stay the course" not only in Iraq but also in the overall Global War on Terrorism.[636] In fact, after al-Qaeda's bombing of the Madrid subway in 2004, Bush connected that attack to the US effort in Iraq, "vowing that terrorist

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[635] Joseph Caroll, Economy, Terrorism Top Issues in 2004 Election Vote," *Gallop*, September 25, 2003.
[636] "Bush: Stay the Course on Terror War," *CNN*, May 6, 2004; available from https://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/03/17/bush.terror/index.html.

attacks like [the] bombings in Spain 'will never shake the will of the United States...al-Qaeda wants us out of Iraq because al-Qaeda wants to use Iraq as an example of defeating freedom and democracy.'"[637]

John Kerry, Bush's presidential election opponent, presented a different message to the American public when it came to Iraq and counterterrorism overall. Kerry agreed that the United States had to respond to terrorism. But Kerry wanted to do so through international institutions and alliances. He did not want to "go it alone" like Bush. Kerry described his approach as "a new era of alliances."[638] Kerry envisioned international diplomacy as a central part of counterterrorism; Kerry wanted to "treat the United Nations as a 'full partner' and pursue collective security arrangements."[639] However, Kerry's position on counterterrorism and Iraq remained fraught given his 2002 Senate vote in which he voted in favor of authorizing the war in Iraq.

Even though Kerry voted to authorize the war in Iraq, he critiqued Bush for his decision to invade Iraq because it was based on faulty intelligence.[640] Yet, Kerry conceded that he would have still voted in favor of the Iraq war even if he knew Saddam Hussein did not possess weapons of mass destruction. Kerry's position was based on a distinction between serving as a US Senator versus a US President. He viewed the president as having unique standing as commander-in-chief and, thereby, decisionmaking power and when it came to war. Kerry argued on the campaign trail that he would not have taken the step to go to war with Iraq had he been President. Kerry also suggested Bush's "stay the course" approach represented a single-mindedness and even ignorance and naiveté about war, as he stated in a major policy speech during the 2004 campaign:

> "Invading Iraq has created a crisis of historic proportions, and if we do not change course, there is the prospect of a war with no end in sight...Today, President Bush tells us that he would do everything all over again, the same way. How can he possibly be serious? Is he really saying that if we knew there were no imminent threat, no weapons of mass destruction, no ties to al-Qaeda, the United States should have invaded Iraq? My answer, resoundingly, is no, because a commander-in-chief's first responsibility is to make a wise and responsible decision to keep America safe...We have traded a dictator for a chaos that has left America less secure."[641]

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[637] "Bush: Stay the Course on Terror War," *CNN*, May 6, 2004; available from https://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/03/17/bush.terror/index.html.

[638] Bush versus Kerry At a Glance," *MSNBC*, March 4, 2004; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna4448630.

[639] Ibid.

[640] Ibid.

[641] Jodi Wilgoren and Elisabeth Bumiller, "*In Harshest Critique Yet, Kerry Attacks Bush Over War in Iraq," New York Times,* September 21, 2004; available from https://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/21/politics/campaign/in-harshest-critique-yet-kerry-attacks-bush-over-war-in.html.

Kerry's message was ultimately re-framed by the Bush campaign as a mixed message, which opened Kerry up to being characterized as indecisive. Bush himself responded to Kerry's speech by stating:

> "Forty-three days before the election, my opponent has now settled on a proposal for what to do next and it's exactly what we're currently doing…Today my opponent continued his pattern of twisting in the wind with new contradictions on old positions on Iraq."[642]

The Bush campaign continued to frame Kerry as an indecisive leader by charging that, as US Senator, Kerry voted for both the 2001 AUMF (the Afghanistan war and 9/11 response against al-Qaeda) and the 2002 AUMF (the Iraq war). This meant Kerry supported the legal authorization of the wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq. However, at the same time, Kerry voted against a $87 billion appropriations supplemental legislation that funded those wars, which Bush noted to support his critique of Kerry as a "flip-flopper" on counterterrorism.[643] Kerry explained this voting record on the campaign trail by stating: "I voted for it before I voted against it."[644] Kerry said he made the inartful comment at "an evening event after a long day of campaigning." However, the Bush campaign pointed out that Kerry also made this comment earlier that same the day. The Bush campaign leaped at this opportunity to not only frame Kerry as a "flip-flopper" on counterterrorism but also "an internationalist willing to negotiate away the safety of the American public to international interests," stating in the subject line of a campaign email to its supporters: "Perhaps his watch was on Paris time."[645]

This incident led to a framing of two worldviews when it came to US counterterrorism. On the one hand, Bush presented himself as a decisive leader, arguing that the United States needed to stay the course with respect to terrorism and continue the "go it alone" approach to counterterrorism to protect the American public at all costs. On the other hand, Kerry believed the United States needed to work through international institutions and create alliances. This strategic choice for the American public during the 2004 presidential election was occurring within the context of a public still reeling from 9/11, which can be seen through the polling on the issue of terrorism at the time. This concern was reflected in the polling during the 2004 election cycle. When it came to counterterrorism, Bush maintained a notable lead over Kerry. At times during the campaign, Bush's margin over Kerry on the issue of terrorism topped 35

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[642] Jodi Wilgoren and Elisabeth Bumiller, "*In Harshest Critique Yet, Kerry Attacks Bush Over War in Iraq," New York Times,* September 21, 2004; available from https://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/21/politics/campaign/in-harshest-critique-yet-kerry-attacks-bush-over-war-in.html.
[643] "Kerry discusses $87 billion comment," CNN, September 30, 2004; available from https://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/09/30/kerry.comment/.
[644] Ibid.
[645] Ibid.

points.[646] In exit polling, "Bush overtook Kerry 58 – 40 percent on just the issue of handling terrorism."[647] And yet, Bush's overall approval rating was only 47-percent prior to the election, which is noteworthy because "no president in history had won re-election with below 50-percent."[648]

This polling suggests a survivalist mindset remained within the American public when it came to terrorism. This is because, in the lead up to the election, the American public observed al-Qaeda's continued capability and capacity to conduct dramatic, complex, and global terrorist attacks – even after losing its safe haven in Afghanistan. These major mass-casualty attacks included the 2002 nightclub district attack in Bali, the 2003 attack of the UN headquarters in Baghdad (and other on-going violence and beheadings led by al-Qaeda in Iraq's Abu Masab al-Zarqawi), and the 2004 Madrid train bombings.[649] [650] These and more terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda and its affiliates not only led to a perception that terrorism was getting worse not better, but it also suggested to the American public that the United States was not safe from terrorism simply by removing terrorist sanctuary in Afghanistan. The view became that terrorist sanctuaries had to be removed everywhere, including Iraq, and the governance in these countries had to be continue to be restructured in order to remove terrorism.[651] [652] Accordingly, the Bush Administration determined that to achieve closure with respect to terrorism, the Bush Administration had to continue to rely on established knowledge around fighting totalitarianism in the 20th century and continue to proceed with a decisive and expansive approach for US counterterrorism policy, which influenced President Bush's decision to "surge" tens-of-thousands of US troops into Iraq during his second-term in office.

The survivalist mindset seeks decisive and charismatic leadership to overcome the existential threat induced by events like 9/11.[653] It is noteworthy to mention that in the context of social psychology experimentation during that time, researchers found reminders of one's own mortality through exposure to images of 9/11 not only increased support for Bush but also decreased willingness within the American public to vote for John Kerry.[654] Accordingly, we see

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[646] Peter J. Wallison, "What Can We Learn from the 2004 U.S. Election About the Future of Politics in the United States?" *American Enterprise Institute*, May 18, 2005; available from https://www.aei.org/articles/what-can-we-learn-from-the-2004-u-s-election-about-the-future-of-politics-in-the-united-states/.

[647] Ibid.

[648] Ibid.

[649] "Timeline – Major attacks by al-Qaeda," *Reuters*; available from https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-56711920110502.

[650] "Spain train bombings fast facts," CNN, March 1, 2021; available from https://www.cnn.com/2013/11/04/world/europe/spain-train-bombings-fast-facts/index.html.

[651] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2002.

[652] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2006.

[653] Landau, M. J., Solomon, S., Greenberg, J., Cohen, F., Pyszczynski, T., Arndt, J., Miller, C., Ogilvie, D, and Cook, A. (2004). Deliver us from evil: The effects of mortality salience and reminders of 9/11 on support for President George W. Bush. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, *30*(9), 1136-1150.

[654] Ibid.

this morality salience play out through the American public ultimately choosing Bush for a second-term as President of the United States. It was Bush's presentation of decisiveness and focus on protecting the American public from terrorism – based on the decisiveness and robust, totalistic response that restructured totalitarian regimes in the 20th century – that delivered the election for Bush. *ABC News* pollster, Gary Langer, argued that Bush's decisiveness and focus on security at all costs was what delivered the 2004 election for him:

> "[Bush's] image of leadership, his focus on security, the fact that 9/11 hasn't happened again within this country's borders convinced Americans, especially women with families to protect, that this president should be returned to the White House."[655]

With this electoral victory came a mandate to "stay the course" and even expand the Bush Administration's first-term counterterrorism policy approach. Accordingly, we assess the Bush Administration continued to operate consistent with "*The Commander*" policy profile (Table 1.3, page 65) during its second-term in office. Such an approach enabled the Bush Administration to respond with an aura of decisiveness to the existential anxiety within the American public that stemmed from terrorism. This operationally manifested through one of the biggest decisions of the Bush presidency – the "surge" in Iraq.

7.1 Strategic Considerations: Next Phase in the Bush Administration's War on Terrorism

By 2005, the American public was deeply concerned about al-Qaeda's continued ability to attack the West through mass-casualty terrorist attacks such as the 7/7 bombings in London. The public was also gravely concerned about the trajectory of the conflict in Iraq. The view was that the United States had to continue to eradicate terrorism and could not "outsource" its security to others or count on other international actors to protect the United States. Colonel John Petkosek summed up the "go it alone" mindset in this way during our interview:

> "On 9/11, the United States got hit, and the United States decided to hit back. We even had allies trying to undermine our policy. After 9/11, we decided your international interests are not going to supersede our international interests."[656]

As President Bush entered his second-term in office, his administration had fully solidified its perspective that a "go it alone" approach was required. They ran on it during the 2004 election, and the administration assumed that other countries would not always be with them, go as far as the United States thought necessary, or commit as much as what the administration thought was needed for counterterrorism. This, the Bush Administration believed, put US national security at risk. The Bush Administration made this point in its 2006 National Security Strategy:

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[655] Lisa Trei, "Why Bush Won in 2004," Stanford News Service, November 17, 2004; available from https://news.stanford.edu/pr/2004/polls-1117.html.
[656] Interview with Colonel (Retired) John Petkosek, January 21, 2020.

"Some nations differ with us on the appropriate pace of change. Other nations provide rhetorical support for free markets and effective democracy but little action on freedom's behalf…we must be prepared to act alone if necessary."[657]

The Economist summed up the Bush Administration's approach to counterterrorism in its piece "Going it alone:" "In an age of global terror, self-defence meant acting alone and pre-emptively, if need be. Working through alliances—if that meant waiting for others—could be suicide."[658]

The Bush Administration pursued this "go it alone" approach, in part, because of the continued heightened need for closure within the American public, as suggested at the outset of this chapter. Dechesne and Kruglanski reminded us in Chapter 4 that need for closure is the way people "believe, form impressions, and create categories in order to feel sure and avoid ambiguity."[659] The Bush Administration believed it had to reject ambiguity at all costs. It could not wait for other nations to join the United States or engage in extensive policy arguments with other nations. It would take too long for those countries to become aligned with the US counterterrorism approach, and it would require too many caveats and qualifiers. In short, it would lead to increased ambiguity in what the Bush Administration already viewed as a highly ambiguous crisis situation due to al-Qaeda and its associated forces' continued drumbeat of attacks – ambiguity that the Bush Administration wanted to avert, based on established knowledge on how to fight totalitarianism as well as the established knowledge around the successes the administration believed it was achieving in Afghanistan and Iraq, consistent with the intuitive mode of thinking (as discussed in our review in Chapter 4). Accordingly, Bush decided to turn ambiguity into certainty by "going it alone" – as the administration clearly asserted in its second-term National Security Strategy: "We must be prepared to act alone…"[660]

The "go it alone" mindset during the Bush Administration's second-term in office led to further unilateral, "go it alone" action when it came to counterterrorism. As Pete Villano expressed during our interview: "There has been a consistent approach for US unilateral capability – and to always have that option…to prevent another 9/11."[661] Don Rassler also reinforced this point during our interview by stating: "Bush declared an emphasis on unilateral action…[to prevent the next 9/11]."[662] Iraq became the strategic focal point for the Bush Administration's unilateral, "go it alone" approach to counterterrorism.[663] This was most prominently reflected through the Bush Administration's "surge" strategy in Iraq.

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[657] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2006.

[658] "Going it alone," *The Economist*, October 7, 2004; available from https://www.economist.com/united-states/2004/10/07/going-it-alone.

[659] Dechesne, M., and Kruglanski, A. W. (2004). Terror's Epistemic Consequences: Existential Threat and the Quest for Certainty and Closure.

[660] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2006.

[661] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Peter Villano, January 20, 2020.

[662] Interview with author of *Fountainhead of Jihad* on the Haqqani Network, Mr. Don Rassler, March 3, 2020.

[663] "National Security Strategy for Victory in Iraq," *The White House*, November 2005.

7.1.1 "The Surge" in Iraq

The invasion of Iraq represented a new phase in the Bush Administration's Global War on Terrorism. It not only reflected the administration's strategic pivot from the United States' pre-9/11, limited approach to counterterrorism; it also reflected an expanded policy for remaking countries and societies such that terrorism would be removed and/or not take root in the first place.[664]

During the post-9/11 period, US counterterrorism policy began to evolve away from the reflexive reaction to 9/11 – a reaction that included an element of retribution, as Congressman Thornberry framed it in our interview – to more long-term goals.[665] Through the surge, the Bush administration achieved a focus around addressing the root causes that were driving terrorism, which aligned with the structural change perspective.[666] In fact, the Bush Administration went a step further in making the case for the structural change approach (as discussed in Chapter 3) by tying the existence of global terrorism directly to the American public's ability to enjoy democracy and liberty, as stated in Bush's 2006 National Security Strategy: "Championing freedom advances our interests because the survival of liberty at home increasingly depends on the success of liberty abroad."[667] Here, the Bush Administration suggested that non-democratic systems in other countries directly threatened the United States' way of life because such systems allowed terrorists to thrive off of grievance. Under this logic, removing, "destroying," or "crushing" terrorists were a necessary but insufficient policy approach. Sufficiency required transforming societies such that they were both no longer harboring and/or providing hospitable environments to terrorists, which required a focus on addressing the root causes of terrorism, consistent with Byman's analysis from Chapter 3.[668] Bush decided he would be unable to address the root causes of terrorism if he did not structurally change nation-states and societies that provided sanctuary that enabled terrorist groups to incubate, launch attacks, and cultivate support. We see the Bush Administration codify this approach in its strategy documents to include the 2006 National Security Strategy in which the administration stated that success in Iraq and Afghanistan was directly tied to success in the Global War on Terrorism:

> "The terrorists' goal is to overthrow a rising democracy; claim a strategic country as a haven for terror; destabilize the Middle East; and strike America and other free nations with ever-increasing violence. This we can never allow. This is why success in

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[664] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2006.

[665] Interview with Chairman / Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 24, 2020.

[666] "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," *The White House*, March 2006.

[667] Ibid.

[668] See also Monten, J. (2005). The roots of the Bush doctrine: Power, nationalism, and democracy promotion in US strategy. *International Security*, *29*(4), 112-156.

Afghanistan and Iraq is vital, and why we must prevent terrorists from exploiting ungoverned areas."[669]

7.1.2 Deciding to Surge

As noted in the 2006 National Security Strategy, the Bush Administration had two wars it was fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, the Bush Administration considered the war in Iraq to be the more vital effort because it viewed Iraq as the epicenter of the Global War on Terrorism.[670] As noted in Chapter 5, the administration framed the War on Terrorism in Iraq as consistent with the struggle against totalitarianism in the 20th century. The administration understood the lessons of this struggle during the last century as a test of wills, requiring total and unwavering commitment and a long-term view to be successful. The decision to surge US troops into Iraq began a new phase of the War on Terrorism, which was, in part, driven by a relatively new affiliate of al-Qaeda, al-Qaeda in Iraq, led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.[671]

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi became a well-known terrorist within the American psyche due to his brutal killings. Zarqawi offered "his *bay'ah* or allegiance to Osama bin Laden and became known for his mass beheadings and horrific killings of not only Iraqis but also Americans and Westerners," more broadly.[672] He also became known for his role as the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq. Shortly after this *bay'ah* to Bin Laden, "Zarqawi proclaimed himself to be the 'Emir of al-Qaeda's Operations in the Land of Mesopotamia.'"[673] By early 2006, Zarqawi and his al-Qaeda affiliate turned the security situation in Iraq into a "deadly, sectarian-driven civil war."[674]

Zarqawi not only had ideological purposes for his terrorism. He also had strategic and political purposes consistent with our understanding of the terrorism phenomenon as laid out by Bruce Hoffman in Chapter 2. Zarqawi and his supporters' grievances stemmed from what they believed to be oppression of the Sunni minority in Iraq following the US invasion of Iraq. Zarqawi viewed the United States as not only occupying Muslims lands in Iraq but also enabling the Shia majority to control Iraq. But Zarqawi also had the international context in mind and a strategic calculus to his actions, as millions of Sunni Muslims worldwide were increasingly being framed as terrorists (or at least potential terrorists), Zarqawi cleverly made use of the increasingly felt sense of persecution among Muslims to represent himself as the vanguard of their cause, as described by the International Crisis Group:

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[669] "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," *The White House*, March 2006.

[670] "The Iraq War," *Council on Foreign Relations*.

[671] Mary Anne Weaver, "The short, violent life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," The Atlantic, July / August 2006; available from https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/.

[672] Ibid.

[673] Ibid.

[674] Ibid.

"Zarqawi's approach was shaped further by new jihadist ideologues, who also borrow from non-Islamic traditions. Abu Bakr al-Naji, the pseudonym of an unknown author, explained in his *Management of Savagery* how to create and exploit pervasive violence to unseat a tyrant and consolidate power. Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir, building on the work of others, including some with al-Qaeda links, such as Abu Yahya al-Libi, fleshed this out, arguing the propriety and utility of specific tactics, including suicide bombings, collateral damage, kidnapping, assassinations and beheadings. These writers advocated violence not only to protect a marginalized Sunni community, but also to remake society and give direction to a generation crushed under decades of oppressive governance and an unfriendly global order."[675]

This sense of persecution among Muslims was best encapsulated in the abuses at the Abu Ghraib detention facility in 2003 run by the US military in Iraq.[676] In fact, in 2004, Zarqawi beheaded Nicholas Berg, an American contractor, in what he claimed was "in retaliation for the abuses at Abu Ghraib."[677] Through terrorism, Zarqawi believed he could "awaken his supporters to this injustice and foment a civil war, making Iraq and epicenter for the global jihad, that would lead to the ejection of the United States from Iraq."[678] Notably, the Bush Administration came to a similar conclusion in which it saw Iraq not only as an epicenter of global jihad but also the potential well-spring of democracy, as the administration asserted in its second-term National Security Strategy:

"The terrorists today see Iraq as the central front of their fight against the United States. They want to defeat America in Iraq and force us to abandon our allies before a stable democratic government has been established that can provide for its own security. The terrorists believe they would then have proven that the United States is a waning power and an unreliable friend. In the chaos of a broken Iraq, the terrorists believe they would be able to establish a safe haven like they had in Afghanistan, only this time in the heart of a geopolitically vital region. Surrendering to the terrorists would likewise hand them a powerful recruiting tool: the perception that they are the vanguard of history. When the Iraqi Government, supported by the Coalition, defeats the terrorists, terrorism will be dealt a critical blow. We will have broken one of al-Qaeda's most formidable factions – the network headed by Zarqawi – and denied him the safe haven he seeks in Iraq. And

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[675] International Crisis Group. (2016). Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. *International Crisis Group*.

[676] Lisa Meyers, "Zarqawi posts Abu Ghraib attack video on web," *NBC News*, April 7, 2005; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna7419507.

[677] Johnson, D. A., Mora, A., & Schmidt, A. (2016). The Strategic Costs of Torture: How" Enhanced Interrogation" Hurt America. *Foreign Affairs*, *95*(5), 121-132.

[678] Jason M. Breslow, "Nada Bakos: How Zarqawi went from 'thug' to ISIS founder," *Frontline*, May 17, 2016.

the success of democracy in Iraq will be a launching pad for freedom's success throughout a region that for decades has been a source of instability and stagnation."[679]

Even though Zarqawi offered his allegiance to Bin Laden, he also believed in the concept of *takfir*, which had to do with purifying his surroundings from "non-believers," including not only Westerners but also Shia inside of Iraq as reflected through a letter by Zarqawi that was translated by the US Department of State:

"[The Shia] are the insurmountable obstacle, the lurking snake, the crafty and malicious scorpion, the spying enemy, and the penetrating venom. We here are entering a battle on two levels. One, evident and open, is with an attacking enemy and patent infidelity [referring to the United States and its coalition]. [Another is] a difficult, fierce battle with a crafty enemy who wears the garb of a friend, manifests agreement, and calls for comradeship, but harbors ill will and twists up peaks and crests…The unhurried onlooker will realize that Shi'ism is the looming danger and true challenge. 'They are the enemy. Beware of them. Fight them."[680]

Even as Zarqawi had a concept for changing the strategic context in Iraq through terrorism, his view significantly differed from that of Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the top leaders of al-Qaeda. Zarqawi wanted to establish a caliphate immediately in Iraq, but Bin Laden thought it was too early. Former CIA agent, Nada Bakos, explained the disagreement between Zarqawi's strategy and al-Qaeda's leadership:

"Zawahiri [sends] a letter back to him [Zarqawi] that says: 'Hey, love what you're doing in a lot of ways, but this killing of the Shia – take it from us – this is not a long-term strategy. This is not going to help. We know this.' So, the response from al-Qaeda was: 'Stop doing what you're doing. Killing Shia and other Muslims aren't going to achieve the objective that we need'…eventually they land on agreeing to disagree somewhat…[Zarqawi] ends up swearing bay'ah…He will now have the al-Qaeda brand…[and foreign terrorists are] filling the various positions that Zarqawi needs…Zarqawi [was] blowing up buses, attacking markets. He's sowing terror within the local population at this point. And then when he ends up attacking the Samarra mosque, that's I think a turning point for Shia…Zarqawi achieved what he wanted to achieve. He had fomented anger and fear and frustration enough that populations felt pitted against each other."[681]

Indeed, the bombing of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra, Iraq, revered by Shia, was a seminal event in the trajectory of the conflict in Iraq – not only for Iraqis but also the United States.

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[679] "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," *The White House*, March 2006.
[680] "Zarqawi Letter," *US Department of State*, February 2004.
[681] Jason M. Breslow, "Nada Bakos: How Zarqawi went from 'thug' to ISIS founder," *Frontline*, May 17, 2016.

7.1.3 Turning Point in Iraq and the Bush Administration's Surge

On February 22, 2006, "Sunni extremists working on behalf of al-Qaeda in Iraq penetrated the al-Askari mosque in Samarra, Iraq." Also known as the "Golden dome mosque," it housed not only "the tombs of two Shiite imams from 9th century, but it was also built near the location where Muhammad al-Mahdi (the 12th Imam or 'hidden imam') went into occultation or hiding."[682] Shiites believe the Mahdi would "eventually reappear and bring salvation to the believers."[683] In short, the mosque carried significant religious meaning for Shia in Iraq – and beyond.

"After tying up the mosque's guards, the al-Qaeda-affiliated fighters placed bombs that destroyed the golden dome" – as journalist, Michael Crowley, recounted:

> "The bombs which reduced the mosque's upper exterior to a pile of rubble and twisted metal killed no one. But the explosion probably led to the slaughter of thousands—which was exactly the plan. The leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq at the time, the notoriously murderous Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, pursued the explicit goal of a nationwide religious civil war."[684]

The bombing of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra initiated a wave of sectarian violence throughout the country. The sectarian fighting not only undercut the ability of the newly sovereign Iraqi government to govern, but it also undermined the central theory behind the Bush Administration's regime change approach. Rather than the liberation of Iraq being an event that led to less violence and fewer terrorist events; it, in fact, led to more violence and an increase in terrorist attacks – as Jessica Stern and Meghan McBride point out through START Global Terrorism Database data:

> "…with the US invasion in March 2003, there were 78 terrorist attacks in the first twelve months following the U.S. invasion; terrorism within Iraq's borders rose precipitously…in the second twelve months, this number quadrupled to 302 attacks. At the height of the war…terrorists claimed 5,425 civilian lives and caused 9,878 injuries."[685]

President Bush was faced with another situation to take "*command*" of and turn around. Yet, the Iraq War had become deeply unpopular within the American polity — not to mention the global community. Members of President Bush's own party — along with almost all Democrats in Congress — vigorously questioned the Bush Administration's strategy in

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[682] Michael Crowley, "How the Fate of One Holy Site Could Plunge Iraq Back into Civil War," *Time*, June 6, 2014; available from https://time.com/2920692/iraq-isis-samarra-al-askari-mosque/.
[683] Ibid.
[684] Ibid.
[685] Jessica Stern and Meghan McBride, "Terrorism after the 2003 invasion of Iraq;" available from https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2013/Terrorism%20after%20the%202003%20Invasion%20of%20Iraq.pdf.

Iraq.[686] This was because the American public already questioned the Bush Administration's decision to surge US military forces in the first place.

By July 2007, 62-percent of Americans polled by *Gallup* expressed it was a mistake to send US troops into Iraq.[687] This was the first-time opposition to the war topped 60-percent. This polling was complemented by additional polling that showed most Americans believed the surge strategy contemplated by the Bush Administration was not making a difference. Moreover, 70-percent of Americans favored removing US troops in Iraq by April of 2008.

On the ground in Iraq, the US military and the Iraqi security forces witnessed an alarming increase in violence. The concern within the Bush Administration was that the deteriorating security situation would lead to a failed state in the heart of the Middle East, becoming a new launchpad for terrorist groups to conduct global attacks – what the administration was trying to prevent given the lessons they took from the 9/11 experience. The Bush Administration believed it had to gain control of the cycle of violence in Iraq to both stabilize Iraq as well as remove terrorism from its new epicenter. With this perspective of what was needed in Iraq, the Bush Administration eventually adopts "surge" strategy in Iraq – again reflecting a structural change policy perspective.

Given the events on the ground in Iraq and the concern that the administration's initial approach to Iraq was not leading to a decrease in terrorist activity, former US Secretary of State James Baker and former 9/11 Commission chair Lee Hamilton co-chaired what became known as the Iraq Study Group. The Iraq Study Group was formed by the United States Institute of Peace in Washington DC at the urging of Congress. It was charged with looking at and providing recommendations in four areas of the Iraq conflict: (1) "the strategic environment in and around Iraq, (2) the security of Iraq and key challenges to enhancing security within the country, (3) the political developments within Iraq following the elections and formation of the new government, and (4) the economy and reconstruction."[688] President Bush rejected the 79 recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, which, broadly described, included: "a call for new and enhanced diplomatic and political efforts in Iraq and the region and a change in the primary mission of US forces in Iraq that will enable the United States to begin to move its combat forces out of Iraq responsibly."[689] In rejecting the Iraq Study Group's recommendations, Bush presented a fundamentally different approach consistent with his "go it alone" policy approach:

> "To step back now would force a collapse of the Iraqi government…Such a scenario would result in our troops being forced to stay in Iraq even longer and confront an enemy that is even more lethal. If we increase our support at this crucial moment, and

[686] Jeffrey M. Jones, "Latest Poll Shows High Point in Opposition to Iraq War," Gallup.com, July 11, 2007; available from https://news.gallup.com/poll/28099/latest-poll-shows-high-point-opposition-iraq-war.aspx.
[687] Ibid.
[688] "The Iraqi Study Group," United States Institute of Peace; available from https://www.usip.org/programs/iraq-study-group.
[689] Baker III, J. A., Hamilton, L. H., & Iraq Study Group. (2006). *The Iraq study group report*. Vintage.

help the Iraqis break the current cycle of violence, we can hasten the day our troops begin coming home."[690] [691]

Bush's rejection of the Iraq Study Group's findings reflects the intuitive mindset of his administration. Instead of changing the course, Bush decided to rely on past knowledge of fighting totalitarianism and installing democracies in the 20th century by deploying thousands of additional troops into Iraq to quell the violence and "destroy" and "defeat" terrorism in what the Bush Administration described as the central front in the War on Terrorism because as Bush stated in announcing the surge: "'The question is whether our new strategy will bring us closer to success. I believe that it will,'…if it is successful it would result in a 'functioning democracy' that 'fights terrorists instead of harboring them.'"[692]

The next step for President Bush was placing new personnel in key positions within his administration to increase the credibility of the "surge" policy approach with the American public. By December of 2006, Donald Rumsfeld stepped down as Secretary of Defense and was replaced by a career national security professional, Robert Gates. The *New York Times* described this urgent personnel switch to implement "the surge" strategy this way:

> "In the past week, Mr. Bush has speeded up the removal of the American commander in Iraq, Gen. George W. Casey Jr., who is to become the Army chief of staff, and replaced him with a counterinsurgency specialist, Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus, who has embraced the new plan. A new American ambassador has been nominated to Baghdad as well, to replace Zalmay Khalilzad, a Sunni of Afghan heritage, who has been nominated to represent the United States in the United Nations."[693]

President Bush ultimately decided to "surge" tens-of-thousands of US troops to crush the terrorist threat and address the broader root cause issues in Iraqi society giving rise to the violence and terrorism, consistent with our review of operational approaches in Chapter 3, enlarging the number of US troops in Iraq by 30,000 which brought the total number of US troops in Iraq to approximately 165,000.[694] [695] [696] [697] Former CIA director and four-star

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[690] David Sanger, "Bush Adds Troops in Bid to Secure Iraq," New York Times, January 11, 2007; available from https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/11/world/middleeast/11prexy.html.

[691] See also Tama, J. (2011). The Contemporary Presidency: The Power and Limitations of Commissions: The Iraq Study Group, Bush, Obama, and Congress. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, *41*(1), 135-155.

[692] David Sanger, "Bush Adds Troops in Bid to Secure Iraq," New York Times, January 11, 2007; available from https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/11/world/middleeast/11prexy.html.

[693] David Sanger, "Bush Adds Troops in Bid to Secure Iraq," New York Times, January 11, 2007; available from https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/11/world/middleeast/11prexy.html.

[694] Tom Bowman, "As The Iraq War Ends, Reassessing The U.S. Surge," National Public Radio, December 16, 2011; available from https://www.npr.org/2011/12/16/143832121/as-the-iraq-war-ends-reassessing-the-u-s-surge

[695] Byman, D. L., & Pollack, K. M. (2008). *Things fall apart: Containing the spillover from an Iraqi civil war*. Brookings Institution Press.

[696] O'Hanlon, M. E. (2004). Iraq without a Plan. *Policy review*, (128), 33.

[697] El-Shibiny, M. (2010). The Ignition of Civil War in Iraq. In *Iraq* (pp. 123-134). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

commanding general in Iraq during the surge, David Petraeus, described the surge strategy in this way in our interview for this dissertation:

> "The approach to counter various terrorist groups has varied based on the situation in the country where the group was located (the magnitude of the threat, the capabilities of host nation forces and government institutions, the region, sanctuaries for the group), on the size and form of the group (e.g., terrorist cells or a caliphate in which ISIS is an Army and fights as such), on the situation in the country (geography, infrastructure, sanctuaries in neighboring countries, revenue generation, literacy, memory of central governance, organic military equipment and infrastructure, ethnic and sectarian and tribal groupings, etc.), on the ability of US forces to operate on the ground (without which we often can only disrupt, not defeat, terrorist groups), on the amount and capability of US / coalition enablers for host nation forces (e.g. Predators and Reapers, precision air attack, intel integration, quantity / quality of host nation forces, etc.) As a result of such considerations and conditions, it was necessary to deploy 165,000 American men and women in uniform, plus tens of thousands of coalition forces, to destroy al-Qaeda in Iraq (and associated insurgent groups) and defeat the Iranian-supported Shia militias in Iraq to pull the country back from the brink of a full-blown Sunni-Shia civil war. A comprehensive civil-military counterinsurgency campaign was necessary in which precision raids were very important and necessary but not decisive by themselves."[698]

7.2   Reflection: Second-Term Bush Administration Policy Profile

During this period, the Bush Administration operated consistent with the structural change policy perspective as the frame for US counterterrorism policy, and "the surge" into Iraq was its full embodiment. The structural change perspective formed the backbone of the Bush Administration's counterterrorism policy. The surge also served as a proving ground for refinement of Bush's approach to counterterrorism. The surge in Iraq was not simply a particular approach to address a specific context in Iraq – removing terrorism and addressing the societal factors that give rise to terrorism therein. The surge in Iraq and the associated counterterrorism processes developed through the Iraq War represented a policy approach for the overall US counterterrorism. The surge enabled the Bush Administration to make the argument for an additional and broader, global purpose for US counterterrorism. The Bush Administration asserted that given terrorists were protected by regimes, this meant that US counterterrorism policy should also focus on remaking the political and social structures of the Middle East – and perhaps beyond. Therefore, the strategic goals of US counterterrorism were not only to structurally change Iraq and Afghanistan – but also the entire region. Moreover, the

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[698] Interview with former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and military commander in Iraq and Afghanistan, General David Petraeus, May 5-6, 2020.

Bush Administration's approach for such a broad and audacious policy for counterterrorism was to operate unilaterally and "go it alone."[699]

The Bush Administration decided to conduct "the surge" because it believed the security situation in Iraq risked becoming similar to the pre-9/11 context in which terrorists had safe haven like al-Qaeda did in Afghanistan. This concern was reflected in the administration's National Security Strategy for Victory in Iraq.[700] [701] The Bush Administration perspective was that emboldened terrorists could destabilize the region, and the next 9/11 could come from Iraq. This is emblematic of a continued survivalist mentality that catalyzed a "seize and freeze" decisionmaking tendency in which the administration rapidly "seized" on an understanding of the threat as akin to fighting Nazis in World War II and broader totalitarianism during the 20th century and "freezed" on that understanding given the security situation in Iraq, consistent with the intuitive mode of thinking. We also see the Bush Administration continue to have its dichotomous framing of the situation – a very generalized "us versus them." Taken together, this high need for closure context addressed by an intuitive mode of thinking and a "seize and freeze" decisionmaking tendency is reflective of the first decisionmaking style (Table 1.2) in Chapter 4.

This period is also noteworthy because the Bush Administration enlarged each of the preferred operational approaches for "*The Commander*" policy profile within our PPC framework. The Bush Administration increased its focus on "crushing terrorists" and "addressing the root causes of terrorism" through the surge in Iraq, leading to almost 165,000 US troops deployed in Iraq to structurally change that society and crush the terrorists.

This analysis allows us to have more data and insights towards answering the central questions of this dissertation: (1) has there been continuity or change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11; (2) what factors led to the continuity or change, and (3) how do we classify any such continuity or change?

First, we can see continuity in US counterterrorism policy from the Bush Administration's first-to-second terms in office. The Bush Administration continued to view terrorism as a strategic, all-encompassing struggle. Second, the key factors that led to this continuity concerned the core elements of the PPC. During this period, the Bush Administration wanted to respond to the American public's existential anxiety, in particular: (1) the continued ambiguity associated with 9/11; (2) the violence, terrorism, and chaos unfolding in Iraq; and (3) the ongoing ability for al-Qaeda to conduct surprise, mass-casualty terrorist attacks against the West. Thirdly, we continued to see the Bush Administration's pursuit of operational approaches that aligned with a maximalist and global view of the struggle to present a sense of

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[699] Mann, J., & Mann, J. (2004). *Rise of the Vulcans: The history of Bush's war cabinet*. Penguin.
[700] "National Security Strategy for Victory in Iraq," *The White House*, November 2005.
[701] Bush Administration's National Security Strategy for Victory in Iraq: "If we and our Iraqi partners prevail in Iraq, we will have made America safer by depriving terrorists of a safe haven from which they could plan and launch attacks against the United States and American interests."

decisiveness, which had the effect of reassuring the American public that the administration was address the most concerning issue – terrorist attacks against the US homeland – and, thereby, bring about closure for the American public. Therefore, we also classify the second-term Bush Administration as *The Commander"* within the PPC framework because the administration continued to operate consistent with the structural change policy perspective and the intuitive mode of thinking.

We will now analyze the first presidential term of the Obama Administration. The Obama Administration also implemented a "surge" – not in Iraq, but rather Afghanistan. That said, President Obama's "surge" strategy in Afghanistan pivoted the US counterterrorism policy away from the structural change policy perspective and towards a threat management policy perspective. This critical change in one of the core elements of the PPC framework – policy perspective – led to the first overall change in policy profile during the 20-year period of this study.

8   OBAMA ADMINISTRATION: AN EXCLUSIVE FOCUS ON AL-QAEDA

The story of President Obama's counterterrorism policy development begins with not only a war-weary United States but also a country in the midst of a new crisis – a housing and financial crisis that became known as the "Great Recession," which not only re-shaped the US economy but also re-oriented the United States' approach to counterterrorism.[702]

During the 2008 presidential election, "ending the wars" and "bringing the troops home" was the mantra across the media air waves and overall political dialogue in the United States.[703] The American public was tired after "years of war" as well as concerned about the financial costs of the wars given the state of the US economy.[704] Scholar James McCormick explains the interplay of "the wars" and the economy as part of Obama's "change" platform during the 2008 presidential campaign:

> "Barack Obama ran for the presidency on a policy of change – change in domestic policy and change in foreign policy. During both the nomination and election campaigns, this focus on change was the overarching theme that he struck at virtually every stop on the campaign trail. In foreign policy, candidate Obama's emphasis on change focused on an array of issues – ending the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and bringing American troops home; 'resetting' and 'restarting' American relations with allies and other major powers throughout the world; engaging with adversaries to address a number of outstanding issues; and dealing with global economic and military issues…The larger aim of this 'change' emphasis was to enable the United States to reengage with the world and to move away from the isolated position that America found itself after the seeming unilateralist policies of the Bush administration."[705]

In Barack Obama, the public found a presidential candidate who was credible in his promise to end "the wars" because he was unburdened by any prior pro-war positioning or voting record.[706] Journalist Jeff Zeleny wrote about this as Obama was launching his candidacy for president:

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[702] "The US financial crisis," *Council on Foreign Relations*; available from https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-financial-crisis.

[703] Alicia Shepard, "Editorial pages turn on war," *Politico*, July 31, 2007; available from https://www.politico.com/story/2007/07/editorial-pages-turn-on-war-005181.

[704] See also "Bush and public opinion," Pew Research, December 18 2008; available from https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2008/12/18/bush-and-public-opinion/.

[705] McCormick, J. M. (2011). The Obama Presidency: A Foreign Policy of Change? Iowa State University. *Political Science Publication*.

[706] Jeff Zeleny, "As candidate: Obama carves anti-war stance," New York Times, February 26, 2007; available from https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/26/us/politics/26obama.html.

"Senator Barack Obama is running for president as one of the few candidates who opposed the Iraq war from the beginning, a simple position unburdened by expressions of regret or decisions over whether to apologize for initially supporting the invasion."[707] Jeffrey Goldberg also wrote about Obama's anti-war political persona in *The Atlantic*: "[Obama] fit the mold of a 'retrenchment president' elected to scale back America's commitments overseas and shift responsibilities to allies."[708]

Obama's opposition on the Iraq war became a critical differentiator during the 2008 presidential election – not only in relation to his Democratic primary opponent, former First Lady, US Senator, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, but also his general election opponent, Senator John McCain, who was among the chief advocates of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the surge strategy in Iraq.[709] Opposition to the Iraq War became one of Obama's central arguments for his candidacy, as reported by *Reuters* in 2008:

"On the day after he formally launched his 2008 White House bid, Obama said on a campaign swing through Iowa that even before the war began it was possible to see the dangerous consequences of a U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. 'Even at the time, it was possible to make judgments that this would not work out well,' the Illinois senator told reporters, indirectly contrasting his stance with presidential rivals…who both voted to authorize the [Iraq] war…"[710]

However, by September of 2008, the challenges associated with the war in Iraq appeared much less urgent as a result of the housing and financial crisis that became the central issue in the presidential election – a crisis that led to $8 trillion in financial loss through the stock market, unemployment of 10-percent, and $9.8 trillion in overall wealth loss as Americans' home values tanked and retirement account values vanished.[711] This crisis catalyzed a survivalist mindset within the American public.[712] This meant Americans no longer wanted to build roads and bridges in places like Iraq and Afghanistan but, instead, at home. This sentiment became part of Obama's closing argument the 2008 presidential campaign.[713]

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[707] Ibid.

[708] Edward Delman, "Obama Promised to End America's Wars—Has He? The Atlantic, March 30, 2016; available from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/03/obama-doctrine-wars-numbers/474531/.

[709] John Whitesides, "Obama says he opposed Iraq war from start," *Reuters*, February 2007; available from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-politics-obama/obama-says-he-opposed-iraq-war-from-start-idUSN0923153320070212.

[710] Ibid.

[711] Michele Lerner, "10 years later: How the housing market has changed since the crash," Washington Post, October 4, 2018; available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/business/wp/2018/10/04/feature/10-years-later-how-the-housing-market-has-changed-since-the-crash/.

[712] John Whitesides, "Obama says he opposed Iraq war from start," Reuters, February 11, 2007; available from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-politics-obama/obama-says-he-opposed-iraq-war-from-start-idUSN0923153320070212.

[713] Mike Allen, "Obama calls for Wall Street crackdown," *Politico*, September 16, 2008; available from https://www.politico.com/story/2008/09/obama-calls-for-wall-street-crackdown-013498.

As the full realization of the financial and housing crisis was coming to a head in the waning months of the 2008 presidential election, Obama gave a speech in Golden, Colorado titled "Confronting an American Crisis" in which he criticized his opponent, John McCain – connecting McCain's position on the Iraq War to the financial and housing crisis:

> "Make no mistake: my opponent is running for four more years of policies that will throw the economy further out of balance. His outrage at Wall Street would be more convincing if he wasn't offering them more tax cuts. His call for fiscal responsibility would be believable if he wasn't calling for more tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, and more of a trillion-dollar war in Iraq paid for with deficit spending and borrowing from foreign creditors like China."[714]

Obama's opposition on the Iraq War coupled with his desire to pursue a domestic economic agenda – "building roads and bridges at home" to ease and end the burden of the housing and financial crisis – uniquely positioned him as the presidential candidate who could both meet the crisis moment and end the wars. Obama's political message of decreasing the US federal government's engagement abroad to increase its engagement at home catalyzed fundamental change in how the Obama Administration pursued counterterrorism. Obama ultimately received the nomination of his party and went on to handily defeat Senator John McCain during the 2008 presidential election.[715] [716] Obama entered the presidency with a clear mandate to "end the wars."[717]

And yet, notwithstanding Obama's anti-war record and his electoral mandate, Obama, as President, carried out counterterrorism in ways that Senator Obama and presidential-candidate Obama could hardly recognize or even agree with.[718] [719] David Ignatius of the *Washington Post* noted Obama's dramatic turn from anti-war candidate to "drone president" following the 2008 election:

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[714] Ibid.

[715] Andrew Glass, "Barack Obama defeats John McCain, Nov. 4, 2008, *Politico*, November 2015; available from https://www.politico.com/story/2015/11/this-day-in-politics-nov-4-2008-215394.

[716] Caren Bohan, "McCain and Obama clash over strategy in Iraq, *Reuters*, July 14, 2008; available from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-politics/mccain-and-obama-clash-over-strategy-in-iraq-idUSN1441726820080714.

[717] Christi Parsons and W.J. Hennigan," President Obama, who hoped to sow peace, instead led the nation in war," *LA Times*, January 13, 2017; available from https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-na-pol-obama-at-war/.

[718] Edward Delman, "Obama Promised to End America's Wars—Has He? The Atlantic, March 30, 2016; available from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/03/obama-doctrine-wars-numbers/474531/.

[719] Christi Parsons and W.J. Hennigan, "President Obama, who hoped to sow peace, instead led the nation in war," LA Times, January 13, 2017; available from https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-na-pol-obama-at-war/.

"Looking back, it's an interesting anomaly of Barack Obama's presidency that this liberal Democrat, known before the 2008 election for his anti-war views, has been so comfortable running America's secret wars."[720]

The central, strategic question for President Obama as he entered office in 2009 was whether the American public's "war-weariness" equated to a lessening of existential anxiety and lower need for closure. The Obama Administration viewpoint can be seen as an assessment that the existential anxiety and need for closure around terrorism remained due to al-Qaeda's continued ability to conduct attacks to include against the US homeland. Obama's turn from an anti-war presidential candidate to a war-time president – eventually authorizing a ten-fold increase in counterterrorism in more countries across the Middle East than President Bush – was unexpected to observers.[721] President Obama also authorized a surge of tens-of-thousands of US troops into Afghanistan during his first-term in office, increasing the number the US "boots on the ground" in Afghanistan from approximately 30,000 under Bush to more than 100,000 during his first-term in office.[722]

President Obama did not view his electoral mandate as ending wars. Rather, he found himself with two crises on his hands that engendered existential anxiety within the American public – terrorism and the financial and housing crisis. Obama, like Bush, focused on preventing another 9/11 against the US homeland, which we will discuss in greater detail in this chapter. This led the Obama Administration to expand counterterrorism globally while narrowing both how it was conducted ("drone strikes" and special operations raids) and who the counterterrorism was conducted against – through an exclusive focus on al-Qaeda. [723] [724]

President Obama, while having some of the same objectives of the Bush Administration such as preventing another 9/11, decided to pursue counterterrorism through a completely different policy perspective than that of the Bush Administration – the threat management policy perspective consistent with our review in Chapter 3 – which led to the employment of new operational approaches and a re-focused US counterterrorism primarily oriented towards al-Qaeda. The Obama Administration believed the threat of terrorism could be managed through an exclusive focus on the terrorist group itself – al-Qaeda – rather than the broader,

[720] Brad Knickerbocker, "How 9/11 made Barack Obama a war president," Christian Science Monitor, September 11, 2011; available from https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/0911/How-9-11-made-Barack-Obama-a-war-president.

[721] Micah Zenko, "Obama's Embrace of Drone Strikes Will Be a Lasting Legacy," New York Times, January 12, 2016; available from https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/01/12/reflecting-on-obamas-presidency/obamas-embrace-of-drone-strikes-will-be-a-lasting-legacy.

[722] Kurtzleben, Danielle. "How the U.S. Troop Levels in Afghanistan Have Changed Under Obama," *National Public Radio*, July 16, 2016; available from https://www.npr.org/2016/07/06/484979294/chart-how-the-u-s-troop-levels-in-afghanistan-have-changed-under-obama.

[723] Interview with Luke Hartig, former Senior Director for CT, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.

[724] Brad Knickerbocker, "How 9/11 made Barack Obama a war president," Christian Science Monitor, September 11, 2011; available from https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/0911/How-9-11-made-Barack-Obama-a-war-president.

root cause factors driving terrorism (as the Bush Administration attempted to pursue through regime change). We will see this policy perspective manifest through a new type of counterterrorism exclusively focused on al-Qaeda. We will also see in this period a reliance on established knowledge from the Bush Administration around the employment of "drone" technology and special operations raids, reflecting an intuitive mode of thinking. Through this policy approach, the Obama Administration became "*prosecutors*" of terrorism.[725]

8.1 Strategic Considerations: A New Counterterrorism

There were two key, strategic considerations during this period: (1) preventing another major terrorist attack on the US homeland and (2) "turning the page" from the Bush Administration's basic beliefs and operational approaches with respect to counterterrorism.[726] [727] The Obama Administration was not skeptical of using military force for the purposes of counterterrorism, but, instead, skeptical of President Bush's approach in that respect – the Bush Administration's basic belief that terrorism must be removed through addressing the broader factors in society that give rise to terrorism.[728] Former Obama Administration Senior Director for Counterterrorism at the White House's National Security Council, Luke Hartig, corroborated the Obama Administrations' strategic pivot towards an approach of managing terrorism through a focus on the terrorist group, al-Qaeda: "[Obama] was consistently focused on defeating al-Qaeda and those that were connected to al-Qaeda and 9/11. That was generally the guiding principle."[729] [730]

In this chapter, we will see change across two of the three of the core dimensions of the PPC outlined in Table 1.3 (page 65) – basic belief and operational approach – but not mode of thinking. We will now dive deeper into understanding the strategic considerations of this period for the Obama Administration.

8.1.1 Pivoting to Managing Terrorism

One of the first acts of the Obama presidency was to conduct outreach to the Muslim world on the international stage. President Obama initiated this outreach through a major speech in Cairo, Egypt approximately six months into his presidency. During Obama's June 2009 Cairo speech, he called for a "new beginning" with the Muslim world, suggesting a pivot in

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[725] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, May 2010.

[726] Interview with Luke Hartig, former Senior Director for CT, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.

[727] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, May 2010.

[728] Brad Knickerbocker, "How 9/11 made Barack Obama a war president," Christian Science Monitor, September 11, 2011; available from https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/0911/How-9-11-made-Barack-Obama-a-war-president.

[729] Interview with Luke Hartig, former Senior Director for CT, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.

[730] Brad Knickerbocker, "How 9/11 made Barack Obama a war president," Christian Science Monitor, September 11, 2011; available from https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/0911/How-9-11-made-Barack-Obama-a-war-president.

policy and strategy from his predecessor, George W. Bush.[731] However, terrorism and al-Qaeda remained a strategic threat to the United States. Therefore, even while Obama tried to shift the nature of the way the United States engaged with the Muslim world, preventing another major terrorist attack against the United States remained a critical and even central strategic objective of the Obama Administration throughout his first-term in office. President Obama suggested a nuance with respect to how the United States would treat terrorists and the broader Muslim world in his Cairo speech by pointing out that those who choose violence are surrendering their moral authority and standing:

> "It is a sign neither of courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus. That's not how moral authority is claimed; that's how it is surrendered."[732]

Even as the Obama Administration began its outreach to the Muslim world, it viewed terrorist groups as illegitimate moral actors and, therefore, subject to intense, direct counterterrorism operations. This objective of managing terrorism through directly addressing the terrorist group itself (which was primarily focused on al-Qaeda during Obama's first-term) permeated Obama's counterterrorism policy throughout his presidency. Hartig, former Senior Director for Counterterrorism at the Obama White House, echoed this sentiment during our interview for this dissertation. He stated that "protecting the homeland was the number one focus..."[733] In addition, even as Obama campaigned as an anti-war candidate for president, the realities on the ground in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and other parts of the Middle East — and beyond — provided a stark, contrasting reality to the campaign rhetoric, which was reflected in Obama's 2010 National Security Strategy:

> "Al-Qaeda's core in Pakistan remains the most dangerous component of the larger network, but we also face a growing threat from the group's allies worldwide. We must deny these groups the ability to conduct operational plotting from any locale, or to recruit, train, and position operatives, including those from Europe and North America."[734] [735]

The 2010 National Security Strategy also outlined grave concerns with respect to the threat emanating from the Afghanistan-Pakistan region:

> "[Afghanistan and Pakistan] is the epicenter of the violent extremism practiced by al-Qaeda. The danger from this region will only grow if its security slides backward, the

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[731] Todd Holzman, "Obama Seeks 'New Beginning' With Muslim World," National Public Radio, June 4, 2009; available from https://www.npr.org/2009/06/04/104891406/obama-seeks-new-beginning-with-muslim-world.

[732] "President Obama's Cairo Speech," *The White House*, June 4, 2009; available from https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-Cairo-university-6-04-09.

[733] Interview with Luke Hartig, former Senior Director for CT, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.

[734] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, May 2010.

[735] Pam Benson, "New president faces increased risk of conflict, intel chief says," *CNN*, November 5, 2008; available from http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/11/05/obama.challenges/index.html.

Taliban controls large swaths of Afghanistan, and al-Qaeda is allowed to operate with impunity."[736]

The Obama Administration's focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan suggested that Iraq was no longer considered the main security threat. This is due to two contextual dynamics during the administration's first-term in office. First, unlike Bush, the Obama Administration did not view Iraq as the "epicenter of terrorism." This viewpoint was, in part, facilitated by the fact that the trajectory of violence on the ground in Iraq had significantly decreased following the surge there. By the publication of the 2010 National Security Strategy, violence in Iraq had fallen sharply with civilian death tolls at the lowest level since the invasion in 2003.[737] Moreover, the US military death toll had fallen sharply as well. [738] Second, the Obama Administration's opposition to the Iraq War, suggesting it was the "dumb war," meant it did not see Iraq through the same strategic lens as the Bush Administration.[739] Therefore, given the dramatic decrease in violence in Iraq following the surge and Obama's opposition to continuing to pursue the war in Iraq, we see the Obama Administration pivot towards Afghanistan – the war that President Obama described as "the good war."[740] Scholars David Fitzgerald and David Ryan describe the purpose of Obama's "good war," framing it this way:

> "Unlike the 'dumb' war in Iraq, Afghanistan was portrayed throughout the 2008 election campaign as the 'good' war, providing Obama a foil to demonstrate his toughness on foreign policy."[741]

Obama enlarged the concept of the "good war" beyond just Afghanistan. He included Pakistan in that regional frame given the movement of terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda into the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2002. Scholars Rohan Gunaratna and Anders Nielsen described al-Qaeda's sanctuary in the FATA this way:

> "After the U.S. led coalition forces attacked al-Qaeda and Taliban infrastructure in Afghanistan beginning in October 2001, the epicenter of global terrorism moved from Afghanistan to tribal Pakistan. Known as the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) in Pakistan, this region has emerged as the premier hunting ground for the al-Qaeda leadership. With the co-option of new groups in FATA and its adjacent Northwestern Frontier Province (NWFP), the al-Qaeda threat has proliferated. The threat posed by the

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[736] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, May 2010.

[737] "Iraqi Civilian Deaths Down in 2010," *Reuters*, January 1, 2011; available from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-violence-toll/iraqi-civilian-deaths-down-in-2010-idUSTRE7001OR20110101.

[738] Ibid.

[739] "Transcript: Obama's speech against the Iraq War," *National Public Radio*, January 20, 2009; available from https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99591469.

[740] Fitzgerald, D., & Ryan, D. (2014). Afghanistan, Escalation and the 'Good War'. In *Obama, US Foreign Policy and the Dilemmas of Intervention* (pp. 52-72). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

[741] Ibid.

Afghan Taliban has been compounded with the addition of a new range of actors notably the Pakistani Taliban. Working together with multiple threat groups, both foreign and Pakistani, al-Qaeda directs its global jihad campaign from FATA. Unless the terrorist enclave is cleared on the Afghan-Pakistan border, the threat to Afghanistan and mainland Pakistan will continue."[742]

Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict during the Obama Administration, Michael Lumpkin, corroborated the Obama Administration's thinking in the 2010 National Defense Strategy during our interview: "The goals were eradicating al-Qaeda and ensuring Afghanistan was not a safe haven for violent extremism."[743] The Obama Administration wanted to find a sustainable way to conduct counterterrorism. The administration found it through exclusively focusing on al-Qaeda rather than the broader, root cause factors driving terrorism. In other words, President Obama wanted to narrow the assessment of the terrorist threat. He also wanted to conduct counterterrorism through an approach that was limited in nature rather than the Bush Administration's more expansive, regime change, democracy promotion approach to counterterrorism.[744] Former Obama Administration senior official, Michael Lumpkin, also made this point in our interview: "Not every country is going to be a democracy, and [the United States] should not hang support for them on being democratic."[745] Lumpkin additionally expressed the intense focus within the Obama Administration on measuring success through the military impact on the terrorist threat: "[The dominant approach to counterterrorism policy] was military and kinetic because you had to show measurable results in a timely fashion – such as a hellfire missile against a terrorist….a military-centric approach was measurable and best resourced."[746]

The Obama Administration carried forward a new approach for US counterterrorism – one that included new assumptions about the terrorist threat itself and how to manage it.[747] [748] Reporter Uri Friedman summed up Obama's unique, threat-based approach to counterterrorism this way: "For years now, Obama has differed from most political leaders by saying, in public, that jihadist terrorism is a manageable threat rather than an existential one."[749] We will see in the next section that President Obama's threat-based perspective to

[742] Gunaratna, R., & Nielsen, A. (2008). Al Qaeda in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan and beyond. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *31*(9), 775-807.

[743] Interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, March 30, 2020.

[744] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2006.

[745] Interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, March 30, 2020.

[746] Interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, March 30, 2020.

[747] See also Hoffman, B. (2009). A counterterrorism strategy for the Obama administration. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *21*(3), 359-377.

[748] See also Stern, J. (2015). Obama and terrorism. *Foreign Affairs*, *94*, 62.

[749] Uri Friedman, "Learning to live with terrorism," *The Atlantic*, April 15, 2016; available from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/08/terrorism-resilience-isis/493433/.

counterterrorism played out in unexpected ways as he contemplates a "surge" of US troops into Afghanistan in 2009.

8.1.2   Obama as Threat Manager

The Obama Administration became predominantly focused on al-Qaeda, leading to a new and different approach to US counterterrorism.[750] Rather than "crushing terrorists" through large-scale military force or addressing the root cause drivers of terrorism, the Obama Administration chose to pursue a counterterrorism policy that almost exclusively focused on targeting al-Qaeda anywhere it manifested.[751] [752] By exclusively focusing on the terrorist group al-Qaeda, the Obama Administration believed it could prevent another 9/11 style, mass-casualty attack and, thereby, protect the US homeland at a lower cost – both in terms of human life as well as monetary costs.[753] [754] Given this purpose and approach to targeting terrorism, it may seem unexpected that President Obama would decide to conduct a "surge" in Afghanistan. Yet, he did – and did so in such a way that he was able to meet his more limited threat manager objectives while still addressing the survivalist mindset within the American public.

8.1.2.1   "Surging" in Afghanistan

Given Afghanistan National Security and Defense Forces (ANDSF) did not yet have the capability and capacity to handle the security situation in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda was able to maintain and even extend its sanctuary in both Afghanistan as well as the Pakistan border region.[755] [756] [757] This was the context within which the Obama Administration found itself when entering office in 2009.

The security situation in Afghanistan had evolved quite significantly following the US invasion in 2001. In parallel to the US invasion in 2001, terrorist actors, including some of the core members of al-Qaeda leadership such as Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, slipped across the border into the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan. Gunaratna

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[750] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, May 2010.
[751] Ibid.
[752] Interview with former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, March 25, 2020.
[753] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, May 2010.
[754] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.
[755] "Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan," *The White House*, June 22, 2011; available from https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-Afghanistan.
[756] Hoffman, B. (2009). A counterterrorism strategy for the Obama administration. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *21*(3), 359-377.
[757] Anthony H. Cordesman, "The Afghan War at the end of 2009 – Why the war is at a crisis stage," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 4, 2010; available from https://www.csis.org/analysis/afghan-war-end-2009.

and Nielsen identify contextual dynamics that shaped the global jihadist landscape following 9/11:

> "…after the U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan, the center of gravity for terrorism has moved from Afghanistan to Pakistan's FATA. While Afghanistan remained a battlefield, core al-Qaeda members, with the help of the Taliban, created FATA as the global headquarters of like-minded groups…While the war in Iraq was providing inspiration and instigation to *jihadists* worldwide, [the] FATA emerged as a key center for planning and preparing operations to strike the United States as well as its allies and friends."[758]

By 2004 – 2005, al-Qaeda moved its safe haven into North Waziristan and set up training operations similar to what they once had in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda found itself co-located with Afghan Taliban leadership and fighters engaged in the war in Afghanistan as well as Pakistani Taliban fighting the Government of Pakistan – among many other groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), and Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT).

Through this co-located experience and the hardships of fighting together in Afghanistan, these groups deepened their ideological bonds and created "blood bonds" in this "new jihad" against what they described as apostate regimes in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as the United States.[759] The terrorist safe haven in North Waziristan became a strategic location from which to recruit, train, equip, and deploy fighters for attacks inside of Afghanistan. It also served a rallying cry among the jihadist community, similar to the anti-Soviet Jihad in the 1980s, which led to significant fundraising for militants fighting in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda and its fellow travelers' safe haven in Pakistan combined with the Bush Administration's re-orientation in focus to Iraq fostered a significant deterioration in the security situation in Afghanistan.[760] In many ways the security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan region during this period could be viewed as akin to the pre-9/11 context. As Gunaratna and Nielsen asserted in their analysis in the period leading up to Obama entering office: "As long as al-Qaeda has a presence on the strategic border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan, [Europe and the United States] are at risk."[761] When President Obama entered office in 2009, he recognized the need to re-establish control over the situation in Afghanistan and turn it around.

President Obama ordered an assessment of the security situation in Afghanistan by the newly appointed commander of the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF), General

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[758] Gunaratna, R., & Nielsen, A. (2008). Al Qaeda in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan and beyond. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *31*(9), 775-807.
[759] Ibid.
[760] Ibid.
[761]Ibid.

Stanley McChrystal.[762] President Obama provided General McChrystal just 60-days to conduct the assessment and submit recommendations for how to proceed – a pressurized context given the Afghanistan security forces were losing ground daily and al-Qaeda was expanding its safe haven.[763] [764] President Obama's charge to General McChrystal was not only to assess the security situation on the ground in Afghanistan but also to recommend a new strategy to "stop the growth of the insurgency and assist the US-backed Afghan government in stabilizing the nation."[765] The Obama Administration recognized the attack on 9/11 was achieved due to the sanctuary and protection that al-Qaeda enjoyed from the Taliban. Therefore, the administration believed it needed to stabilize the US and NATO-backed Afghan government as a direct blow to al-Qaeda's ability to plot, plan, and attack.

General McChrystal recommended "a greater resourced, population-centric counterinsurgency strategy" that would be coupled with robust, precision counterterrorism operations — much like what occurred in Iraq – which was possible given the fact that violence in Iraq was decreasing and the insurgency waning.[766] [767] [768] This recommendation was, in essence, the same approach that General Petraeus implemented in Iraq during the Bush Administration's surge, discussed in Chapter 6 – an approach that General McChrystal was intimately familiar with given his participation in overseeing all counterterrorism operations during the Iraq surge.[769] [770] Yet, President Obama had a very different political persona from his predecessor, President Bush.[771] Also, Obama had a different relationship with the military – not having served in the US military or having significant ties to the institution prior to his presidency. This reportedly made senior leadership within the military skeptical of President Obama and concerned about what he may decide to do in Afghanistan. This concern within the

[762] "McChrystal assumes command in Afghanistan," US Central Command, June 15, 2009; available from https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/News-Article-View/Article/883875/mcchrystal-assumes-command-in-afghanistan/.

[763] Anthony H. Cordesman, "The Afghan War at the end of 2009 – Why the war is at a crisis stage," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 4, 2010; available from https://www.csis.org/analysis/afghan-war-end-2009.

[764] "Interview: General Stanley McChrystal," Frontline; available from https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/obamaswar/interviews/mcchrystal.html.

[765] Colonel Matthew Brand, "General McChrystal's Strategic Assessment," *Air University and Air Research Institute*, July 2011; available from https://media.defense.gov/2017/Jun/19/2001765050/-1/-1/0/AP_BRAND_MCCHRYSTALS_ASSESSMENT.PDF.

[766] Sky, E. (2011). Iraq, from surge to sovereignty: Winding down the war in Iraq. *Foreign Affairs*, 117-127.

[767] Colonel Matthew Brand, "General McChrystal's Strategic Assessment," *Air University and Air Research Institute*, July 2011; available from https://media.defense.gov/2017/Jun/19/2001765050/-1/-1/0/AP_BRAND_MCCHRYSTALS_ASSESSMENT.PDF.

[768] Author participated in the "McChrystal Assessment" of Afghanistan, August 2009.

[769] Hart, G. (2013). The McChrystal way of war.

[770] Marsh, K. (2014). Obama's surge: a bureaucratic politics analysis of the decision to order a troop surge in the Afghanistan war. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *10*(3), 265-288.

[771] But see Jackson, R. (2011). Culture, identity and hegemony: Continuity and (the lack of) change in US counterterrorism policy from Bush to Obama. *International Politics*, *48*(2-3), 390-411.

US military's senior ranks was most prominently featured in Michael Hasting's *Rolling Stone* profile of General McChrystal titled, "The Runaway General."

In the profile, Hastings portrays General McChrystal as someone who was skeptical of the Obama Administration. McChrystal's questions with respect to the new administration, as reported by Hastings, began with Vice President Joe Biden who, at that time, was advocating for a "counterterrorism-only" approach in Afghanistan in which US forces would take terrorists off the battlefield without conducting complementary population-centric counterinsurgency efforts such as building infrastructure, civil society, and the political apparatus in Afghanistan. McChrystal not only questioned Obama and Biden in private but also in public. One prominent example occurred following a speech in London in 2009. During a question-and-answer session, Hasting reports, McChrystal categorically dismissed Biden's "counterterrorism-only" approach as "'short-sighted' saying that it would lead to a state of Chaos-istan.'"[772] This comment led to an admonishment by President Obama himself: "Shut the fuck up and keep a lower profile."[773]

The friction between McChrystal and the incoming Obama Administration — including the President himself — continued. As Michael Hasting reports, during a meeting in "the tank," a facility in the Pentagon that houses the National Military Command Center, McChrystal thought President Obama looked "uncomfortable and intimidated" by the military admirals and generals in the room.[774] These comments by General McChrystal in Hasting's *Rolling Stone* piece ultimately led to his ouster. McChrystal's firing only increased the friction between President Obama and senior military leadership.[775]

The "surge" approach that McChrystal recommended for Afghanistan was viewed within the military as what had led to substantial success in Iraq, including a major decrease in violence as well as time, space, and stability for Iraqi political negotiations to occur.[776] The military's sentiment was triumphant when it came to Iraq — they took a failing war and turned it around.[777] The military, therefore, felt "the surge" was also the right formula to turn around the war in Afghanistan.[778] This view was shared by an increasing number of followers in the Washington DC policy community.

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[772] Michael Hastings, "The Runaway General," *Rolling Stone*, June 22, 2012; available from https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/the-runaway-general-the-profile-that-brought-down-mcchrystal-192609/.

[773] Ibid.

[774] Ibid.

[775] "US Afghan commander Stanley McChrystal fired," BBC, June 24, 2010; available from https://www.bbc.com/news/10395402.

[776] David Petraeus, "How we won in Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, October 2013; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/10/29/how-we-won-in-iraq/.

[777] Ibid.

[778] Interview with former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and military commander in Iraq and Afghanistan, General David Petraeus, May 5-6, 2020.

Petraeus' success with the surge in Iraq led to a robust followership of analysts, Members of Congress, and policymakers who became known as "COIN-dinistas."[779] These were members of the Washington DC think tank, journalist, military, and civilian civil servant community who were followers of what became jokingly referred to as the "COIN religion."[780] The community of counterinsurgency intelligentsia ran the political spectrum from neo-conservatives Fred and Kimberly Kagan, founders of the Institute for the Study of War, to more progressive-leaning researchers such as Andrew Exum from the Center for a New American Security.[781] The "COIN-dinistas" were not only influential on Capitol Hill and in the senior echelons of the Pentagon. "COIN-dinistas" also became part of conducting, influencing, and advising McChrystal's 60-day assessment and its associated policy recommendations for President Obama.[782]

President Obama had to avert the felt insecurity within the American public – not only with respect to "the wars" but also the economy – while dealing with concerns about his leadership within the military and, at the same time, navigating around the policy approaches being pushed by the influential "COIN-dinistas" in the Washington DC policy community.

President Obama ultimately decided to surge US forces into Afghanistan but through a different policy perspective than that of President Bush. Obama did not adopt "the surge" approach to transform Afghan society like Bush did in Iraq. Obama decided to surge to intensely target al-Qaeda and its associated forces and deny them sanctuary to plot, plan, and launch attacks. Obama, unlike Bush, set a definitive deadline for how long the surge would be conducted.

This bounding of the surge strategy was intended to ensure the focus of the effort remained narrowly on al-Qaeda and its terrorist fellow travelers and not slip into an open-ended campaign of nation-building that could enable an expansion of the objectives of the surge over time. President Obama set forth this narrow focus on al-Qaeda and the time bounding of the surge in a major address to the nation on Afghanistan:

> "...we set clear objectives: to refocus on al-Qaeda, to reverse the Taliban's momentum, and train Afghan security forces to defend their own country. I also made it clear that our commitment would not be open-ended, and that we would begin to draw down our forces this July."[783]

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[779] Thomas Ricks, "The COINdinistas," *Foreign Policy*, November 30, 2009; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/11/30/the-coindinistas/.

[780] Ibid.

[781] Ibid.

[782] Laura Rozen, "Winning hearts and minds: all of McChrystal's advisors," *Foreign Policy*, July 31, 2009; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/07/31/winning-hearts-and-minds-all-of-mcchrystals-advisors/.

[783] "Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan," *The White House*, June 22, 2011; available from https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-Afghanistan.

Obama employed the surge as a way to manage terrorism and, thereby, directly address the American public's anxiety around the security situation in Afghanistan and 9/11 mass-causality terrorism.[784] In fact, President Obama communicated the first two parameters in his 2009 speech at West Point where he formally announced "the surge" into Afghanistan.[785]

8.1.2.1.1 Justifying "the surge"

On December 2, 2009, President Obama gave a speech at the United States Military Academy at West Point in which he announced the surge of US military forces into Afghanistan.[786] This was a powerful audience to address because every one of the cadets at West Point upon graduation would most likely find themselves in combat in Afghanistan as part of the President Obama's surge strategy.

In the speech, President Obama harkened back to 9/11, pointing to it as a justification for the United States continuing to focus on managing the threat of terrorism:

"We did not ask for this fight. On September 11, 2001, 19 men hijacked four airplanes and used them to murder nearly 3,000 people. They struck at our military and economic nerve centers. They took the lives of innocent men, women, and children without regard to their faith or race or station… Al Qaeda's base of operations was in Afghanistan, where they were harbored by the Taliban…America, our allies and the world were acting as one to destroy al Qaeda's terrorist network, and to protect our common security…"[787]

During this 2009 West Point speech, President Obama also reinforced his approach of managing terrorism through focusing on the terrorist group itself – in this case al-Qaeda:

"Over the last several years, the Taliban has maintained common cause with al-Qaeda…After consultations with our allies, I then announced a strategy recognizing the fundamental connection between our war effort in Afghanistan, and the extremist safe havens in Pakistan. I set a goal that was narrowly defined as disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al-Qaeda and its extremist allies, and pledged to better coordinate our military and civilian efforts…Al-Qaeda has not reemerged in Afghanistan in the same numbers as before 9/11, but they retain their safe havens along the border…as commander in chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an

[784] Woodward, B. (2011). *Obama's wars*. Simon and Schuster.

[785] Kin Ghattas, "Obama's struggle to realise anti-war rhetoric," BBC, December 21, 2015; available from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-35123915.

[786] See also Chollet, D. (2016). *The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined Americas Role in the World*. Public Affairs.

[787] "Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan," *The White House*, June 22, 2011; available from https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-Afghanistan.

additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home."[788] [789] [790] [791]

This excerpt from Obama's West Point speech reflects that although President Obama ordered a large-scale surge of US troops into Afghanistan, his policy perspective for doing so was fundamentally different than that of Bush given Obama's focus on al-Qaeda. Obama was not trying to remove the terrorist threat in Afghanistan by transforming that country. He wanted to manage it.

President Obama's threat manager policy perspective also came through in his first National Security Strategy, following his decision to surge into Afghanistan, further reinforcing his threat manager approach to counterterrorism policy:

> "We will disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its affiliates through a comprehensive strategy that denies them safe haven, strengthens front-line partners, secures our homeland..."[792]

Therefore, while both Bush and Obama "surged" US troops into Iraq and Afghanistan respectively, they did so through very different policy perspectives.[793] [794] We will now look at the second, strategic consideration for the Obama Administration in its first term – managing the al-Qaeda threat beyond Afghanistan.

8.1.3 An Expansion of Threat Management Perspective – Obama as the "Drone President"

An undercurrent within US counterterrorism policymaking was the fact that Osama Bin Laden remained at-large. The United States had invested great resources and effort into trying to locate and capture or kill Osama Bin Laden – but to no avail. US military forces lost track of Bin Laden in 2001 in the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan during the Bush Administration, and Bin Laden remained elusive to the United States ever since.[795] Killing or capturing Osama bin

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[788] Transcript of Obama Speech on Afghanistan," *The United States Military Academy at West Point*, December 2, 2009; available from
https://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/12/01/obama.afghanistan.speech.transcript/index.html.

[789] Peter Spiegel, Jonathan Weisman and Yochi J. Dreazen, "Obama Bets Big on Troop Surge," Wall Street Journal, December 2, 2009; available from https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB125967363641871171.

[790] See also McHugh, K. (2015). A tale of two surges: Comparing the politics of the 2007 Iraq surge and the 2009 Afghanistan surge. *Sage Open*, 5(4), 2158244015621957.

[791] But see Stephens, B. (2015). What Obama Gets Wrong. *Foreign Affairs*, *94*, 13.

[792] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, May 2010.

[793] Danielle Kurtzleben, "How the US Troop Levels in Afghanistan Have Changed Under Obama," *National Public Radio*, July 6, 2016; available from https://www.npr.org/2016/07/06/484979294/chart-how-the-u-s-troop-levels-in-afghanistan-have-changed-under-obama.

[794] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.

[795] Gordon Corera, "Bin Laden's Tora Bora Escape, Just Months after 9/11," BBC, July 21, 2011; available from Bin Laden's Tora Bora escape, just months after 9/11 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-14190032.

Laden became a top strategic objective under President Obama.[796] This is because the Obama Administration recognized that to manage terrorism it not only had to deny sanctuary but also diminish the guidance, inspiration, and operational control of terrorist groups through its leaders – from Osama bin Laden to the Anwar al-Awlaki, an inspirational leader who became affiliated with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. This objective of directly addressing the inspiration and leadership of terrorist leaders became particularly acute as the American public witnessed more terrorist attacks inspired by al-Qaeda occur within the United States such as Army Major Nidal Hassan's attack at Fort Hood that killed 13 US servicemembers and wounded 32 others.[797]

Just four months into his presidency, President Obama directed his top national security leaders — National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, CIA Director Leon Panetta, National Counterterrorism Center Director Michael Leiter, and White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel — to put the "hunt" for Osama Bin Laden at the top of objective of each of their agencies, as described in *The Atlantic*:

> "[President Obama] had ended a routine national security briefing in the Situation Room by pointing to [then-Deputy National Security Adviser] Tom Donilon, Leon Panetta, his newly appointed CIA director, Mike Leiter, director of the National Counter Terrorism Center, and Rahm Emanuel, his chief of staff. "You, you, you, and you," he said. "Come upstairs. I want to talk to you guys about something…'Here's the deal. I want this hunt for Osama bin Laden and al-Zawahiri to come to the front of the line. I worry that the trail has gone cold. This has to be our top priority and it needs leadership in the tops of your organizations [...] And I want regular reports on this to me, and I want them starting in thirty days.'"[798]

Also, as Mark Bowden reported in his book, *The Finish*, President Obama remained focused on the status of the hunt for Bin Laden from the outset of his first term in office, consistently asking "how're we doing?"[799] Obama made it a routine to bring up the hunt for Bin Laden at almost every security briefing, asking: "Are we any closer? What have we learned?"[800] This second major line of effort – focused on al-Qaeda and capturing or killing Bin Laden – quickly

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[796] John A Gans Jr., "'This is 50-50:' Behind Obama's Decision to Kill Bin Laden," The Atlantic, October 10, 2012; available from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/this-is-50-50-behind-obamas-decision-to-kill-bin-laden/263449/.

[797] Katherine Poppe, "Nidal Hasan: A Case Study in Lone-Actor Terrorism," *George Washington University Program on Extremism*, October 2018; available from https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Nidal%20Hasan.pdf.

[798] John A Gans Jr., "'This is 50-50:' Behind Obama's Decision to Kill Bin Laden," *The Atlantic*, October 10, 2012; available from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/this-is-50-50-behind-obamas-decision-to-kill-bin-laden/263449/.

[799] Bowden, M. (2012). *The finish: The killing of Osama bin Laden*. Atlantic Monthly Press.

[800] John A Gans Jr., "'This is 50-50:' Behind Obama's Decision to Kill Bin Laden," The Atlantic, October 10, 2012; available from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/this-is-50-50-behind-obamas-decision-to-kill-bin-laden/263449/.

became the primary focus of the Obama Administration. As Michele Flournoy pointed out in our interview:

> "The vigilant watching of threat streams to the US homeland…Watching who are the leaders that need to be taken off the battlefield. Disrupting safe havens. This [became] a very well-oiled machine..."[801]

Of all the tools in the US military toolkit, none is more synonymous with counterterrorism during this period than the "drone." So-called "drone strikes" occurred during the Bush Administration; however, under Obama, there was an exponential growth in "drone strikes" and special operations raids across the greater Middle East region.[802] This targeted killing program became the cornerstone and primary way the Obama Administration achieved its objective of denying al-Qaeda sanctuary and capability to attack. As Luke Hartig, former Senior Director for Counterterrorism at the Obama White House, stated: "We tried to ensure this powerful tool [drone technology] could be employed in a responsible and sustainable way for the threats we face for years to come."[803] In fact, Obama perceived the efficacy of using drones to manage terrorism at the very outset of his administration.

The first drone strike authorized by President Obama occurred on January 23, 2009 – just three days into his presidency.[804] It included two strikes just hours apart in North Waziristan, Pakistan where al-Qaeda was suspected to have safe haven.[805] These two strikes began an exponential growth in the use of drones by the Obama Administration. By the end of President Obama's second term, his administration had conducted 540 strikes — representing a 10-fold increase from the Bush Administration.[806] The Obama Administration also expanded the universe of individuals within or affiliated with al-Qaeda that could be targeted – including US citizens. In 2011, President Obama authorized the first known targeted killing of a US citizen by a drone strike in Yemen.[807] This strike was conducted against al-Qaeda leader, Anwar al-Awlaki.[808]

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[801] Interview with former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, March 25, 2020.

[802] Christopher Fuller, "The Origins of the Drone Program," Lawfare, February 18, 2018; available from https://www.lawfareblog.com/origins-drone-program.

[803] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.

[804] Micah Zenko, "Obama's Final Drone Strike Data," Council on Foreign Relations, January 20, 2017; available from https://www.cfr.org/blog/obamas-final-drone-strike-data.

[805] Micah Zenko, "Obama's Final Drone Strike Data," Council on Foreign Relations, January 20, 2017; available from https://www.cfr.org/blog/obamas-final-drone-strike-data.

[806] Ibid.

[807] Mark Memmott," Al-Awlaki, U.S.-Born Cleric Linked To Al-Qaida, Is Dead, U.S. And Yemen Say," National Public Radio, September 30, 2011; available from https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2011/09/30/140945123/yemen-says-al-awlaki-al-qaidas-english-speaking-voice-is-dead.

[808] Michael B. Kelley, "Last Year President Obama Reportedly Told His Aides That He's 'Really Good at Killing People,'" Business Insider, November 2, 2013; available from https://www.businessinsider.com/obama-said-hes-really-good-at-killing-people-2013-11.

Obama also expanded the use of drone strikes to wherever al-Qaeda affiliates were gaining prominence, as Obama's chief counterterrorism advisor, John Brennan, stated at that time: "…largely because of the administration's use of armed drone aircraft and Special Forces units, al Qaeda is 'on a steady slide.'"[809] Reportedly, a special operations operator told journalist Jeremy Schill that "global [CT] operations under Obama became 'harder, faster, quicker — with the full support of the White House.'"[810] Schill stated in his book *Dirty Wars* that President Obama "will go down in history as the president who legitimized and systematized a process by which the United States asserts the right to conduct assassination operations around the world."[811] Bill Braniff, Director of the terrorism and counterterrorism research center START at the University of Maryland, noted in our interview that the dramatic expansion of the use of "drones" (and other manned platforms) for the purposes of counterterrorism normalized it within the overall set of operational approaches — over time, making aerial strikes the primary policy tool for US counterterrorism overseas.[812]

Micah Zenko of the Council on Foreign Relations also described President Obama as "the drone president."[813] Interestingly, President Obama saw himself in that way as well. As Mark Halperin and John Heilemann reported in their book *Double Down*, President Obama told aides: "Turns out I'm 'really good at killing people.'"[814] Peter Hamby of the *Washington Post* further highlighted this point by noting that Obama authorized "…542 drone strikes that…killed an estimated 3,797 people, including 324 civilians…"[815] [816] While the technology for drones was initiated under President Bush (and prior presidents), the program became a global effort under Obama, relying on established knowledge from the Bush Administration, reflecting an intuitive mode of thinking in which the Obama relied on the prototyping of the

[809] Brad Knickerbocker, "How 9/11 made Barack Obama a war president," Christian Science Monitor, September 11, 2011; available from https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/0911/How-9-11-made-Barack-Obama-a-war-president.

[810] Michael B. Kelley, "Last Year President Obama Reportedly Told His Aides That He's 'Really Good at Killing People,'" Business Insider, November 2, 2013; available from https://www.businessinsider.com/obama-said-hes-really-good-at-killing-people-2013-11.

[811] Ibid.

[812] Interview with William Braniff, Director of START at the University of Maryland, February 7, 2020.

[813] Micah Zenko, "Obama's Final Drone Strike Data," Council on Foreign Relations, January 20, 2017; available from https://www.cfr.org/blog/obamas-final-drone-strike-data.

[814] Michael B. Kelley, "Last Year President Obama Reportedly Told His Aides That He's 'Really Good at Killing People,'" Business Insider, November 2, 2013; available from https://www.businessinsider.com/obama-said-hes-really-good-at-killing-people-2013-11.

[815] Ibid.

[816] Micah Zenko, "Obama's Final Drone Strike Data," Council on Foreign Relations, January 20, 2017; available from https://www.cfr.org/blog/obamas-final-drone-strike-data.

"drone strike" approach during the Bush Administration.[817] [818] Through the "drone" program, President Obama saw a tool to manage terrorism and, thereby, manage the existential anxiety associated with 9/11 that remained within the American public. "Drones" also provided a more cost-effective way to keep terrorists at bay particularly in countries where the United States did not have a military presence – thereby providing an alternative to conducting large-scale land wars to deny terrorist sanctuary and provide financial resources to meet his promise to address the economic challenges in the United States.[819] The Obama Administration, therefore, embraced "drone" technology and highly-trained special operations operators to manage terrorism, as Micah Zenko of the Council on Foreign Relations noted:

> "Obama's embrace and vast expansion of 'drone' strikes against militants and terrorists will be an enduring foreign policy legacy. Whereas President George W. Bush authorized approximately 50 drone strikes that killed 296 terrorists and 195 civilians in Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia, Obama has authorized 506 strikes that have killed 3,040 terrorists and 391 civilians."[820] [821]

The ultimate manifestation and success of the Obama Administration's threat management policy perspective came on May 2, 2011.[822] On that day, President Obama achieved the objective of killing Osama bin Laden, bringing justice and closure for the victims of 9/11 as well as the American public writ large. Obama's approach demonstrated the power of his threat management policy perspective.[823] [824] He was able to kill the mastermind of 9/11 –

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[817] An overview of the drone program can be found here: Christopher Fuller, "The Origins of the Drone Program," Lawfare, February 18, 2018; available from https://www.lawfareblog.com/origins-drone-program.

[818] On September 17, 2001, President Bush signed a finding, which authorized a list of individuals deemed high-value targets authorized for killing. The central idea behind this targeted killing program through "drones" came from the need to pre-emptively kill of terrorists before their attacks manifest "while avoiding the collateral damage of air strikes and the moral ambiguity of assassination." However, the drone program was supplemental to the Bush Administration's more grand ambitions to re-make countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq such that they were no longer hospitable to terrorists.

[819] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.

[820] Micah Zenko, "Obama's Final Drone Strike Data," Council on Foreign Relations, January 20, 2017; available from https://www.cfr.org/blog/obamas-final-drone-strike-data.

[821] Micah Zenko, "Obama's Embrace of Drone Strikes Will Be a Lasting Legacy" *New York Times*, January 12, 2016; available from https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/01/12/reflecting-on-obamas-presidency/obamas-embrace-of-drone-strikes-will-be-a-lasting-legacy.

[822] "The Death of Osama Bin Laden," CNN, April 19, 2020; available from https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/09/world/death-of-osama-bin-laden-fast-facts/index.html.

[823] Ibid.

[824] Spencer Ackerman, "Obama Uses Bin Laden Death to (Kind of) End Afghan War," Wired, May 1, 2012; available from https://www.wired.com/2012/05/obama-osama-afghanistan/.

not, per se, through thousands of US troops but instead through a handful of highly trained Navy SEAL operators and "drones" overhead.[825] [826]

8.2   Reflection: First-Term Obama Administration Policy Profile

During this period, the Obama Administration made decisions consistent with the intuitive mode of thinking similar to the Bush Administration. This is because the Obama Administration, like Bush, recognized a high need for closure within the American public around preventing the next 9/11 and relied on established knowledge from the Bush Administration around "drones," "the surge," and special operations raids to address that existential anxiety and achieve closure. However, the way in which the Obama Administration conducted counterterrorism changed during this period. President Obama contemplated terrorism through a fundamentally different policy perspective than that of the Bush Administration – the threat manager's perspective. This approach, coupled with the administration's intuitive mode of thinking, is consistent with "*The Prosecutor"* policy profile within the PPC framework (Table 1.3, page 65).

This profile reflects President Obama's pivot away from the narrative that terrorism could be only handled through large-scale military intervention. The administration went on to prove out its *"prosecutor"* policy profile by expanding the "drone strike" program and killing Osama bin Laden, the mastermind of 9/11. Through what we assess as a pivot in the Obama Administration's counterterrorism policy perspective, President Obama opened-up both political and policy space for other domestic priorities to be put on the national agenda.

The analysis in this chapter informs the answers to the central questions of this dissertation: (1) has there been continuity or change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11; (2) what factors led to the continuity or change, and (3) how do we classify any such continuity or change?

First, we see change in US counterterrorism policy between the Bush and Obama Administrations. The Obama Administration did not view terrorism as a strategic, all-encompassing struggle. On the contrary, Obama believed terrorism could be managed through a narrow set of counterterrorism operational approaches such as targeting terrorist groups, consistent with the threat management policy perspective, which his administration expanded during this period. Second, the key factors that led to this change are consistent with the core elements of the PPC. The Obama Administration adopted the basic belief that the terrorism could be managed, which we see through his elevation of "drone strike" technologies and special operations raids against the terrorist group itself. The housing and financial crisis also

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[825] "Will Obama spiking the Bin Laden football backfire?" *Foxnews*, May 2, 2012; available from https://www.foxnews.com/transcript/will-obama-spiking-the-bin-laden-football-backfire.
[826] Schaller, C. (2015). Using Force Against Terrorists 'Outside Areas of Active Hostilities'-The Obama Approach and the Bin Laden Raid Revisited. *Journal of Conflict & Security Law*, *20*(2), 195–227.

served as a key factor for the change to the threat manager policy perspective. The financial resources needed to get the domestic US economy back on track required a shift towards a more financially sustainable approach to counterterrorism. Therefore, we classify the first-term of the Obama Administration as *"The Prosecutor"* because the administration operated consistent with the threat management policy perspective through an exclusive focus on al-Qaeda and an intuitive mode of thinking by relying on established knowledge from the Bush Administration with respect to "drone strikes," "the surge," and special operations raids.

We will now turn to the Obama Administration's second-term in office. During the second-term, the Obama Administration remained consistent in its approach to counterterrorism, making fine tuning adjustments across its basic belief, decisionmaking style, and operational approach as ISIS comes on the scene.

9 OBABA ADMINISTRATION: THE RISE OF ISIS

As Obama entered the 2012 presidential campaign, many wondered whether he would be re-elected – as reflected in his approval ratings with just 44-percent approving, 46-percent disapproving, and only 28-percent believing he made progress on fixing the economy.[827] Yet, on terrorism, Obama enjoyed a 57-percent approval rating going into the 2012 election.

During the 2012 presidential campaign, Obama was assailed by his general election opponent, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney. [828] [829] Romney and his vice-presidential running mate, Paul Ryan, asserted that "drone strikes" and special operations raids were insufficient to address the threat of terrorism and keep American safe. Romney and Ryan pointed to the mob attack against the US diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya that led to the deaths of 4 Americans, including the US Ambassador to Libya. The Benghazi attack occurred within the larger context of the "Arab Spring" across the Middle East, which led to violence and instability across the region.[830] On the campaign trail, Paul Ryan accused the Obama Administration of taking its eye off the ball on addressing the factors that were giving rise to terrorism, calling for "moral clarity and firmness of purpose:"

> "The slaughter of brave dissidents in Syria. Mobs storming American embassies and consulates. Iran four years closer to gaining a nuclear weapon. Israel, our best ally in the region, treated with indifference bordering on contempt by the Obama administration. Amid all these threats and dangers, what we do not see is steady, consistent American leadership."[831]

Romney and Ryan wanted to see the United States become more engaged in addressing the root cause factors of terrorism, as former assistant secretary of state, Richard Williamson suggested in an interview on *CNN* during the campaign:

> "Romney's policies would have led to a better standing for the United States in the Arab Spring countries of recent years. A Romney Administration would be there, would be

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[827] "The Obama Presidency: A Year Before the 2012 Presidential Election," *CBS News*, December 9, 2011; available from https://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/Poll_Obama_120911.pdf.
[828] Ian Black, "Barack Obama, the Arab Spring, and a Series of Unforseen Events," *The Guardian*, October 21, 2012; available from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/21/barack-obama-arab-spring-cairo-speech.
[829] See also Shadi Hamid, "Obama's good intensions in the Middle East meant nothing," Brookings Institution, January 23, 2017; available from https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/01/23/obamas-good-intentions-in-the-middle-east-meant-nothing/.
[830] Ian Black, "Barack Obama, the Arab Spring, and a Series of Unforseen Events," *The Guardian*, October 21, 2012; available from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/21/barack-obama-arab-spring-cairo-speech.
[831] Tom Cohen, "Romney, Republicans increase attacks on Obama," *CNN*, September 14, 2012; available from https://www.cnn.com/2012/09/14/politics/campaign-wrap/index.html.

more active trying to work with civil society, with reformer movements, so we would be partners in this evolution, not running behind."[832]

In Egypt, where protests in 2011 led to the resignation of long-time President Hosni Mubarak, Williamson, a Romney surrogate during the 2012 campaign, charged there was a lack of leadership and U.S. involvement from the Obama Administration. In Libya, Williamson asserted that the United States should have been engaged in the "reconciliation and reconstruction" of Libya after the US-led ousting of Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.[833]

Romney and Ryan also critiqued the Obama Administration on the economy, which President Obama had a mandate to address following the financial and housing crisis four years earlier, asserting that more people were in poverty under Obama:

"After four years of economic stewardship under these self-proclaimed advocates of the poor, and what do they have to show for it? More people in poverty, and less upward mobility wherever you look…After four years of dividing people up with the bogus rhetoric of class warfare, just about every segment of society is worse off."[834]

On the campaign trail, Obama touted his successes of his foreign policy agenda during his first-term by pivoting away from the large-scale wars of the Bush Administration:

"Six years ago, there were roughly 180,000 U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, there are fewer than 15,000. This transition has dramatically reduced U.S. casualties and allows us to realign our forces and resources to meet an evolving set of threats while securing our strategic objectives."[835]

On the domestic economic front, Obama touted the more than 3.1 million Americans between the ages 19 – 25 who were now insured under Obamacare as a success of his economic agenda, contrasting his approach with Romney who promised to repeal Obamacare if he became president.[836] This amounted to a choice for the American public. Did Americans want a new approach that would address the broader factors driving terrorism and a re-start on the domestic economic agenda through the repeal of Obamacare or did the American public want to "stay the course" in a new way with Obama as the "drone president" and an expansion of Obamacare?

The American public decided to stay the course with President Obama, re-electing him with a convincing victory. Obama won 332 electoral votes and Romney just 206.[837] Obama won

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[832] Tom Cohen, "Romney, Republicans increase attacks on Obama," *CNN*, September 14, 2012; available from https://www.cnn.com/2012/09/14/politics/campaign-wrap/index.html.

[833] Ibid.

[834] Ibid.

[835] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2015.

[836] Emily Jane Fox, "Obama's re-election secures health care reform," *CNN*, November 7, 2012; available from https://money.cnn.com/2012/11/07/pf/health-care-reform-obama/index.html.

[837] "Election 2012," *New York Times*, available from https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2012/results/president.html.

a mandate to continue his approach to counterterrorism (and his domestic economic agenda). This suggests he was addressing the existential anxiety and need for closure within the American public, stemming from terrorism – just as he had, as a crisis manager, following Hurricane Sandy prior to the elections.[838]

The second-term of the Obama Administration remained largely focused on targeting terrorist groups – but doing so through a renewed focus on working with allies and partners.[839] With this approach came even more variance in the scale and scope of US counterterrorism. For example, in Afghanistan, the approach remained relatively robust with 9,800 US troops whereas in places like Yemen, Iraq, and Somalia, there was a much lighter footprint with hundreds of troops and intelligence community personnel.[840] The Obama Administration also continued to expand the geographic span of the Obama Administration's counterterrorism across the greater Middle East.[841] [842] But even as Obama had a renewed mandate for his approach to counterterrorism, a new crisis loomed that would challenge his targeted killing approach to counterterrorism. This new crisis was the rise of ISIS in 2014 – a group that not only conducted terrorist attacks but also took control of vast swathes of territory in both Syria and Iraq, leading to a new safe haven for terrorism.

9.1 Strategic Considerations: New Terrorist Group, New Counterterrorism Fight

President Obama's political objectives during his second-term were to make the American public feel like they were safer "after turning the page" from Bush, and he wanted to focus on expanding his domestic economic and social agenda.[843] The Obama campaign retort during the 2012 presidential campaign was: "Osama bin Laden is dead and GM is alive."[844] President Obama wanted the American public to believe his administration had "decimated al-Qaeda" through the targeted killing program spanning across the greater Middle East region and the raid that killed Osama bin Laden.[845] Yet, as Obama entered his second term, there was significant upheaval in the Middle East due to the Arab Awakening.[846]

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[838] Kenneth Walsh (2012). A tale of two storms: comparing Bush and Obama's Hurricane response. *US News*, *31*.
[839] David Rohde, "Obama's counterterrorism doctrine: Let locals lead the fight," Reuters, June 4, 2014; available from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-security-doctrine-analysis/obamas-counterterrorism-doctrine-let-locals-lead-the-fight-idUSKBN0EF2EK20140604.
[840] See also Stern, J. (2015). Obama and terrorism. *Foreign Affairs*, *94*, 62.
[841] Zenko, Micah. "Obama's Embrace of Drone Strikes Will be a Lasting Legacy, *New York Times*, January 12, 2016.
[842] Zenko, Micah. "Obama's Final Drone Strike Data," Council on Foreign Relations, January 20, 2017.
[843] See also Stern, J. (2015). Obama and terrorism: Like it or not, the war goes on," *Foreign Affairs*, *94*, 62.
[844] "Biden: Bin Laden is Dead, GM Alive," CNBC, April 26, 2012; available from https://www.cnbc.com/2012/04/26/biden-bin-laden-dead-gm-alive.html.
[845] Ibid.
[846] David Remnick, "Going the Distance," The New Yorker, January 19, 2014; available from https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/27/going-the-distance-david-remnick.

9.1.1 The "Arab Spring"

Just a little over year before President Obama was sworn into the office for a second time, the so-called "Arab Spring" began.[847] In December 2010, anti-government protests began in Tunisia in response to a 26-year old, Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire in front of a government building because a police officer told Bouazizi that he could not sell fruits and vegetables to support his family because he did not have a permit.[848] This event came to represent the authoritarianism experienced by everyday people across the Middle East. Bouazizi's desperate act of civil disobedience led to protests that spread across the greater Middle East region – a movement that became known as the "Arab Spring" (also known as the "Arab Awakening").[849]

A tumultuous period ensued, leading to the overthrow of the Egyptian government of President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011; a civil war in Libya that led to the death of Muammar Gaddafi in August 2011; the end of the 33-year reign Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh in November 2011; and protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Oman. The turmoil across the Middle East carried with it the potential for terrorists to gain new sanctuary and achieve new launchpads to attack the United States and its partners and allies.[850] Those worst fears came true in Syria and Iraq in 2014.

In Bashar al-Assad's Syria, the protests that grew out of the "Arab Spring" and the Assad regime's horrific response to the protests catalyzed a raging civil war, leading to the deaths of over 400,000 Syrians, 5.6 million Syrians fleeing the country, and more than 6.2 million people internally displaced.[851] As the Syrian civil war unfolded, a terrorist group emerged known as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).[852] ISIS was led by an Iraqi once imprisoned by US forces at Camp Bucca in Iraq in 2009. He called himself Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.[853] The emergence of ISIS appeared to have surprised President Obama.[854] In an interview with David Remnick in January of 2014, President Obama likened ISIS to a junior varsity basketball team:

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[847] Kali Robinson, "The Arab Spring at ten years: What's the legacy of the uprisings," *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 3, 2020; available from https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings.

[848] "The Arab Spring: A Year of Revolution," National Public Radio, December 17, 2011; available from https://www.npr.org/2011/12/17/143897126/the-arab-spring-a-year-of-revolution.

[849] Ibid.

[850] See also Schumacher, M. J., & Schraeder, P. J. (2021). Does domestic political instability foster terrorism? Global evidence from the Arab Spring Era (2011–14). *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *44*(3), 198-222.

[851] "Syrian Civil War Fast Facts," CNN, April 9, 2020; available from https://www.cnn.com/2013/08/27/world/meast/syria-civil-war-fast-facts/index.html.

[852] Brian Fishman (2016). *The Master Plan: ISIS, Al Qaeda, and the Jihadi strategy for Final Victory*. Yale University Press.

[853] Terrence McCoy, "How the Islamic States Evolved in an American Prison," *The Washington Post*, November 4, 2014; available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/11/04/how-an-american-prison-helped-ignite-the-islamic-state/.

[854] Kevin Liptak, "ISIS rise surprised Obama, US intelligence," *CNN*, December 7, 2016.

> **Remnick:** "In the 2012 campaign, Obama spoke not only of killing Osama Bin Laden; he also said that al-Qaeda had been 'decimated.' I pointed out that the flag of al-Qaeda is now flying in Fallujah in Iraq and among various rebel factions in Syria…"
>
> **Obama:** "The analogy we use around here sometimes, and I think is accurate, is if a Jayvee team puts on Lakers uniforms that doesn't make them Kobe Bryant."[855]

President Obama's "jayvee team" analogy suggested the president was in a mode of learning about the nature and evolution of this new terrorist group, ISIS. Less than five months later, ISIS took control of 34,000 square miles (88,000 square kilometers) of territory from western Syria to eastern Iraq; the group also started implementing administrative control over 8 million people.[856] ISIS began generating "billions of dollars in revenue through oil, extortion, robbery, and kidnapping."[857] By June 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced the establishment of a caliphate across the territory it controlled in Syria and Iraq.[858]

This five-month evolution of ISIS from "junior varsity" to a "varsity" terrorist group ran directly in the face of Obama's messaging during the 2012 Presidential campaign — rhetoric that characterized al-Qaeda and jihadist terrorism as "decimated."[859] [860] By June 2014, President Obama could no longer tell that story in the face of the ISIS reality and was now faced with the difficult decision of having to conduct counterterrorism in Iraq (after pulling out of Iraq just two-and-a-half years earlier) and in a new country, Syria, that was undergoing a raging civil war. President Obama, the once anti-war presidential candidate and the counterterrorist-in-chief with the killing of Osama bin Laden, now found himself having to re-enter the conflict in Iraq (which he opposed) and a new war in Syria against a new terrorist group – ISIS.

9.1.2   Managing the Terrorist Threat from ISIS

By the summer of 2014, President Obama not only faced a consequential policy decision but also a risky political decision given his political persona and political objectives during his second-term in office: How should the United States re-engage in Iraq (after pulling out in December 2011) and conduct counterterrorism in new country – Syria? Engaging in a new war in Syria (where a civil war was already raging) and re-engaging in Iraq (the basis of which came

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[855] David Remnick, "Going the distance: On and off the road with Barack Obama," *The New Yorker*, January 27, 2014; available from https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/27/going-the-distance-david-remnick.

[856] "IS 'Caliphate' Defeated But Jihadist Group Remains a Threat," BBC, March 23, 2019; available from IS 'caliphate' defeated but jihadist group remains a threat https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-45547595.

[857] "IS 'Caliphate' Defeated But Jihadist Group Remains a Threat," BBC, March 23, 2019; available from IS 'caliphate' defeated but jihadist group remains a threat https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-45547595.

[858] Ibid.

[859] "Biden: Bin Laden is Dead, GM Alive," CNBC, April 26, 2012; available from https://www.cnbc.com/2012/04/26/biden-bin-laden-dead-gm-alive.html.

[860] David Remnick, "Going the distance: On and off the road with Barack Obama," *The New Yorker*, January 27, 2014; available from https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/27/going-the-distance-david-remnick.

from a war that Obama opposed as both a Senator and presidential candidate) carried significant political risk and consequences for both President Obama himself as well as his political party.

Because President Obama was in his second-term as president, he was unencumbered by the politics of re-election. So, while President Obama had the political freedom to go back into Iraq and inject the United States into a civil war in Syria to fight ISIS; such efforts were, at the same time, a distraction from other items on the president's domestic political agenda such as expanding Obamacare and growing the economy – not to mention that fact that engaging in new counterterrorism efforts worked against his overall political narrative and legacy of ending wars. He also had to consider the re-election prospects for Members of Congress in his party because, for them, the proposition of having to fight a new counterterrorism war in Iraq and Syria carried even greater political consequences.

2014 was a congressional election year in which Republicans retained control of the US House of Representatives and regained control of the US Senate – a significant political loss for Obama as the leader of his party.[861] After this defeat at the polls, Obama was now faced with a decision to engage in these "new wars" in Iraq and Syria – just a year before the upcoming presidential campaign.

9.1.2.1   Engaging in Iraq and Syria to Counter ISIS

The *New America Foundation*, a Washington DC based think tank, analyzed the Obama Administration's decisionmaking for re-entering Iraq and entering a new conflict in Syria to counter ISIS. *New America* observed four phases in the Obama Administration's decisionmaking for entering into what they describe as the "counter-ISIS war:" (1) Pre-War, (2) Recognition of Crisis, (3) Limited War, and (4) Escalation.[862] The report described the pre-war phase as occurring between January 2014 and June 2014. During this phase, the Obama Administration did not make policy changes with respect to ISIS and even dismissed the threat from ISIS, as suggested through President Obama's interview with David Remnick, discussed earlier in this chapter.

Following the pre-war phase, the *New America* report explained that the Obama Administration entered a "recognition phase triggered by ISIS' control of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city."[863] During this phase, Obama made his first statements on ISIS and began to contemplate war, as the report explains, given Deputy National Security Advisor, Ben Rhodes'

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[861] Dan Hirschhorn and Zeke Miller, "Republicans win the Senate in mid-term elections," NBC News, November 5, 2014; available from https://time.com/3556003/election-day-midterm-2014-republicans-senate-democrats-obama-mcconnell/.

[862] "What Drove the War's SnapBack in Iraq and Syria?" New America Foundation, https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decision-making-counter-isis-war/what-drove-the-wars-snapback-in-iraq-and-syria/.

[863] Martin Chulov, "Isis Insurgents Seize Control of Iraqi City of Mosul," *Guardian*, June 10, 2014.

notable comments after the fall of Mosul to ISIS, suggesting a shift US counterterrorism policy: "It was becoming apparent that we would have to intervene again in Iraq."[864] Assistant Secretary of State, Derek Chollet, made a similar suggestion during this period: "The sense of urgency changed after Mosul…Obama decided it was time for the US to get more involved directly."[865]

By June 19, 2014, President Obama publicly stated he would re-enter Iraq by sending 300 more US troops to Iraq — bringing the total number of troops in Iraq to 800 — for the purposes of supporting the Iraqi military and security forces and protecting the US Embassy in Baghdad.[866] [867] [868] Then in August 2014, the *New America* report observed that the Obama Administration entered a new phase in its decisionmaking, which it termed the limited war phase. During this phase, President Obama authorized "targeted air strikes" against ISIS in Iraq. The justification for these strikes during this period were based on the mission to protect Americans under threat from ISIS in Iraq and to provide humanitarian protection to minority groups inside of Iraq such as the Yazidis.[869] In fact, in the week leading up to President Obama's authorization of military strikes against ISIS, the terrorist group moved into the Sinjar province in Iraq pushing out tens-of-thousands of Yazidis and Turkmen minorities.[870] These Iraqi minority groups became surrounded by ISIS on Mt. Sinjar. ISIS began "advancing against these groups on Mt. Sinjar to kill and enslave the population."[871] ISIS' horrific atrocities and genocide against the Yazidis and other Iraq minorities in and around Mt. Sinjar became among the leading justifications for the Obama Administration to decide to conduct "targeted military strikes" against ISIS.[872] As the *New America* report discusses: "In contrast to references to a humanitarian rationale in earlier phases' statements, Obama left no doubt that humanitarian objectives had their own driving force rather than counterpoising them to national interests. Rather than making general references to ISIS' brutality, as in earlier statements, Obama

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[864] Benjamin Rhodes, *The World as It Is: A Memoir of the Obama White House*, First edition (New York: Random House, 2018), 290.

[865] Derek H. Chollet, *The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined America's Role in the World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016), 149.

[866] "Remarks by the President on the Situation in Iraq," The White House Office of the Press Secretary, June 19, 2014.

[867] Iraq at a Crossroads: Options for U.S. Policy: Statement for the Record: Deputy Assistant Secretary Brett McGurk.

[868] General Martin E. Dempsey, "Gen. Dempsey Remarks at the Aspen Security Forum 2014" (Joint Chiefs of Staff, n.d.).

[869] "What Drove the War's SnapBack in Iraq and Syria?" New America Foundation, https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decision-making-counter-isis-war/what-drove-the-wars-snapback-in-iraq-and-syria/.

[870] "Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014."

[871] Ibid.

[872] "What Drove the War's SnapBack in Iraq and Syria?" New America Foundation, https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decision-making-counter-isis-war/what-drove-the-wars-snapback-in-iraq-and-syria/.

described ISIS atrocities at length following the decision to re-engage in "targeted military strikes" in Iraq for the first time since President Obama pulled out US troops from Iraq in December 2011. President Obama framed the situation at Mt. Sinjar it in terms of preventing at genocide:"

> "As ISIS has marched across Iraq, it has waged a ruthless campaign against innocent Iraqis. And these terrorists have been especially barbaric towards religious minorities, including Christian and Yezidis, a small and ancient religious sect. Countless Iraqis have been displaced. And chilling reports describe ISIL militants rounding up families, conducting mass executions, and enslaving Yazidi women. In recent days, Yazidi women, men and children from the area of Sinjar have fled for their lives. And thousands — perhaps tens of thousands — are now hiding high up on the mountain, with little but the clothes on their backs. They're without food, they're without water. People are starving. And children are dying of thirst. Meanwhile, ISIS forces below have called for the systematic destruction of the entire Yazidi people, which would constitute genocide. So, these innocent families are faced with a horrible choice: descend the mountain and be slaughtered or stay and slowly die of thirst and hunger."[873]

The Obama Administration's justification for military action was notable because it reflected a legalistic justification for counterterrorism against ISIS. In fact, in the pre-war and recognition periods, Obama resisted conducting counterterrorism based on a pure security rationale. It was not until there was a legalistic basis for counterterrorism, in this case protection of minority population from genocide, did we see the Obama Administration take counterterrorism action.

Secretary of State John Kerry noted in his book, there was "reticence among decisionmakers, even on August 7, to initiate [the targeted strikes]…' Unspoken but palpable in the room was the reality that a president who had been elected in 2008 promising to get the United States out of a war in Iraq had no choice but to order air strikes in that country again.'"[874] Just one month later, we see the Obama Administration enlarge the counterterrorism action against ISIS by, for the first time, conducting airstrikes in Syria against ISIS.[875] On September 11, 2014, the CIA released a public assessment on the strength of ISIS, estimating ISIS included 20,000 – 31,500 fighters.[876] Given the scale of the task, the Obama

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[873] "What Drove the War's SnapBack in Iraq and Syria?" New America Foundation, https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decision-making-counter-isis-war/what-drove-the-wars-snapback-in-iraq-and-syria/.

[874] Kerry, J. (2019). *Every day is extra*. Simon & Schuster.

[875] "What Drove the War's SnapBack in Iraq and Syria?" New America Foundation, https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decision-making-counter-isis-war/what-drove-the-wars-snapback-in-iraq-and-syria/.

[876] Joanna Karadsheh, Jim Sciutto, and Laura Smith-Spark, "How Foreign Fighters are Swelling ISIS Ranks in Startling Numbers," CNN, September 14, 2014; available from https://www.cnn.com/2014/09/12/world/meast/isis-numbers/index.html.

Administration quickly assembled an international coalition to support the conduct of counterterrorism against ISIS.[877]

9.1.3 Obama as Threat Manager – Developing On-the-Ground Partners to Fight ISIS

The Obama Administration chose to work "by, with, and through" partners on the ground in both Syria and Iraq to do the heavy lifting of re-taking territory from ISIS and conducting counterterrorism.[878] The Obama Administration discovered, through the experience of "the surge" in Iraq and Afghanistan, that the United States military had a capability to train foreign forces for combat against insurgents and terrorists, relying on prior established knowledge of fighting terrorism through targeting terrorist groups through partners and allies, consistent with our review of Byman's operational approaches for counterterrorism in Chapter 3, and, thereby, address the existential anxiety in the American public with respect to ISIS, consistent with an intuitive mode of thinking described in Chapter 4.[879] The Obama Administration adopted and modified these operational approaches developed and employed during the surge in Afghanistan (and even Iraq) for this new war against ISIS. As noted in a 2018 Congressional Research Service report:

> "The Obama Administration's strategy for reducing the threats posed by [ISIS] was predicated on the principle of working "'by, with, and through' U.S.-supported local partners as an alternative to large and direct applications of U.S. military force and/or large investments of U.S. personnel and resources."[880]

Through this process of counterterrorism engagement and re-engagement in Syria and Iraq respectively, Obama's threat management approach once again manifested. The Obama Administration continued its focus on the terrorist group, through a primary focus on ISIS, rather than the broader factors that gave rise to ISIS. In fact, President Obama was specific about this in his public statements as early as June 2014:

> "What we're going to have to do is combine selective actions by our military to make sure that we're going after terrorists who could harm our personnel overseas or eventually hit the homeland…We also have an interest in making sure that we don't have a safe haven that continues to grow for [ISIS] and other extremist jihadist groups who could use that as a base of operations for planning and targeting ourselves, our personnel overseas, and eventually the homeland. And if they accumulate more money,

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[877] Sarah NG Hamasaeed and Garrett Nada, "Iraq Timeline; Since the 2003 War," United States Institute of Peace," May 29, 2020; available from https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/05/iraq-timeline-2003-war.
[878] Barbara Starr and Jeremy Diamond," Syria: Obama authorizes boots on ground to fight ISIS," CNN, October 30, 2015; available from https://www.cnn.com/2015/10/30/politics/syria-troops-special-operations-forces/index.html.
[879] Christopher Blanchard and Carla Humud, "The Islamic State and US Policy," Congressional Research Service, September 25, 2018; available from https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43612.pdf.
[880] Ibid.

they accumulate more ammunition, more military capability, larger numbers, that poses
great dangers not just to allies of ours like Jordan, which is very close by, but it also
poses a great danger potentially to Europe and ultimately the United States."[881]

The Obama Administration continued to manage terrorism through focusing exclusively
on the terrorist group itself, in this case ISIS, as suggested earlier in this section.

9.1.4 Obama Administration's Second-Term Decisionmaking Style

During President Obama's second-term in office, his administration continued to
operate consistent with the intuitive mode of thinking. When the Obama Administration first
learned of the emergence of ISIS, President Obama appeared to be more open and comfortable
with ambiguity and willing to learn over time as ISIS evolved. President Obama's comfort with
ambiguity and willingness to learn was suggested through his "jayvee" comments in the David
Remnick interview. However, in just five months after the Remnick interview, we see the
administration immediately change its mode of thinking around ISIS due to the group's
territorial gains and the associated anxiety that became heightened in the American public
reflected in news reports to polling.[882] Once ISIS made its territorial gains and its leader, Abu
Bakr al-Baghdadi, announced the ISIS caliphate; we see the Obama Administration make an
immediate shift towards rejecting the ambiguity and revealed more dichotomous thinking by
defining what ISIS was – a terrorist group that directly threatened the US homeland as well as
the United States' partners, allies, and interests abroad. Obama no longer described ISIS as the
"jayvee team" of militants: "What we're going to have to do is combine selective actions by our
military to make sure that we're going after [ISIS] terrorists who could harm our personnel
overseas or eventually hit the homeland."[883] This is notable because months before ISIS made
its territorial gains, it made gains on the internet through its virtual caliphate of supporters.[884]
Even as ISIS was gaining ground on the internet, Obama was deeming them as a "jayvee team."
Yet, on August 19th, 2014, as the administration learned of the murder and beheading of
journalist James Foley by ISIS, senior leaders in the Obama Administration made a decisive
change in policy vis-a-vis ISIS as reflected through Kerry's statement in his memoir after
learning of Foley's beheading posted on YouTube:

> "My profound feeling of injustice and sadness turned to anger. Something was horribly
> unimaginably sick and wrong in the world. I closed my eyes. I wanted this brave young

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[881] "What Drove the War's SnapBack in Iraq and Syria?" *New America Foundation*.

[882] "What Drove the War's SnapBack in Iraq and Syria?" *New America Foundation*,
https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decision-making-counter-isis-war/what-drove-the-wars-snapback-in-iraq-and-syria/.

[883] "What Drove the War's SnapBack in Iraq and Syria?" *New America Foundation*.

[884] Ben Makuch, "ISIS Is Using Internet Propaganda to Maintain a 'Virtual Caliphate,' UN Report Says," Vice, August
6, 2019; available from https://www.vice.com/en/article/gyzx3j/isis-is-using-internet-propaganda-to-maintain-a-virtual-caliphate-un-report-says.

journalist to be home with his family, safe, and alive. I wanted Daesh extinguished from the face of the earth. But now I could help accomplish only one of those things."[885]

This anxiety was amplified by ISIS taking control of large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq and establishing what the group described as a caliphate. The American public also felt Secretary's Kerry's existential anxiety with respect to ISIS through the group's beheadings. This heightened the need for closure within the public. Once ISIS started conducting beheadings of Westerners and had safe haven through its territorial gains – as well as the freedom of maneuver to plot and plan terrorist attacks much like al-Qaeda had in the 1990s – the Obama Administration began to understand ISIS as a terrorist organization that needed to be directly addressed through US counterterrorism. The administration "seized and freezed" on this framing of ISIS. This stemmed not only from ISIS' beheadings of Western journalists and others but also the threat of attacks in the West, which suggested an associative frame in relation to the 9/11 experience with al-Qaeda. In other words, it was not until ISIS, like al-Qaeda, started threatening the West that the Obama Administration came to a definitive view that it must directly address ISIS. And it was the employment of established knowledge around how to leverage partners and allies on the ground, from the surges in Iraq and Afghanistan, that revealed the Obama Administration's full adoption of the intuitive mode of thinking with respect to ISIS terrorism during its second-term in office.

The Obama Administration, once it defined ISIS as a terrorist group, made rapid judgments with respect to taking action against ISIS. As noted earlier in this chapter, just one day after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, declared the ISIS caliphate, President Obama announced his decision to send US troops back into Iraq.[886] In just a matter of weeks, President Obama initiated an offensive bombing campaign against ISIS in Iraq.[887] Then, just a few weeks later, President Obama decided to engage in a bombing campaign against ISIS in Syria.[888] Between June and October 2014, President Obama moved the United States from a narrative of withdrawing from the Middle East and describing ISIS as the "jayvee team" to a significant counterterrorism re-engagement in two countries in the Middle East – Syria and Iraq (as well as Afghanistan and Libya) to manage the threat of this new terrorist group, ISIS. The Obama Administration was responding to the survivalist mindset within the American public, manifesting in an immediate seizing and freezing on a definitive understanding of ISIS as a

[885] Kerry, J. (2019). *Every day is extra*. Simon & Schuster.
[886] Barbara Starr and Jeremy Diamond," Syria: Obama authorizes boots on ground to fight ISIS," CNN, October 30, 2015; available from https://www.cnn.com/2015/10/30/politics/syria-troops-special-operations-forces/index.html.
[887] "What Drove the War's SnapBack in Iraq and Syria?" *New America Foundation*, https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decision-making-counter-isis-war/what-drove-the-wars-snapback-in-iraq-and-syria/.
[888] "What Drove the War's SnapBack in Iraq and Syria?" *New America Foundation*, https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decision-making-counter-isis-war/what-drove-the-wars-snapback-in-iraq-and-syria/.

threat to the United States once it took territory in Syria and Iraq – leading to a counterterrorism response by the administration against ISIS that was generally consistent with how the administration understood and fought al-Qaeda during its first term in office – through drone strikes, special operations raids, and working by, with, and through partners on the ground as it had in Afghanistan during the "surge."

The Obama Administration's intuitive mode of thinking also manifested through the way it analyzed and argued for its legal authorities for use military force against ISIS. The administration argued to Congress that it had the legal authority to take military action against ISIS based on the established legal knowledge of the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF). Specifically, President Obama pointed to the same legal authority Congress authorized in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, which provided President Bush with the authorization to conduct counterterrorism against al-Qaeda.[889] The Obama Administration asserted that the 2001 AUMF was operative for this new counterterrorism effort against ISIS.[890] In fact, White House General Counsel, Neil Eggelston, presented the administration's legal argument to congressional staffers in a briefing at the White House in September 2014.[891] Eggelston made the case that the 2001 AUMF applied to counterterrorism against ISIS because ISIS was an antecedent of al-Qaeda in Iraq.[892] Eggelston, through his presentation, insinuated that the administration believed it had to apply military force given the lessons of the experience of 9/11.

Through this analysis, we can assess the policy profile of the second-term of the Obama Administration as that of "*The Prosecutor*."

9.2   Reflection: Second-Term Obama Administration Policy Profile

When applying the PPC framework (Table 1.3, page 65) during this period, the Obama Administration continued to adhere to "*The Prosecutor*" profile in three ways: (1) it maintained a threat manager's policy perspective by focusing on the terrorist group itself, in this case, ISIS; (2) it made decisions through an intuitive mode of thinking through relying on established knowledge as reflected through choosing policy tools such as the 2001 AUMF that were consistent with a 9/11-oriented understanding of the threat as well as the adoption of approaches for training and equipping with partners and allies for counterterrorism from the experiences of "the surge" in Iraq and Afghanistan; and (3) it expanded operational approaches to "target terrorists" through partners and allies on the ground in Iraq and Syria and beyond. We will proceed by summarizing each of these elements in accordance with the case study during this period.

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[889] Public Law 107-40, *Congress.gov*, September 18, 2001.
[890] Author participated in this briefing with Neil Eggelston, White House General Counsel, September 2014.
[891] Ibid.
[892] Ibid.

The goal of the threat manager is to find measures that mitigate the threat emanating from a specific terrorist group, consistent with Cronin and Price's outline of the policy perspective in Chapter 2. As Luke Hartig, former Senior Director for Counterterrorism at the White House said in our interview:

> "[The efficacy of US counterterrorism under Obama was measured by] an overall level of threat from a particular group, frequency of plots from a group, terrorist geographic control, and the number of attacks that have taken place against the US and the West."[893]

The Obama Administration remained focused on understanding the impact of its counterterrorism in relation to the terrorist group itself rather than how it affected the broader factors in society driving terrorism. This is consistent with what we learned about the threat management approach in Chapter 3 in which the threat manager tended to focus on the operational approaches that addressed the organic operational capability of the terrorist group(s) and its ever-changing tactics.

While the Obama Administration shifted from its primary focus on al-Qaeda to a focus on ISIS, it continued to adhere to Byman's suggested operational approach of "targeting terrorists."[894] However, Obama did so in a way that was fundamentally different than Bush. Instead of deploying tens-of-thousands of US troops to Iraq and Syria to conduct regime change and structurally change the overall political and social context, Obama, instead, deployed a much smaller force to work "by, with, and through" indigenous forces in each country. In Iraq, the Obama Administration devised an approach that re-trained and re-equipped the Iraqi Security Forces. And once a sufficient number of such forces were re-trained and re-equipped, US forces advised and accompanied those Iraqi forces on the battlefield to re-take ISIS controlled territories. In Syria, the Obama Administration had to take on a different approach because it did not view the Assad regime as a credible partner. So, the administration decided to identify indigenous forces (that were not affiliated with or part of the state) that it could work with, which they found in the Syrian Democratic Forces. The Obama Administration proceeded with what become known as the "Syria Train and Equip" program, authorized in section 1209 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015.[895] Consistent with the administration's approach to fighting al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, US troops trained and equipped vetted elements of the Syrian opposition and then advised and accompanied them on the battlefield, providing capabilities such as close air support.

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[893] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.

[894] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[895] Author wrote this NDAA authority for the Syria "train and equip" program.

The Obama Administration also continued to engage in an intuitive mode of thinking for decisionmaking particularly when ISIS took significant territory in Syria and Iraq. It continued to have a need to reject ambiguity by defining ISIS as a terrorist group – akin to al-Qaeda – thereby achieving both closure and legal authority through the 2001 AUMF to act, pursuing ISIS in the same way it pursued al-Qaeda. The administration made this judgment rapidly and took immediate military action against ISIS in both Syria and Iraq.

The analysis in this chapter provides us with insight into the central questions of this dissertation: (1) has there been continuity or change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11; (2) what factors led to the continuity or change, and (3) how do we classify any such continuity or change?

First, we see continuity between the first and second terms of the Obama Administration. However, what was different was that President Obama did not pursue the threat management policy perspective and intuitive mode of thinking in relation to the terrorist threat through a "surge" strategy. Rather, the administration pursued its approach to counterterrorism against ISIS through expanding "drone strikes" and special operations raids to target terrorists. It also trained and equipped partners to do the same. Second, the key factors that led to this change had to do with the Obama Administration's framing of the threat from ISIS consistent with framing of al-Qaeda, as reflected through the White House General Counsel Neil Eggelston's briefing to congressional staff. We can also see this through the administration's exclusive focus on ISIS, consistent with the strategic approach it pursued against al-Qaeda during its first-term in office. Third, we again see the Obama Administration pursue operational approaches that aligned with threat management policy perspective such as "targeting of terrorists," as described in Chapter 3. We, therefore, classify the second-term of the Obama Administration as "*The Prosecutor*" policy profile because the administration operated consistent with the threat management policy perspective and the intuitive mode of thinking.

In the final analysis, this period suggests an internally conflicted president and administration. President Obama wanted to meet the expectations of his anti-war political persona but, ultimately, settled for having to address the realities that were presented by a new terrorist actor – ISIS. By the end of his second term in 2016, President Obama handed over to President Trump an ongoing counterterrorism effort in Afghanistan, a continuing counterterrorism effort in Syria against ISIS, and an on-going global counterterrorism campaign whose end was nowhere in sight. This was a far cry from what the American public may have predicted would have occurred eight years earlier during the 2008 presidential campaign and the election of Obama as President of the United States. This shift in President Obama from anti-war presidential candidate to "Counterterrorist-in-Chief" across not only his second-term in office but also his first-term once again is suggestive of both the acuteness of the existential anxiety within the American public as well as the necessity the Obama Administration felt to

address the public's anxiety immediately and through leveraging established knowledge, which creates an aura of trust and confidence in the chosen approach.

President Trump took political advantage of Obama's record on counterterrorism by arguing that he was "weak," which could be viewed as a counterintuitive critique given President Obama's record of robust "drone strikes" and special operations raids against terrorist groups. Trump would assert that he would unleash the military to finish the fight against ISIS and then bring the US troops home. This suggests President Trump intended to make counterterrorism the top focus of his administration to contrast, in the public mindset, the fact that the Obama Administration (and, by extension, Hillary Clinton, Trump's 2016 presidential rival) had priorities other than terrorism. Trump may have recognized that the Obama Administration had not fully achieved closure with the American public when it came to the threat of ISIS.

In the next chapter, we will analyze the Trump Administration's only term in office through the PPC framework. We will see President Trump's approach to counterterrorism reflects a different policy profile – that of "*The Negotiator*."

10 TRUMP ADMINISTRATION: COUNTERTERRORISM AS DEALMAKING

The key, strategic event of this period was the Trump Administration's pivot away from terrorism as the primary focal point of US national security policy for the first time since 9/11, stating in the administration's National Defense Strategy: "Inter-state strategic competition, **not terrorism**, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security."[896] This strategic pivot, over time, led to fundamental change towards a dealmaking approach for US counterterrorism policy during the Trump Administration, which culminated in the first bilateral negotiations with the Afghan Taliban for the first time in the 20-year war in Afghanistan.

The Trump Administration overall operated consistent with "*The Negotiator"* policy profile (Table 1.3, page 65) during its term in office, which we will explain over the course of this chapter. To understand how the President Trump became a *"negotiator*," we must first reflect on the 2016 presidential election. Such a reflection will help us understand how "candidate Trump" laid the groundwork for his administration's strategic pivot away from terrorism as the focal point of US national security policy and towards a dealmaking approach for US counterterrorism.

Just one year after President Obama decided to engage in new wars in Iraq and Syria to counter ISIS, in June of 2015, Donald Trump formally announced his bid for the US presidency. In his announcement, Trump argued he would take a more aggressive approach to counterterrorism – more aggressive than President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton – asserting: "Nobody would be tougher on ISIS than Donald Trump. Nobody."[897] [898] *Pew Research* polling during the 2016 presidential campaign corroborated the importance of terrorism as a top issue for the American public. Pew's polling found 80-percent of respondents identified terrorism as a very important issue.[899]

On the campaign trial, Trump not only attacked Clinton's record but also questioned the credibility of all who led US counterterrorism policy since 9/11 as "weak," "incompetent," and part of a network of special interest in Washington DC that Trump labeled "the swamp."[900] [901]

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[896] "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, January 2018; available from https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf.

[897] "Here's Donald Trump's Presidential Announcement Speech," Time, June 16, 2015; available from https://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/.

[898] Kevin Liptak, "ISIS rise surprised Obama, US intelligence," *CNN*, December 7, 2016.

[899] "Top Voting Issues in the 2016 Election," *Pew Research*, July 2016; available from https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2016/07/07/4-top-voting-issues-in-2016-election/.

[900] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, December 2017.

[901] "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, January 2018; available from https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf.

[902] "Drain the swamp" became one of Trump's consistent messages on the campaign trail.[903] Trump argued that Washington DC was dominated by a coterie of special interest from government officials, to think tanks, to lobbyists – what he described as "a rigged the system rewarding the wealthy and well-connected at the expense of the common man."[904] This "swamp" included, in Trump's parlance, "stupid people," referring to government officials who were unresponsive to the American people when it came to, among other things, counterterrorism.[905] As Trump asserted: "We are being led by stupid people. We're being led by people who don't have a clue…they're incompetent."[906] Trump argued that Clinton represented "the swamp" and lacked the judgment, strength, and record to serve as President:

> "Her bad instincts and her bad judgment – something pointed out by Bernie Sanders – are what caused the disasters unfolding today. Let's review the record. In 2009, pre-Hillary, ISIS was not even on the map. Libya was cooperating. Egypt was peaceful. Iraq was seeing a reduction in violence. Iran was being choked by sanctions. Syria was under control. After four years of Hillary Clinton, what do we have? ISIS has spread across the region, and the world. Libya is in ruins, and our ambassador and his staff were left helpless to die at the hands of savage killers. Egypt was turned over to the radical Muslim brotherhood, forcing the military to retake control. Iraq is in chaos. Iran is on the path to nuclear weapons. Syria is engulfed in a civil war and a refugee crisis that now threatens the West. After fifteen years of wars in the Middle East, after trillions of dollars spent and thousands of lives lost, the situation is worse than it has ever been before. This is the legacy of Hillary Clinton: death, destruction, and weakness."[907]

On the campaign trail, Trump cited major terrorist attacks during both the Obama Administration as well as Clinton's tenure in office as Secretary of State.[908] Trump noted terrorist attacks in Benghazi, Libya, a terrorist attack that killed the US ambassador to Libya along with three other Americans; to ISIS' November 2015 attack in Paris, the deadliest attack in France since World War II with 130 dead and over 416 wounded; to ISIS-inspired domestic terrorist attacks such as Omar Mateen's the June 2016 attack on a night club in Orlando,

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[902] "How might Trump 'drain the swamp'?" BBC, October 18, 2016; available from https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-37699073.
[903] Ibid.
[904] Trevor Hughes, "Trump Calls to 'Drain the Swamp' of Washington," *USA Today*, October 18, 2016; available from https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2016/2016/10/18/donald-trump-rally-colorado-springs-ethics-lobbying-limitations/92377656/.
[905] Interview with Dana Bash, CNN, July 29, 2015; available from https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2015/07/29/donald-trump-talks-about-exaggerating-bash-intv-erin.cnn.
[906] Ibid.
[907] Michele Gorman, "Full Transcript: Donald Trump's 2016 Republican National Convention Speech," *Newsweek*, July, 22, 2016; available from https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-full-transcript-republican-national-convention-hillary-clinton-482945.
[908] Susan Davis, "Trump attacks Obama as 'the founder of ISIS,'" National Public Radio, August 11, 2016; available from https://www.npr.org/2016/08/11/489607788/trump-attacks-obama-as-the-founder-of-isis.

Florida, killing 49 people.[909] Trump argued that the Obama Administration "handcuffed intelligence and law enforcement" officials. He also attacked Clinton as "broadcasting weakness to the world" in the lead up to these and other ISIS attacks:[910] [911]

> "The current politically correct response cripples our ability to talk and to think and act clearly. We're not acting clearly. We're not talking clearly. We've got problems. If we don't get tough, and if we don't get smart and fast, we're not going to have our country anymore. There will be nothing, absolutely nothing left.'"[912]

Trump delivered a foreign policy speech during the general election of the presidential campaign in August 2016 titled: "Make America Safe Again."[913] In the speech, Trump asserted that during the summer of 2016, "there had been an ISIS attack launched outside the war zones of the Middle East every 84 hours."[914] Trump suggested the problem resided with the leadership of the Obama Administration and Secretary Clinton because they were unwilling to label these attacks as "radical Islamic terrorism," culminating with this assertion:

> "The rise of ISIS is the direct result of policy decisions made by President Obama and Secretary Clinton….In short, the Obama-Clinton foreign policy has unleashed ISIS, destabilized the Middle East, and put the nation of Iran – which chants 'Death to America' – in a dominant position of regional power and, in fact, aspiring to be a dominant world power…Incident after incident proves again and again: Hillary Clinton lacks the judgement, the temperament and the moral character to lead this nation. Importantly, she also lacks the mental and physical stamina to take on ISIS, and all the many adversaries we face – not only in terrorism, but in trade and every other challenge we must confront to turn this country around."[915]

Trump also framed Clinton as a "hawk" when it came to foreign policy, pointing to her support of Bush's "stupid wars," citing Iraq in particular:

> "Our current strategy of nation-building and regime change is a proven failure. We have created the vacuums that allow terrorists to grow and thrive. I was an opponent of the

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[909] Kelly Cobiella, Ziad Jaber, and Nancy Ing, "Historic Bataclan terror attack trial begins in Paris," NBC News, September 8, 2021; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/historic-bataclan-terror-attack-trial-begins-paris-n1278679.
[910] Ibid.
[911] Ralph Ellis, Ashley Fantz, Faith Karimi, and Eliott C. McLaughlin, "Orlando Shooting: 49 Killed, Shooter Pledged ISIS Allegiance," *CNN*, June 13, 2016; available from https://www.cnn.com/2016/06/12/us/orlando-nightclub-shooting/index.html.
[912] Louis Nelson, "Trump: Clinton, Obama Protecting Terrorists to be 'Politically Correct,'" *Politico*, June 13, 2016; available from https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/donald-trump-muslim-ban-224272.
[913] "Full text: Donald Trump's speech on fighting terrorism," Politico, August 15, 2016; available from https://www.politico.com/story/2016/08/donald-trump-terrorism-speech-227025.
[914] Ibid.
[915] "Full text: Donald Trump's speech on fighting terrorism," Politico, August 15, 2016; available from https://www.politico.com/story/2016/08/donald-trump-terrorism-speech-227025.

Iraq war from the beginning – a major difference between me and my opponent. [916] [917] [918]

Throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump committed to keeping the United States out of wars of choice.[919] [920] He also suggested he would use different mechanisms to fight terrorism, including intelligence, immigration law, and diplomatic measures:

"As President, I will call for an international conference focused on [recognizing "radical Islamic terrorism"]. We will work side-by-side with our friends in the Middle East, including our greatest ally, Israel. We will partner with King Abdullah of Jordan, and President Sisi of Egypt, and all others who recognize this ideology of death that must be extinguished. We will also work closely with NATO on this new mission. I had previously said that NATO was obsolete because it failed to deal adequately with terrorism; since my comments they have changed their policy and now have a new division focused on terror threats…My Administration will aggressively pursue…expanded intelligence sharing, and cyberwarfare to disrupt and disable their propaganda and recruiting. We cannot allow the internet to be used as a recruiting tool, and for other purposes, by our enemy – we must shut down their access to this form of communication, and we must do so immediately. The common thread linking the major Islamic terrorist attacks that have recently occurred on our soil – 9/11, the Ft. Hood shooting, the Boston Bombing, the San Bernardino attack, the Orlando attack – is that they have involved immigrants or the children of immigrants. Clearly, new screening procedures are needed…A Trump Administration will establish a clear principle that will govern all decisions pertaining to immigration: we should only admit into this country those who share our values and respect our people...In addition to screening out all members or sympathizers of terrorist groups, we must also screen out any who have hostile attitudes towards our country or its principles – or who believe that Sharia law should supplant American law. Those who do not believe in our Constitution, or who support bigotry and hatred, will not be admitted for immigration into the country…As soon as I take office, I will ask the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security to identify a list of regions where adequate screening cannot take place. We will stop processing visas from those

[916] Ibid.

[917] Michele Gorman, "Full Transcript: Donald Trump's 2016 Republican National Convention Speech," *Newsweek*, July, 22, 2016; available from https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-full-transcript-republican-national-convention-hillary-clinton-482945.

[918] Louis Nelson, "Trump: Clinton, Obama Protecting Terrorists to be 'Politically Correct,'" *Politico*, June 13, 2016; available from https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/donald-trump-muslim-ban-224272.

[919] "Trump's no 'stupid' wars doctrine faces biggest test," France 24, March 1, 2020; available from https://www.france24.com/en/20200103-trump-s-no-stupid-wars-doctrine-faces-biggest-test.

[920] Louis Nelson, "Trump: Clinton, Obama Protecting Terrorists to be 'Politically Correct,'" *Politico*, June 13, 2016; available from https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/donald-trump-muslim-ban-224272.

areas until such time as it is deemed safe to resume based on new circumstances or new procedures."[921]

Above all, Trump attempted to make the case that the strategic challenges the United States faced were best solved through dealmaking.[922] Trump's "dealmaker" brand was, in part, built on the book he authored 30 years earlier titled *The Art of the Deal*.[923] Trump argued he could strike deals to ensure the safety and security of Americans. He promised to negotiate "good deals" for the United States – from peace in the Middle East, to trade, to relations with foreign powers. Trump contrasted his dealmaking approach with the "bad" nuclear deal, as he characterized it, that the Obama Administration entered into with Iran.[924] Trump argued that "good deals" could only be achieved by him alone because he had dealmaking experience from his career in the private sector. Trump also suggested that prior presidents – from Obama, to Bush, to Bill Clinton – made "bad deals" because they did not have the American public's interests first or top of mind. Trump asserted he would put "America first" as central to his negotiating and dealmaking:

> "My foreign policy will always put the interests of the American people and American security above all else. It has to be first. Has to be. That will be the foundation of every single decision that I will make. America."[925]

Trump went even further in his critiques of Clinton. He argued that when Hillary Clinton was Secretary of State, she did not have America's interests top of mind, which he argued was exemplified through the terrorist attack in Benghazi, Libya in 2012.[926]

On September 11th, 2012, a militant group named Ansar al-Sharia conducted an attack on the US "special mission" in Benghazi, Libya.[927] This attack led to the deaths of four US personnel, Sean Smith, Glen Doherty, and Tyrone Woods, and the US ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens.[928] Trump's basic argument in relation to the "Benghazi attack" was that Clinton failed to protect the US interests and Americans in Libya.[929] Trump made this assertion in a foreign policy speech during the 2016 campaign:

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[921] "Trump's no 'stupid' wars doctrine faces biggest test," France 24, March 1, 2020; available from https://www.france24.com/en/20200103-trump-s-no-stupid-wars-doctrine-faces-biggest-test.

[922] Anthony Zurcher, "Donald Trump's top four 'deals' for foreign policy," *BBC,* April 27, 2016; available from https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-36154988.

[923] Trump, D. J., & Schwartz, T. (2009). *Trump: The art of the deal*. Ballantine Books.

[924] Anthony Zurcher, "Donald Trump's top four 'deals' for foreign policy," *BBC,* April 27, 2016; available from https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-36154988.

[925] Ibid.

[926] Ryan Teague Beckwith, "Read Donald Trump's 'America First' Foreign Policy Speech," *Time,* April 27, 2016; available from https://time.com/4309786/read-donald-trumps-america-first-foreign-policy-speech/.

[927] "Benghazi Attack Timeline," *CNN*, October 21, 2015; available from https://www.cnn.com/2013/08/06/politics/benghazi-attack-timeline/index.html.

[928] Ibid.

[929] Ryan Teague Beckwith, "Read Donald Trump's 'America First' Foreign Policy Speech," *Time,* April 27, 2016; available from https://time.com/4309786/read-donald-trumps-america-first-foreign-policy-speech/.

"Hillary Clinton…refuses to say the words radical Islam, even as she pushes for a massive increase in refugees coming into our country. After Secretary Clinton's failed intervention in Libya, Islamic terrorists in Benghazi took down our consulate and killed our ambassador and three brave Americans. Then, instead of taking charge that night, Hillary Clinton decided to go home and sleep. Incredible. Clinton blames it all on a video, an excuse that was a total lie, proven to be absolutely a total lie. Our ambassador was murdered, and our Secretary of State misled the nation. And, by the way, she was not awake to take that call at 3 o'clock in the morning. And now ISIS is making millions and millions of dollars a week selling Libya oil. And you know what? We don't blockade, we don't bomb, we don't do anything about it. It's almost as if our country doesn't even know what's happening, which could be a fact and could be true. This will all change when I become president…Under a Trump administration, no American citizen will ever again feel that their needs come second to the citizens of a foreign country."[930]

On the one hand, Trump argued that he would always put "America first." He also argued that when it came to terrorism, he would "bomb the shit out of 'em.'" [931] But, on the other hand, Trump stated he would pursue a dealmaking approach, suggesting a negotiation-oriented approach to the United States' strategic and security challenges.[932] Such an approach to US national security and foreign policy scrambled the traditional Republican and Democratic party coalitions as *Foreign Policy* described in an article on the election day in 2016:

"This year's contest has upended the politics of U.S. foreign policy more dramatically than any in recent memory. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the nominee of the typically "diplomacy first, force as last resort" Democratic Party, sounds more hawkish than the usually "strong on defense" GOP. And businessman Donald Trump, the Republican Party standard-bearer, is the one questioning military interventions overseas and offering olive branches to adversaries."[933]

The American public ultimately chose Trump as the 45th President of the United States with 306 electoral college votes versus Clinton's 232.[934] As Trump entered office, he began the process of strategically pivoting the US national security apparatus away from terrorism as the focal point of US national security first through codifying this new strategic focus in both the 2017 National Security Strategy as well as the 2018 National Defense Strategy. These were the

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[930] Ryan Teague Beckwith, "Read Donald Trump's 'America First' Foreign Policy Speech," *Time,* April 27, 2016; available from https://time.com/4309786/read-donald-trumps-america-first-policy-speech/.
[931] Stephen Tankel, "Trump's Shadow War," Politico, May 9, 2018; available from https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/05/09/donald-trumps-shadow-war-218327/.
[932] Ibid.
[933] Molly O'Toole and Dan De Luce, "The 2016 Election Turned the Politics of Foreign Policy on Its Head," Foreign Policy, November 2, 2016; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/02/the-2016-election-turned-the-politics-of-foreign-policy-on-its-head/.
[934] "2016 Presidential Election Results," *Politico*; available from https://www.politico.com/2016-election/results/map/president/.

Trump Administration's first steps in ultimately becoming a "*negotiator*" in US national security and foreign policy.[935] [936]

10.1 Strategic Considerations: Pivoting from Terrorism

By 2016, a consensus had formed within the US national security community around three lessons in relation to US counterterrorism: (1) counterterrorism through drone strikes, airstrikes, and other special operations raids were effective in disrupting terrorist groups and potential attacks against the US homeland and (2) large-scale ground wars made the United States less safe and were too costly.[937] [938] [939] [940] [941] [942] [943] [944] Once in office, this consensus provided Trump a roadmap for more aggressive drone strikes and special operations raids to manage terrorism, as Colonel John Petkosek, former commander of the Asymmetric Warfare Group, related during our interview:

"Obama took us to a counterterrorism policy approach that we were not before – a light counterterrorism approach focused on man-hunting. Obama took what the Bush Administration started with direct action and perfected it. Trump full-on leveraged it.[945]

Petkosek's perspective illuminates an interesting insight into how senior policymakers and military leaders understood and assessed US counterterrorism. These leaders viewed the Trump's counterterrorism policy as consistent with that of the Obama Administration at the initial outset of the Trump Administration. Former HASC staffer Pete Villano, former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, and former National Security Council Senior Director for Counterterrorism Luke Hartig shared Petkosek's sentiment in our interviews, pointing out that the Trump Administration initially operated much like the Obama Administration when it came to counterterrorism, with Villano stating:

"Any and all changes were on the margins. [Counterterrorism] was a heavy military-centric and largely overseas approach measured by dollars and implementers. For

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[935] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, December 2017.
[936] "National Defense Strategy," US Department of Defense, January 2018; available from https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf.
[937] Interview with Colonel (Retired) John Petkosek, January 21, 2020.
[938] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Peter Villano, January 20, 2020.
[939] Interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, March 30, 2020.
[940] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.
[941] Interview with Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 24, 2020.
[942] Interview with former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Dr. Joe Felter, March 18, 2020.
[943] Interview with former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, March 25, 2020.
[944] Malley and Finer, Jon. "The Long Shadow of 9/11: How Counterterrorism Warps US Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018.
[945] Interview with Colonel (Retired) John Petkosek, January 21, 2020.

example, the troop numbers in Afghanistan, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa [remained the same at the beginning of the Trump Administration.]"[946] [947] [948]
Colonel Tom Nelson reinforced this point in our interview, asserting:

"Trump authorized a ramp-up in targeted killings consistent with Obama to reduce the military footprint…it started with regime change [under Bush] and moved to targeted killings [under Obama and Trump]."[949]

However, over time, the Trump Administration pivoted to a different policy profile than that of Bush or Obama. President Trump pursued a threat management policy perspective similar to Obama, but he did so through leveraging a larger set of policy tools in support of his counterterrorism objectives. Many of these new operational approaches had not been employed in the preceding 15 years of US counterterrorism following 9/11, bringing new change to the overall approach of US counterterrorism policy. The Trump Administration's new operational approaches for dealmaking in US counterterrorism could not have been achieved without first experiencing the risks and downsides of "The *Prosecutor*" policy profile lingering from the Obama Administration during the first days and weeks the Trump Administration was in office, which we will discuss in the next section.

10.1.1 From "*Prosecutor*" to "*Negotiator*"

As the US federal government in Washington DC was transitioning from the Obama Administration to the Trump Administration, US special operations forces were continuing their counterterrorism mission planning as part of an on-going campaign to counter al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen.[950] AQAP was a group that had been on the rise for years. In 2011, the Obama Administration conducted counterterrorism operations against one of the group's leaders, Anwar al-Awlaki, a US citizen and "the leading English-language al-Qaeda propagandist," killing him through a US drone strike, as discussed in Chapter 8.[951] This was not the last US counterterrorism effort in Yemen.

By early 2016, US intelligence observed AQAP growing in strength.[952] The Obama Administration decided to conduct a new counterterrorism campaign to prevent AQAP from

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[946] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Peter Villano, January 20, 2020.
[947] Interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, March 30, 2020.
[948] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.
[949] Interview with Colonel (Retired) Tom Nelson, February 13, 2020.
[950] Laura Smith-Spark and Angela Dewan, "Yemen Raid: The Plan, the Operation, and the Aftermath," *CNN*, February 9, 2017; available from https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/08/middleeast/yemen-raid-explainer/index.html.
[951] Scott Shane, "The Enduring Influence of Anwar al-Awlaki in the Age of the Islamic State," CTC Sentinel, July 2016; available from https://ctc.usma.edu/july-2016/
[952] Cynthia McFadden, William M. Arkin, and Tim Uehlinger, "How the Trump Team's First Military Raid in Yemen Went Wrong," NBC News, October 2, 2017; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/how-trump-team-s-first-military-raid-went-wrong-n806246.

conducting attacks against the US homeland like it had on Christmas day in 2009 in Detroit and the foiled printer cartridge bombs 2010.[953] [954] [955] By the latter half of 2016, the Obama Administration created a new counterterrorism campaign for Yemen that included aggressive drone strikes, airstrikes, and ground raids, consistent with its "*prosecutor*" policy profile, as discussed in Chapters 8 and 9.[956] However, President Obama deferred the decision on whether to execute such a campaign to the newly elected President Trump.[957]

President Trump was sworn in as the 45th President of the United States on January 20, 2017.[958] The next day, President Trump's Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, was briefed on the situation in Yemen and the counterterrorism operation devised by the Obama Administration. As reported, special operations forces had prepared a series of raids and rehearsed such raids in nearby Djibouti where the United States has a military base.[959] On January 25th, just five days after inauguration, "President Trump and his national security team met to consider a joint US-UAE special operations raid in the village of Yakla in Yemen against a high-value target and site exploitation for the purpose of informing future counterterrorism missions."[960]

Secretary Mattis and General Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, both of whom served as senior military leaders during the Obama Administration, walked President Trump through the mission and its objectives. Both Mattis and Dunford fully endorsed the mission.[961] [962] Newly appointed National Security Advisory, Michael Flynn, who served as a three-star Army general and Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency during the Obama Administration also endorsed the mission and noted a tip from the United Arab Emirates in which "the Emirate government relayed that one of the most wanted terrorists in the world,

[953] "Yemen mail bomb 'could have detonated over eastern US,'" *BBC*, November 10, 2010; available from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-11729720.

[954] Dana Hughes and Kirit Radia, "'Underwear Bomber's' Alarming Last Phone Call," *ABC News*, December 31, 2009; available from https://abcnews.go.com/WN/bombers-phone-call-father/story?id=9457361.

[955] Laura Smith-Spark and Angela Dewan, "Yemen Raid: The Plan, the Operation, and the Aftermath," *CNN*, February 9, 2017; available from https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/08/middleeast/yemen-raid-explainer/index.html.

[956] Dana Hughes and Kirit Radia, "'Underwear Bomber's' Alarming Last Phone Call," *ABC News*, December 31, 2009; available from https://abcnews.go.com/WN/bombers-phone-call-father/story?id=9457361.

[957] Cynthia McFadden, William M. Arkin, and Tim Uehlinger, "How the Trump Team's First Military Raid in Yemen Went Wrong," NBC News, October 2, 2017; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/how-trump-team-s-first-military-raid-went-wrong-n806246.

[958] "US President Donald Trump sworn in," *BBC*, January 20, 2017; available from https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-38696960.

[959] Cynthia McFadden, William M. Arkin, and Tim Uehlinger, "How the Trump Team's First Military Raid in Yemen Went Wrong," NBC News, October 2, 2017; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/how-trump-team-s-first-military-raid-went-wrong-n806246.

[960] Ibid.

[961] Ibid.

[962] Laura Smith-Spark and Angela Dewan, "Yemen Raid: The Plan, the Operation, and the Aftermath," *CNN*, February 9, 2017; available from https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/08/middleeast/yemen-raid-explainer/index.html.

Qasim al-Rimi, could be at the location where the raid would be conducted."[963] Flynn pointed out this could have a significance for the newly inaugurated Trump Administration, stating to President Trump:

> "….capturing or killing al-Rimi would distinguish President [Trump] from Obama right out of the box…Trump would be a risk taker where Obama was a hesitant and endless deliberator. And the president would be honoring the Gulf allies who were operating in Yemen."[964]

Flynn argued to President Trump that a raid in the first week of his administration would be a "game changer," showing strength and resolve to take decisive and aggressive action to manage the threat of terrorism. In this respect, Trump began his presidency operating consistent with "*The Prosecutor*" policy profile.

Just after midnight on January 29th, 2017, the raid commenced.[965] Special operations forces landed just outside the village of Yaklu in Yemen. "As the US special operations forces entered the village, they made contact with AQAP fighters. In a matter of minutes, a special operator was killed. Two US Marine Corps CV-22 tilt-rotor Ospreys were sent to provide support."[966] As the Ospreys entered the area of combat, one crashed. Eventually, the US raid team was able to withdraw from the area but only after a special operations operator was killed, five wounded, and a total loss of a CV-22 Osprey aircraft.

The Trump Administration initially tried to cover up the failure of its first counterterrorism mission. White House Press Secretary, Sean Spicer, stated to the press on January 30th: "This weekend, we carried out a very successful raid against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula."[967] Spicer repeated the false characterization of the mission the very next day, on January 31st: "…we recovered a tremendous amount of information."[968] After being briefed on the raid, Senator John McCain, then Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, immediately went to the public to dispute the Trump Administration's

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[963] Cynthia McFadden, William M. Arkin, and Tim Uehlinger, "How the Trump Team's First Military Raid in Yemen Went Wrong," NBC News, October 2, 2017; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/how-trump-team-s-first-military-raid-went-wrong-n806246.

[964] Ibid.

[965] Laura Smith-Spark and Angela Dewan, "Yemen Raid: The Plan, the Operation, and the Aftermath," *CNN*, February 9, 2017; available from https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/08/middleeast/yemen-raid-explainer/index.html.

[966] Laura Smith-Spark and Angela Dewan, "Yemen Raid: The Plan, the Operation, and the Aftermath," *CNN*, February 9, 2017; available from https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/08/middleeast/yemen-raid-explainer/index.html.

[967] Domenico Montanaro, Tom Bowman, and Danielle Kurtzleben, "Fact Check: Trump's Yemen Raid – 'Winning Mission' or 'Failure?' It's Not So Simple," *National Public Radio*, February 10, 2017; available from https://www.npr.org/2017/02/10/514378178/fact-check-trumps-yemen-raid-winning-mission-or-failure-its-not-so-simple.

[968] Cynthia McFadden, William M. Arkin, and Tim Uehlinger, "How the Trump Team's First Military Raid in Yemen Went Wrong," NBC News, October 2, 2017; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/how-trump-team-s-first-military-raid-went-wrong-n806246.

characterization of the raid: "When you lose a $75 million airplane and, more importantly, an American…life is lost and [there are] wounded, I don't believe that you can call it a success."[969]

President Trump's very first counterterrorism mission was a failure, which would normally work against a president intending to pivot away from terrorism as the primary focus of US national security. However, President Trump blamed the failure of the raid on the Obama Administration:

"Well, this was a mission that was started before I got here. This was something that was, you know, just, they wanted to do. They explained what they wanted to do, the generals, who are very respected. My generals are the most respected that we've had in many decades, I would, I believe. And they lost Ryan."[970] [Referring to Chief Petty Officer Ryan Owens who was killed in the raid.]

Not only did President Trump reject taking responsibility for the failed raid, but he also laid the responsibility for the failure at the feet of US military leadership. Accordingly, General Joseph Votel, the commander of US Central Command, publicly took the responsibility for the failed raid, stating during testimony with the Senate Armed Services Committee: "I accept the responsibility for this. We lost a lot on this operation. We lost a valued operator; we had people wounded; we caused civilian casualties; we lost an expensive aircraft..."[971]

The Trump Administration appeared to use this failed raid in Yemen to further question the Obama Administration's approach to counterterrorism and pivot to a new operational approach for managing terrorism.[972] [973] [974] [975] Following this failed raid, the Trump Administration devised a new policy approach and began to employ immigration-based and diplomatic-oriented approaches to US counterterrorism in new and controversial ways that no other president had to that point.

First, in February 2017, Trump appointed Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster to be his next National Security Advisor.[976] McMaster began crafting the Trump Administration's

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[969] Ibid.

[970] Ibid.

[971] Cynthia McFadden, William M. Arkin, and Tim Uehlinger, "How the Trump Team's First Military Raid in Yemen Went Wrong," NBC News, October 2, 2017; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/how-trump-team-s-first-military-raid-went-wrong-n806246.

[972] Maxwell Tani, "'This was a mission that was started before I got here': Trump suggests Obama is to blame for the raid that lost a Navy SEAL," Business Insider, February 28, 2017; available from https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-blames-obama-yemen-raid-navy-seal-2017-2.

[973] But see Biegon, R., & Watts, T. F. (2020). When ends Trump means: continuity versus change in US counterterrorism policy. *Global Affairs*, *6*(1), 37-53.

[974] Jeremy Diamond, "Trump administration unveils new counterterrorism strategy," *CNN*, October 4, 2018; available from https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/04/politics/counterterrorism-strategy-white-house/index.html.

[975] "National Strategy for Counterterrorism," *The White House*, 2018.

[976] Spencer Ackerman, "Trump appoints HR McMaster as National Security Advisor," *The Guardian*, February 20, 2017; available from https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/20/trump-appoints-hr-mcmaster-national-security-adviser/.

National Security Strategy that de-prioritized counterterrorism.[977] Then, in May 2017, Trump traveled to Saudi Arabia where he attempted to rally the Muslim world against terrorism.[978] In Trump's speech, he asserted he would "unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate from the face of the earth."[979] Later that year, in December 2017, the Trump Administration rolled out its first National Security Strategy – billed as "…a tough new approach to confront a raft of global security challenges."[980] This National Security Strategy called for a strategic pivot of US national security to great power competition":

> "China and Russia challenge American power, influence and interests…They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence."[981]
> [982]

Then, in January 2018, just a year after the failed raid in Yemen, the Trump Administration lowered the prioritization of counterterrorism in its first National Defense Strategy – the first such change to US counterterrorism policy in the 20 years since 9/11, stating: "Inter-state strategic competition, *not terrorism*, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security" (which was also referenced at the outset of this chapter).[983] Finally, on June 26th, 2018, Trump signed an executive order that "barred citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States for 90 days."[984] This controversial executive order was based on the discretionary legal authority provided to the President of the United States by Congress in US Code, including the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1101, and 3 U.S.C.

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[977] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, December 2017.

[978] Daniel Benjamin, "Is Trump Fighting Terrorism?" Politico, June 4, 2017; available from https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/06/04/is-trump-fighting-terrorism-215225.

[979]Ibid.

[980] Julian E. Barnes and Gordon Lubold, "McMaster Gives Glimpse of New U.S. National Security Strategy," *Wall Street Journal*, December 3, 2017; available from https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-administration-nears-completion-of-first-national-security-strategy-1512343443.

[981] Michael Gordon, "Trump Plans Shift to U.S. Security Strategy," Wall Street Journal, December 18, 2017; available from https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-plans-shift-to-u-s-security-strategy-1513591201.

[982] Julian E. Barnes and Gordon Lubold, "McMaster Gives Glimpse of New U.S. National Security Strategy," *Wall Street Journal*, December 3, 2017; available from https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-administration-nears-completion-of-first-national-security-strategy-1512343443.

[983] "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, January 2018; available from https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf.

[984] "Full Text of Trump's Executive Order on 7-Nation Ban, Refugee Suspension," CNN, January 28, 2017; available from https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/28/politics/text-of-trump-executive-order-nation-ban-refugees/index.html.

301. Through this executive order, President Trump also suspended the US refugee program for four months and issued a ban on Syrian refugees from entering the United States.[985] [986] [987]

From this point forward, President Trump began seeking non-military approaches to US counterterrorism. Following the fall of Raqqa, President Trump called for the removal of all US troops from Syria (a decision that Secretary of Defense James Mattis opposed and resigned over).[988] [989] Then the Trump Administration began changing the global US counterterrorism footprint by removing US troops from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia.[990] But the most prominent example of this major shift in US counterterrorism policy occurred through the first direct negotiations with the Afghan Taliban. This was the most significant change to US counterterrorism not only during Trump's term in office but also over the entire 20-year period studied in this treatise

10.1.2 Operationalizing "*The Negotiator*"

Ending the war in Afghanistan had been a key objective for President Trump since entering office. President Trump appointed Zalmay Khalilzad to lead the negotiations. Khalilzad was an experience diplomat and negotiator, having served as US ambassador to both Afghanistan and Iraq during both wars. The war in Afghanistan had been grinding for nearly 18 years at the time of Khalilzad's appointment.

Khalilzad began leading bilateral negotiations with the Taliban in 2018. These were the first bilateral negotiations with the Taliban in the history of the Afghanistan War. The explicit purpose of these negotiations was the removal of US troops from Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan began as a counterterrorism effort whose end was not adjudicated at the barrel of a special operations soldier's rifle or from an overhead missile of a drone but instead from the

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[985] Ibid.

[986] Peter Neumann, "Donald Trump's failed war on terror," *Politico*, October 27, 2019; available from https://www.politico.eu/article/trump-failed-war-on-terror/.

[987] Terrorism scholar, Peter Neumann, criticized Trump's new approach: "The most cynical part of Trump's counterterrorism doctrine has been the systematic conflation of terrorism, immigration, and Islam. While popular with his supporters, the effectiveness of the Muslim travel ban is completely unproven. According to a study by RAND, nearly three-quarters of the 178 jihadists who planned or executed attacks against the U.S. between 2001 and 2017 were U.S. citizens. American jihadism has not just been relatively rare, but also predominantly homegrown. Equally questionable is his idea of 'extreme vetting.' Since taking office, Trump has claimed that immigration vetting is "getting tougher each month."

[988] US troops remained in Syria as of the writing of this chapter.

[989] President Trump back-pedaled on this plan and some US troops remained in Syria, though a smaller force.

[990] Eric Schmitt, Thomas Gibbons-Neff, Charlie Savage and Helene Cooper, "Trump Is Said to Be Preparing to Withdraw Troops From Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia," *New York Times,* November 16, 2020; available from https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/16/us/politics/trump-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan-somalia-iraq.html.

negotiation table. This was a major change from the Afghanistan policy of the Obama Administration, as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.[991] [992]

The United States and the Afghan Taliban engaged in nine rounds of negotiations with the Trump Administration for over a year-long period in Doha, Qatar. After a year of negotiation, Khalilzad achieved an in-principle agreement with the Afghan Taliban. The deal included a withdrawal of the 14,000 US troops over 16 months. Taliban, in return, committed to no longer harboring terrorists such as al-Qaeda. [993]

This was a momentous and controversial agreement, after 20-years fighting the Taliban and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan. Trump even contemplated bringing the Taliban to Washington DC – including to Camp David, a site normally reserved for heads of state and other dignitaries – to "seal the deal" just three days before the September 11th anniversary. As the *New York Tim*es reported: "Mr. Trump wanted to be the dealmaker who would put the final parts together himself, or at least perceived to be."[994] Trump also called Mullah Baradar, the leader of the Afghan Taliban, in the lead up to the proposed Washington DC US-Taliban "summit."

Given the negotiation was bilateral in nature between the United States and the Taliban, the Afghan government led by President Ashraf Ghani was not included in the discussions. That said, Trump's staff suggested to President Ghani that he should travel to Washington DC and Camp David. Trump wanted to broker an additional deal between the Taliban and Ghani to further resolve the conflict in Afghanistan.

These final negotiations over the war in Afghanistan and future counterterrorism efforts therein occurred within the context of intensified fighting in Afghanistan. Notwithstanding the Taliban attacks, US negotiators told Taliban negotiators they were "prioritizing the agreement," demonstrating the Trump Administration's focus and commitment to achieving a diplomatic, negotiated outcome in Afghanistan. Yet, contemporaneous to the finalization of negotiations, Taliban fighters conducted a suicide car bomb attack that led to the death of a US servicemember. President Trump decided he could not bring the Taliban to Camp David to finalize the negotiation after such an attack. But even as this Taliban attack scuttled the meeting at Camp David, the negotiations to finalize the deal continued.

After 18-months of intense negotiations, in February 2020, the Trump Administration

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[991] Steve Coll, "US-Taliban Talks," *New Yorker*, February 17, 2011; available from https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/02/28/u-s-taliban-talks.

[992] "Obama discusses Taliban peace talks with Afghan president: White House," Reuters, March 4, 2016; available from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-afghanistan-obama/obama-discusses-taliban-peace-talks-with-afghan-president-white-house-idUSKCN0W62QN.

[993] Ibid.

[994] Baker, P., Mashal, M., & Crowley, M. (2019). How Trump's Plan to Secretly Meet with the Taliban Came Together, and Fell Apart. *The New York Times*, *8*(09).

reached a deal with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar.[995] The Taliban committed to no longer harbor terrorists or attack US troops, as discussed earlier. But in addition to that, the Taliban agreed to be held responsible for any individual who attempted to attack the United States and its allies from Afghanistan, as stated in the agreement: "…prevent any group or individual in Afghanistan from threatening the security of the United States and its allies and will prevent them from recruiting, training, and fundraising and will not host them in accordance with the commitments in this agreement."[996] There was no enforcement mechanism in the agreement other than the risk that the United States would attack the Taliban if it breached the terms. The Taliban only had to sign a pledge that it would not harbor terrorists. In exchange, the United States would withdrawal all US troops from Afghanistan within 14-months. The deal had a specific timetable for the withdrawal of US troops:

> "In the first 100 days…[the United States] would reduce troops from 14,000 to 8,600 and leave five military bases. Over the next nine months, [the United States] would vacate all the rest. 'The United States, its allies, and the coalition will complete withdrawal of all remaining forces from Afghanistan within the remaining nine and a half months.' 'The United States, its allies, and the coalition will withdraw all their forces from remaining bases.'"[997]

The Taliban also committed to peace talks and to contemplate a cease-fire with the Afghan government. The United States also committed to releasing 5,000 Taliban prisoners. The shortcomings of the agreement were revealed immediately. The Taliban continued attacks against the United States, NATO forces, and Afghan government. US intelligence described al-Qaeda as integrated with the Taliban.[998] Nonetheless, this agreement became what ultimately led to the withdrawal of all US forces. Trump's successor, President Joe Biden, kept the agreement intact but pushed out the date for withdrawal by four months to have the withdrawal coincided with the 20th anniversary of 9/11.[999] Ultimately, all US troops left Afghanistan by August 2021.[1000]

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[995] Amber Phillips, "Trump's Deal with the Taliban, explained," *Washington Post*, August 26, 2021; available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/08/20/trump-peace-deal-taliban/.

[996] Ibid.

[997] Ibid.

[998] Amber Phillips, "Trump's Deal with the Taliban, explained," *Washington Post*, August 26, 2021; available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/08/20/trump-peace-deal-taliban/.

[999] Quint Forgey, "Biden: I would have sought Afghanistan withdrawal even without Trump's Taliban deal," Politico, August 19, 2021; available from https://www.politico.com/news/2021/08/19/biden-afghanistan-withdrawal-trump-taliban-deal-506215.

[1000] Quint Forgey, "Biden: I would have sought Afghanistan withdrawal even without Trump's Taliban deal," Politico, August 19, 2021; available from https://www.politico.com/news/2021/08/19/biden-afghanistan-withdrawal-trump-taliban-deal-506215.

Trump's "*negotiator*" approach fit with his desire to focus on the terrorist group and manage the threat. We will now analyze how Trump's decisionmaking style supported his overall dealmaking approach to counterterrorism.

10.1.3 Trump Administration Decisionmaking Style

To change the way US counterterrorism was prioritized, the Trump Administration first decided to change the way decisions were made for US counterterrorism. Trump officials such as Secretary of Defense James Mattis were concerned that decisionmaking for US counterterrorism occurred at the White House level during the Obama Administration.[1001] Former Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Mac Thornberry, shared this concern in our interview: "Under Obama, there were many more constraints on the military on how aggressive it could be."[1002] Director of START at the University of Maryland, Bill Braniff, also reinforced this point during our interview, highlighting Trump's aversion to institutional processes and bureaucratic structures: "Trump believed in…a less top-down approach to counterterrorism."[1003] Trump wanted to power down authority US personnel on the ground to experiment towards finding the best approach to fight counterterrorism. This is consistent with the pragmatic mode of thinking we discussed in Chapter 4.

The Trump Administration pulled counterterrorism decisionmaking out of the exclusive control of policymakers at the National Security Council, as it had been during the Obama Administration, and put it more into the hands of commanders on-the-ground in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense during the Trump Administration, Joe Felter, echoed this point in our interview: "Policy is one thing, but [we recognized] execution matters. Actions [on the ground] must reinforce policy."[1004] Former HASC Chairman Thornberry also reinforced this point: "Trump wanted to remove the shackles on the US military so they could eliminate the ISIS caliphate."[1005]

With this change, counterterrorism was carried out more exclusively through the context of the localized fight and under the decisionmaking control of the commanders on the ground. This powering-down approach to commanders on the ground suggested a comfort in the Trump Administration with the potential ambiguity associated with decisionmaking at lower echelons from the White House. However, as reported by Tankel, the Trump Administration also developed its version of a policy-level counterterrorism governing

[1001] Gregg Re, "Mattis slams Obama, Biden for 'ignoring reality' in Iraq, leading to rise of ISIS," Foxnews, September 3, 2019; available from https://www.foxnews.com/politics/mattis-slams-obama-biden-for-ignoring-reality-in-iraq-leading-to-rise-of-isis.

[1002] Interview with Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 24, 2020.

[1003] Interview with Director of START, University of Maryland, Mr. William Braniff, February 7, 2020.

[1004] Interview with former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Dr. Joe Felter, March 18, 2020.

[1005] Interview with Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mac Thornberry, March 24, 2020.

structure, known as the Principles, Standards, and Procedures (PSP), which had similarities to what the Obama Administration employed:

> "…the new set of rules governing direct action (called the Principles, Standards, and Procedures, or PSP) his administration reportedly produced in late 2017…replaced the Obama-era architecture with a framework of its own in a tacit acknowledgment of the need to govern the overall use of direct action, rather than simply dealing with operations piecemeal. The PSP framework also reportedly preserved two important policy components: Obama's distinction between war zones and other countries where terrorists operate but higher protections for civilians still apply; and the need to meet the standard of near certainty that civilians would not be harmed before a direct-action operation could be executed in the second set of countries."[1006]

That said, the Trump Administration made two fundamental changes that differentiated it from Obama's counterterrorism decisionmaking approach: "(1) Trump eliminated the requirement for terrorists to be a 'continuing, imminent threat to U.S. persons' to be targeted outside of areas of active hostilities and (2) 'drone strikes' and special operations raids did not have to have same White House-level review as they did under Obama, permitting delegation of decisionmaking authority to commanders, as discussed earlier."[1007] [1008] Counterterrorism scholar Stephen Tankel assessed that "…these two changes meant the threshold for conducting strikes was lower [under Trump], and there was not nearly as much high-level oversight of their conduct."[1009] This suggests that commanders on the ground had latitude to experiment with the counterterrorism operational approaches that worked within the context within which they found themselves. Powering down US counterterrorism from National Security Council staffers at White House to commanders closest to the terrorist threat demonstrated a comfort with ambiguity and a willingness to experiment with US counterterrorism policy within various contexts. This, therefore, suggests the Trump Administration adopted a pragmatic mode of thinking consistent with our review in Chapter 4. Such a change in decisionmaking authority for US counterterrorism, putting it in the hands of commanders on-the-ground, also reflected a critical shift from that of the Bush and Obama Administrations.[1010]

The Trump Administration: (1) embraced crisis uncertainty by relinquishing control of counterterrorism decisions at the White House level, treating it as something to be managed (which he did through the commanders on the ground) rather than to "dispel and conquer," as

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[1006] Stephen Tankel, "Trump's Shadow War," Politico, May 9, 2018; available from https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/05/09/donald-trumps-shadow-war-218327/.
[1007] Stephen Tankel, "Trump's Shadow War," Politico, May 9, 2018; available from https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/05/09/donald-trumps-shadow-war-218327/.
[1008] According to Tankel, "higher-level approval from the White House is still reportedly required to begin using direct action in a new country, and the process for securing it is through country reports submitted annually."
[1009] Stephen Tankel, "Trump's Shadow War," Politico, May 9, 2018; available from https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/05/09/donald-trumps-shadow-war-218327/.
[1010] Conversation with Dr. Mark Dechesne, October 18, 2021.

Ansell and Boin write;" (2) allowed commanders to make more in-context decisions with respect to the counterterrorism, thereby, understanding the interdependencies and embracing the ambiguities of the situation; and (3) enabled a process of iterative testing and "continuous revision" of counterterrorism approaches to learn more over time about the nature of the threat and the most promising counterterrorism measures within that context.[1011] [1012] [1013] [1014] [1015] [1016] [1017] [1018] [1019] [1020] These elements were consistent with a more experimental, pragmatic mode of thinking, as discussed in Chapter 4.

10.2 Reflection: Trump Administration Policy Profile

Trump's pivot away from terrorism as the strategic focus of the US national security apparatus is the most fundamental change in US national security and foreign policy since 9/11. This is because, up to this point, terrorism was the primary – even exclusive – focus of US national security. The Trump Administration made this fundamental, strategic shift to align US policy with the broader national security and foreign policy interests and the desires of the domestic polity. The administration was able to achieve this shift through a second, major change in a key factor in the PPC framework – a change in mode of thinking from intuitive to pragmatic.

Trump, like Obama, fully embraced the threat manager policy perspective but, unlike Obama, employed a pragmatic approach to crisis management. The goal of the threat manager is to find measures that mitigate the threat emanating from a specific terrorist group, consistent with Cronin and Price's outline of the policy perspective in Chapter 3.[1021] [1022] The

[1011] Ansell, Chris, & Boin, Arjen. (2017). Taming Deep Uncertainty: The Potential of Pragmatist Principles for Understanding and Improving Strategic Crisis Management. *Administration & Society, 51*(7), 1079-1112.

[1012] See also Boin, Arjen, 't Hart, Paul, Stern, Eric, & Sundelius, Bengt. (2005). *The Politics of Crisis Management*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[1013] Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Macmillan.

[1014] See also Lagadec, P. (1997). Learning Processes for Crisis Management in Complex Organizations. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 5*(1), 24-31.

[1015] See also Milstein, B. (2015). Thinking politically about crisis: A pragmatist perspective. *European Journal of Political Theory, 14*(2), 141-160.

[1016] See also Lagadec, P. (1997). Learning Processes for Crisis Management in Complex Organizations. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 5*(1), 24-31.

[1017] See also Hogan, John, & Feeney, Sharon. (2012). Crisis and Policy Change: The Role of the Political Entrepreneur. *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy, 3*(2), 1-24.

[1018] See also Rosenthal, Uriel, & Pijnenburg, Bert. (1990). Simulation-oriented scenarios. *Contemporary Crises, 14*(4), 277-283.

[1019] See also Cordero R (2014) Crisis and critique in Jürgen Habermas's social theory. European Journal of Social Theory 17(4): 497–515

[1020] But see Mascareño A, Goles E and Ruz G (2016) Crisis in complex social systems: a social theory view illustrated with the Chilean case. Complexity. DOI: 10.1002/cplx.21778.

[1021] Cronin, A. K. (2012). U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism. *Orbis (Philadelphia), 56*(2), 192-214.

[1022] Price, B. C. (2012). Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism. *International Security, 36*(4), 9-46.

Trump Administration focused on the threat itself, its organic capabilities, and limiting its ability to conduct attacks over time. We see this revealed through the administration's initial pre-occupation with the overall fight against ISIS, the re-taking Raqqa, and other global counterterrorism operations such as the failed Navy SEAL raid in Yukla, Yemen. We also see the Trump Administration fully adhere to the threat management perspective by being the first post-9/11 president not to conduct regime change through military force – as each of his post-9/11 predecessors, Bush and Obama, had – even as the Trump Administration had the opening to engage in regime change war in Syria after the Assad regime conducted two, separate chemical attacks against the Syrian people. While Trump did respond militarily in Syria, it was limited in nature, launching 59 cruise missiles targeted at Shayrat airbase where the chemical attack was believed to have been conducted from, "cratering the runways and hitting maintenance and command and control hard shelters."[1023] Trump had another opportunity to militarily strike Bashar al-Assad in 2018 when the Assad regime conducted yet another chemical attack against the Syrian people. The Trump Administration instead conducted a limited, stand-off cruise missile strike against the chemical weapon production facilities.

Trump's pragmatic mode of thinking catalyzed new operational approaches for US counterterrorism. Trump loosened authorities for military commanders on the ground, which enabled a learning decisionmaking style that allowed commanders to experiment with the most counterterrorism measures to learn what worked best within highly complex operating environments such as Syria and Iraq, as counterterrorism scholar, Peter Neumann, wrote in *Politico*: "In Syria and Iraq, for instance, the U.S President [Trump] allowed his generals to take greater risks and hastened the destruction of the caliphate."[1024] The pragmatic mode of thinking (coupled with the threat management policy perspective) enabled new operational approaches for the Trump Administration to negotiate and conciliate with terrorists by withdrawing US troops in Syria, Africa, and eventually Afghanistan, consistent with Byman's approaches outlined in Chapter 3.[1025] This begins to demonstrate the strategic shift in the very nature of US counterterrorism – from an informational and intelligence-focused approach to what could be described as a more diagnosis-based approach.[1026]

This analysis provides insight into the central questions of this dissertation: (1) has there been continuity or change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11; (2) what factors led to the continuity or change, and (3) how do we classify any such continuity or change?

[1023] Spencer Ackerman, Ed Pilkington, Ben Jacobs, Juilian Borger, "Syria missile strikes: US launches first direct military action against Assad," The Guardian, April 17, 2017; available from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/06/trump-syria-missiles-assad-chemical-weapons.

[1024] Peter Neumann, "Donald Trump's failed war on terror," *Politico*, October 27, 2019; available from https://www.politico.eu/article/trump-failed-war-on-terror/.

[1025] Byman, Daniel, 'Counterterrorism Strategies', in Erica Chenoweth and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, Oxford Handbooks (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Apr. 2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

[1026] Conversation with Dr. Mark Dechesne, October 18, 2021.

First, we see fundamental change between the second-term of the Obama Administration and the first and only term of the Trump Administration. The critical change we see is through the Trump Administration's eventual adoption of a pragmatic mode of thinking, consistent with Ansell and Boin's description in Chapter 4, by powering down decisionmaking to commanders on the ground conducting counterterrorism, authorizing them to make in-context decisions. This shift in mode of thinking is also noteworthy because, as discussed, it opened new operational approaches such as bilateral negotiations and conciliation with terrorists that had not been a central feature of US counterterrorism policy during any other administration over the 20-year period studied. Second, the key factors that led to this change were: (1) the absence of new major terrorism crises; (2) the apparent confidence the public had in Trump, as reflected through polling described earlier in this chapter, to address terrorism; and (3) the willingness of the Trump Administration to power down authority to US leaders on the ground to make policy decisions when it came to counterterrorism. Third, we see the Trump Administration pursue new operational approaches during this period by negotiating and conciliating with terrorists, which required a flexible, learning type of approach to understand the other side's perspective and interests to achieve a negotiated outcome such as what occurred with the Afghan Taliban. We, therefore, classify the Trump Administration as *"The Negotiator"* policy profile because the administration, over time, operated consistent with the threat management policy perspective and the pragmatic mode of thinking.

In sum, what we learn during this period – not to mention across all analyses of US presidential administrations since 9/11 across Chapters 6—10 – is that policymaking is not static in nature or exclusively tied to a singular presidential administration. Instead, it is a phenomenon that is continually evolving based on past policy decisions, the immediate context, and what is envisioned to come after. In this respect, we see change overtime with Bush as *"The Commander,"* Obama as *"The Prosecutor,"* and Trump as *"The Negotiator."*

11 FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY AND PRACTICE

The terrorist attack on September 11th, 2001 represented a seminal event in American history, catalyzing a 20-year period in which counterterrorism was the top priority for US national security policy.[1027] During this period, the United States rapidly developed and robustly matured its tactics, operations, strategy, and policy approach for counterterrorism. And yet, over the same 20-year period, our understanding of the nature and overall evolution of US counterterrorism policy remained varied and unclear.

In Chapter 1, we noted the varying analyses of US counterterrorism during the post-9/11 era – analyses ranging from Rosa Brooks characterizing US counterterrorism as "insane" and "doing the same thing, but expecting different results" to Daniel Byman's analysis that suggested a US counterterrorism "doing different things, but expecting the same results."[1028] [1029] These wide-ranging and diametrically opposing analyses revealed a need for a more rigorous framework for understanding of US counterterrorism policy and its evolution. This led us to ask three key questions central to this treatise: (1) has there been continuity or change in US counterterrorism policy since 9/11; (2) what factors led to the continuity or change, and (3) how do we classify any such continuity or change? These research questions carry with them not only a particular academic relevancy, as discussed in Chapter 1, but also a pertinency and even urgency as a matter of practice given the United States' decisive shift away from terrorism as the strategic focal point of US national security policy and strategy – a significant shift even as we have yet to achieve a foundational understanding of the factors that have driven US counterterrorism policy and its evolution over the last 20 years.[1030] Moreover, the limitations in the existing theoretical frameworks for policy analysis outlined in Chapter 2 suggest important shortcomings for understanding both counterterrorism theory and practice – a concerning

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[1027] See the following: "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, 2008; "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, 2018; "National Military Strategy for the Global War on Terrorism," *US Department of Defense*, 2006; "National Military Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, 2011; "National Military Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, 2015; "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," *The White House*, 2003; "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," *The White House*, 2006; "National Strategy for Counterterrorism," *The White House*, 2011; "National Strategy for Counterterrorism," *The White House*, 2018; "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2002; "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2006; "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2010; and "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2015.

[1028] Rosa Brooks, "U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy Is the Definition of Insanity, Foreign Policy, June 24, 2015; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/24/u-s-counterterrorism-strategy-is-the-definition-of-insanity/.

[1029] Robert Malley and Jon Finer, "The Long Shadow of 9/11: How Counterterrorism Warps US Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018.

[1030] "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, 2018.

proposition given the long-term impacts terrorism can inflict on society. We will proceed by providing a summary of the theoretical foundation for the study and a discussion of the key findings.

11.1 Policy Profiles for Counterterrorism Policy Analysis

Through the literature reviews in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, we recognized that by integrating the typologies of policy perspective (structural change and threat management) and mode of thinking (intuitive and pragmatic) into a 2x2 matrix, we can create frames or archetypal profiles of a policymaker. Through this process, we discerned four, distinct policy perspective-mode of thinking combinations or what we term profiles. Each profile is distinct in nature because the core elements of the profile – policy perspective and mode of thinking – are mutually exclusive. Profiles are useful because they can provide a way to synthesize the core elements of policymaking through the inter-relationship between policy perspective and mode of thinking of a policymaker – thereby doing at once what these elements do separately. We termed this framework the "Policy Profile Code" (PPC).

As we reflected on the profile components, we were confronted with how to relate the essential nature of each profile. We chose to label each profile through a metaphorical framing. We proposed the following metaphors for each profile: "*The Commander," "The Doctor," "The Prosecutor," "The Negotiator*."[1031] This allowed us to relate each profile as well as organize the possibilities for counterterrorism policy and operational approach. Through these profiles, we could evaluate not only how presidential administrations understood the circumstances and context within which they found themselves but also the factors that drove their decisionmaking. The elements of decisionmaking tendency and preferred operational approaches, identified through the literature reviews of Chapters 3 and 4, enabled us to understand the potential ways in which a policymaker could carry out counterterrorism policy. We first introduced the PPC in Chapter 4, and provided a table (Table 1.3, page 65), which we also outline below by means of summary of the four policy profiles for counterterrorism:

[1031] The idea of employing metaphors to frame counterterrorism was informed by Kruglanski et al.'s metaphors for counterterrorism. In their scholarship, they discussed war, law enforcement, epidemiological, and prejudice reduction metaphors. While there are similarities between Kruglanski et al.'s metaphors and our suggested PPC metaphors, the PPC metaphors are different because they are intended to explain profiles of a policymaker rather than counterterrorism from a purely psychological perspective. See Kruglanski, Crenshaw, Post, Victoroff, Jeff. "What Should This Fight Be Called?: Metaphors of Counterterrorism and their Implications," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*," December 1, 2007.

	Intuitive **Mode of Thinking**	Pragmatic **Mode of Thinking**
Structural Change Perspective	**"The Commander"** **Decisionmaking Tendency:** • Seize & Freeze. **Preferred Approaches:** • Crushing terrorist organizations. • Going after root causes of terrorism.	**"The Doctor"** **Decisionmaking Tendency:** • Learning. **Preferred Approaches:** • Delegitimizing terrorists. • Improving societal defenses and resiliency.
Threat Management Perspective	**"The Prosecutor"** **Decisionmaking Tendency:** • Seize & Freeze. **Preferred Approaches:** • Targeting terrorist leaders. • Allies targeting terrorists.	**"The Negotiator"** **Decisionmaking Tendency:** • Learning. **Preferred Approach:** • Conciliating / negotiating with terrorists. • Containing terrorists.

11.2 Answering the Research Questions

Through tracing the core elements of the PPC across the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations in Chapters 6 – 10, we were able to answer the three central research questions of this dissertation.

11.2.1 Was There Continuity or Change?

US counterterrorism changed between 2001 and 2021. We uncovered two critical change points in US counterterrorism policy across the 20-year period studied: (1) a change from the structural change to the threat management perspective in the first decade of the study and (2) a change from the intuitive to the pragmatic mode of thinking in the second decade of the study.

11.2.1.1 Change Point 1: From Structural Changing to Threat Managing

The first major change came in the form of policy perspective. Occurring in the first decade of the post-9/11 period, we observed a fundamental change in the basic belief and preferred operational approach for US counterterrorism policy. The Bush Administration began the post-9/11 period by pursuing counterterrorism through a basic belief that terrorism must be removed through an operational approach of changing the root cause factors in society that give rise to terrorism. The Bush Administration's policy perspective manifested through

removing regimes in both Afghanistan and Iraq and then conducting nation-building with the objective of structurally changing society.

When the Obama Administration came into office, we observed a critical shift in the US approach to counterterrorism from a basic belief of removing of terrorism under Bush to a basic belief of managing terrorism under Obama. This shift in policy perspective was accompanied by a change in preferred operational approach between Bush and Obama, moving from a focus on the root cause factors in society giving rise to terrorism to a focus on the terrorist group itself.[1032] We specifically see this shift through the Obama Administration's ten-fold increase in drone strikes, which were designed manage terrorism by killing terrorist leaders overseas.

This fundamental change in policy perspective for US counterterrorism between Bush and Obama led to a material shift in very nature of US counterterrorism policy itself. We see this through an evolution of US counterterrorism from a large-scale, overt war in two countries in the Middle East (Iraq and Afghanistan) during the Bush Administration to smaller-scale, covert wars in at least ten countries across the greater Middle East during the Obama Administration.[1033] [1034] [1035]

This first change point was soon accompanied by a second critical change point in US counterterrorism – a change in the mode of thinking between the Obama Administration and the Trump Administration.

11.2.1.2   Change Point 2: From an Intuitive to a Pragmatic Mode of Thinking
The second major change in this study was in mode of thinking between the Obama and Trump Administrations – a movement from an intuitive mode of thinking during the Obama Administration to a pragmatic mode of thinking during the Trump Administration. The critical factors that led to this change relate to each administration's relative urgency to act against the terrorist threat.

The Obama administration relied on established knowledge from the Bush Administration, which is reflective of an intuitive mode of thinking. The first factor that drove the Obama Administration's intuitive mode of thinking was the urgency to act in response to al-Qaeda's continued expansion of its safe havens not only in the Afghanistan and Pakistan but also the greater Middle East. The Obama Administration's ten-fold expansion in drone strikes over the Bush Administration is a key data-point that is reflective of this concern regarding al-Qaeda's and eventually ISIS' ability to attack the US homeland, US interests, and partners and allies.

[1032] National Security Strategy of the United States, *The White House*, May 2010.
[1033] Zenko, Micah. "Obama's Embrace of Drone Strikes Will Be a Lasting Legacy, *New York Times*, January 12, 2016.
[1034] Zenko, Micah. "Obama's Final Drone Strike Data," Council on Foreign Relations, January 20, 2017.
[1035] Author participated in this briefing with Neil Eggelston, White House General Counsel, September 2014.

During the Trump Administration, we see the second, major change point across the 20-year period through mode of thinking – moving from an intuitive to a pragmatic mode of thinking, which led to another fundamental shift in US counterterrorism policy during the second decade of the 20-year period studied. President Trump did not have to contend with an urgency to act in response to an extreme crisis brought on by a terrorist event, as Bush and Obama did. His administration was not faced with a new, major terrorist attack the likes of 9/11, and there was not a new terrorist group, such as the rise of ISIS during the Obama Administration, when the Trump Administration entered office. Given this context, the urgency to act within the Trump Administration decreased. In fact, after the fall of ISIS' strongholds in Raqqa and Mosul, President Trump announced the removal of US troops from Syria and Iraq. These conditions of low urgency to act, which evolved over the course of the Trump Administration's term in office, influenced and indicated an openness to treat terrorism differently within the overall national security strategy for the first time during our 20-year period studied. We also see a willingness to experiment with non-military policy tools, which led to new and fundamental shifts in US counterterrorism policy, including the Trump Administration's de-prioritize terrorism within overall national security. The Trump Administration also became the first and only post-9/11 presidential administration to pursue direct, bilateral negotiations with the Taliban (the group ousted by the United States in 2001 following 9/11 and that which included the Haqqani Network, a designated foreign terrorist organization by the US State Department).[1036] Finally, we observed the Trump Administration take new diplomatic and law enforcement actions under the banner of addressing terrorism.

11.2.2 How Do We Classify Continuity or Change?

Given these major shifts in US counterterrorism over the 20-year period – in policy perspective from structural change to threat management and mode of thinking from intuitive to pragmatic – we classified these changes as an evolution in policy profile from "*The Commander,*" to *"The Prosecutor,"* to *"The Negotiator"* across Bush, Obama, and Trump respectively, consistent with the PPC framework. We will describe these classifications further below.

11.2.2.1 Bush and his administration as "commanders"

The Bush Administration's counterterrorism was primarily influenced by the experience of 9/11. Given the element of surprise of the attacks on 9/11, the scale of destruction, and the safe haven terrorists such as al-Qaeda enjoyed; the Bush Administration adopted a basic belief that terrorism could no longer be managed but, instead, must be removed through addressing the root cause factors that were giving rise to terrorism. This policy approach was consistent

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[1036] "Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations," *United States Department of State*; available from https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/.

with the structural change policy perspective. The Bush Administration also recognized during both its first and second terms in office that 9/11 and terrorism, as a general matter, catalyzed an existential anxiety within the American public and, accordingly, a high need for closure. The administration addressed this anxiety and high need for closure in the American public by relying on existing knowledge based on how the United States addressed totalitarianism in the 20th century. This reliance on established or known knowledge is reflective of an intuitive mode of thinking. Bush revealed this intuitive mode of thinking in a speech to a joint session of Congress not more than a week after 9/11. He framed the post-9/11 context as akin to fighting totalitarianism in the 20th century, suggesting that this knowledge provided a policy roadmap for the post-9/11 fight against what he described as the modern totalitarianism of terrorism:

> "These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life…We have seen their kind before. They're the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way to where it ends in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies."[1037]

Given the US policy was to remove the totalitarian ideology of the 20th century, the Bush Administration chose to pursue a policy of removing the totalitarian ideology of the 21st century through addressing the structural factors, such as changing the regimes that supported the ideology of terrorism and installing democracies. This policy perspective is reflective of a structural change approach to counterterrorism. Given these factors of structural change and intuitive mode of thinking, we categorized the Bush Administration as "*The Commander"* within our PPC framework.

11.2.2.2 Obama and his administration as "prosecutors"

High anxiety and high need for closure remained within the American public across President Obama's first and second terms in office due to continued terrorist attacks from al-Qaeda (and its affiliates) and eventually ISIS. President Obama also faced an acute housing and financial crisis, requiring a counterterrorism approach that would manage terrorism given the significant financial costs (not to mention human costs) of the regime change approach of the Bush Administration. Given this strategic context, President Obama chose to pursue terrorism primarily through a basic belief that terrorism could be managed and a preferred operational approach of addressing the terrorist group itself rather than the broader, root cause factors giving rise to terrorism. The Obama Administration's counterterrorism approach was consistent with the threat management policy perspective. The Obama Administration's threat

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[1037] "President Bush's address to a joint session of Congress and the nation," *Washington Post*, September 20, 2001; available from https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html.

management policy perspective reflected the first major change in US counterterrorism policy uncovered in our study.

The Obama Administration relied heavily on knowledge from the Bush Administration regarding "drone strikes," special operations raids, and even "the surge" strategy, which led to an over a ten-fold increase (over Bush) in the number of "drone strikes" across his two terms in office, the killing of Obama bin Laden through special operations raids, and a surge in Afghanistan that diminished al-Qaeda's sanctuary there. The Obama Administration pursued these operational approaches to manage the threat of terrorism through the terrorist group itself and intended to do so at a relatively minimal cost – both financially and to US servicemembers lives – than the Bush Administration's regime change-dominant counterterrorism approach.

President Obama's robust implementation of "drone strikes," special operations raids, and the "surge" reflects a reliance on established knowledge for pursuing post-9/11 terrorism – first prototyped by the Bush Administration. This reliance on known or existing knowledge reflected an intuitive mode of thinking, which enabled the Obama Administration to address the high need for closure that remained in the American public due to terrorism by al-Qaeda and eventually ISIS. Given these factors of threat management and intuitive mode of thinking, we categorized the Obama Administration as "*The Prosecutor*" within our PPC framework.

11.2.2.3 Trump and his administration as "negotiators"

President Trump entered office vowing to pursue terrorism more aggressively. The Trump Administration recognized there remained a high need for closure within the American public. ISIS continued to have control of vast swathes of territory in both Syria and Iraq. Also, ISIS continued to demonstrate capability to attack the West. In fact, Trump pointed this out in a speech during the 2016 campaign, stating: "there had been an ISIS attack launched outside the war zones of the Middle East every 84 hours."[1038] ISIS had conducted numerous high-profile attacks against the West during the Obama Administration, including the November 2015 attack in Paris, the deadliest attack in France since World War II with 130 dead and over 416 wounded, and the ISIS-inspired June 2016 attack on a night club in Orlando, Florida, killing 49 people.[1039] The anxiety within the American public was also reflected in *Pew Research* polling that found 80-percent of respondents identifying terrorism as a "very important" issue.[1040] This context led the Trump Administration towards continuing to focus on managing the terrorist

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[1038] Kelly Cobiella, Ziad Jaber, and Nancy Ing, "Historic Bataclan terror attack trial begins in Paris," NBC News, September 8, 2021; available from https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/historic-bataclan-terror-attack-trial-begins-paris-n1278679.
[1039] Ibid.
[1040] "Top Voting Issues in the 2016 Election," *Pew Research*, July 2016; available from https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2016/07/07/4-top-voting-issues-in-2016-election/.

group itself initially through the same operational approaches as Obama of "drone strikes" and special operations raids.

However, the Trump Administration attempted to differentiate itself from the Obama Administration through a threat management approach that had fewer restrictions to going after terrorist groups. Trump loosened authorities for commanders on the ground to make independent decisions on operations against terrorist groups such as ISIS, and the Trump administration engaged in more aggressive bombing campaigns to include using new munitions such as the MOAB ("Mother of All Bombs") in Afghanistan. The Trump Administration also conducted high-risk special operations raids against ISIS leaders in Syria.

Once Mosul and Raqqa were retaken from ISIS, the Trump Administration's mode of thinking evolved from intuitive to pragmatic, leading to a more experimentation-oriented approach to counterterrorism policy. First, the administration pivoted away from terrorism as the focal point of US national security policy and strategy for the first time in the 20-years since 9/11. The Trump Administration relegated terrorism to a lower priority and elevated inter-state competition as the new focal point of overall US national security policy, stating in its National Defense Strategy: "Inter-state strategic competition, *not terrorism*, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security."[1041] This de-prioritization of terrorism suggested the administration would not pursue terrorism at any cost. That, for the first time, there would be higher priorities such as inter-state competition, that would get more resources and attention. This change led to more experimental policies to counter terrorism such as bilateral negotiations for the first time in the 20-year period studied with the Taliban – a group ousted by the United States after 9/11 for supporting terrorism and a group that still supported terrorism when the Trump Administration entered negotiations. Trump also experimented with controversial changes to immigration law with the stated purpose of addressing terrorism. This experimentation-oriented policy approach reflects a pragmatic mode of thinking.

Given the Trump Administration's pursuit of managing terrorism and its adoption of a pragmatic mode of thinking reflected through its experimentation with US counterterrorism policy that manifested in a negotiation-oriented, dealmaking approach to US counterterrorism, we categorized the Trump Administration as "*The Negotiator"* within our PPC framework.

11.2.3 What were the Key Factors?

The key factors that led to the fundamental shifts in US counterterrorism policy over the 20-year period are specific to the core elements of policymaking: policy perspective and mode of thinking. The first change was in policy perspective from a structural change during the Bush Administration to a threat management during the Obama Administration. The Bush Administration caused the Obama Administration to truncate what would be addressed by US

[1041] "National Defense Strategy," *US Department of Defense*, January 2018; available from https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf.

counterterrorism policy due to the unsustainability of the structural change policy perspective given its cost of billions of dollars each month (as well as servicemembers' lives), which took great prominence within the context of a financial crisis as Obama entered office. The second major change across the 20-year period studied was a movement in mode of thinking from intuitive during the Obama Administration to pragmatic during the Trump Administration. The Obama Administration caused a change in the Trump Administration's mode of thinking because it engendered a relatively low threat, low need for closure environment given that no new terrorist groups had come on the scene, such as what had occurred with ISIS in 2014, and there had not been another terrorist attack on the scale of 9/11 against the US homeland. Further, Obama's approach of "drone strikes" and special operations raids carried with them great risks as the Trump Administration learned in Yemen at the very beginning of its term in office. Finally, the Trump Administration recognized that the Obama (and Bush) Administrations had neglected to prepare the United States for strategic competition with China and Russia, leading to a strategic de-prioritization of terrorism by the Trump Administration. This catalyzed a need for experimentation with counterterrorism policy to find other approaches to address terrorism that carried less risk, less distraction, and less of a drain of resources such as munitions, "drone" platforms, and national security personnel as counterterrorism once had. This environment led to the Trump Administration adopting a pragmatic, experimental approach to counterterrorism over time to uncover new policy approaches.

11.2.4 Research Limitation – Variance in Interpretation

There are surely limitations to the PPC framework. A key limitation has to do with the potential for variance in the analysis through the application of the definitional elements of the PPC. Where one sits in relation to the counterterrorism phenomenon – within, atop, or outside of the national security apparatus – can influence how urgency, ambiguity, and the threat itself are perceived. For example, Luke Hartig, a former White House National Security Council Senior Director, stated in our interview for this dissertation that Obama's small-footprint approach provided a way to roll back the "excesses" of the Bush Administration.[1042] While others, such as Michael Lumpkin, a former Assistant Secretary responsible for counterterrorism policy at the Pentagon, asserted in our interview that there was little creativity in US counterterrorism policy and, therefore, "drone strikes" were pursued because the bureaucracy was conditioned to conduct counterterrorism through such an approach during the Obama Administration.[1043] Still others such as Michele Flournoy, a former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, suggested in our interview that the Executive Branch was inclined to expand a military-led, drone strike

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[1042] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.
[1043] Interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, March 30, 2020.

campaign because that is what the Congress incentivized it to do.[1044] In each of these cases, the interpretation of what was occurring may well have been connected to the position from which one observed the phenomenon. This suggests that "positionality" relative to the policy affects the policy analysis itself.[1045] Our interpretations in the light of the PPC are also subject to the risks of "positionality," which could be a limitation of the framework without developing specific standards to apply the framework.

Dvora Yanow explains that "interpretative analysis" is necessary for understanding public policy and controlling for "positionality."[1046] It is the meaning, Yanow suggests, of the phenomenon "not only to the actors in the situation but also the analyst that must also be taken into account to fully understand the interpretative nature of the analysis."[1047] In other words, the "positionality" of the analyst in relation to the situation or the phenomenon studied must be of analytical concern. The researcher may shape the events or perhaps may even be shaped by such events, people, and contexts. This means, as Yanow asserts:

> "Interpretive policy analysis needs to focus not only on figuring out what policy-relevant elements carry or convey meaning, what these meanings are, who is making them, and how they are being communicated, but also on the methods through which the analyst-researcher accesses and generates these meanings and analyzes them."[1048]

This suggests "interpretative policy analysis" requires both an understanding of the meaning of the event itself as well as the meaning of the event to the researcher. Interpretive policy analysis, therefore, requires not only the study of meaning in relation to the policy phenomenon but also the identification and development of specific methods to support such an analysis such as frames.

As suggested by Cukier et al., frames are not a panacea for understanding the world because "they can be mis-applied or misrepresent the world around us."[1049] Therefore, one of the key features of framing is constantly evaluating whether the frame applies and changing or discarding frames as they no longer apply. One of the greatest and most powerful examples of reframing came from Albert Einstein. "As Newton's explanation for the movement of objects in space could no longer account for certain phenomena, Einstein re-framed physics by arguing that time was not constant but instead relative."[1050] This suggests that to be able to

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[1044] Interview with former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy, March 25, 2020.
[1045] Yanow, D. (2007). Interpretation in policy analysis: On methods and practice. *Critical Policy Studies*, *1*(1), 110–122.
[1046] Ibid.
[1047] Ibid.
[1048] Ibid.
[1049] Cukier, K., Mayer-Schönberger, V., & de Véricourt, F. (2022). *Framers: Human advantage in an age of technology and turmoil*. Penguin.
[1050] Ibid.

"appropriately and optimally apply frames," one must be a "conscious framer."[1051] "Conscious framers" as policymakers are people who recognize that "how an issue is framed will determine the options that they contemplate and the actions they take."[1052] "Conscious framers" must also be more open to "re-framing" to ensure the frames that are applied are best aligned with reality they are presented.

Therefore, as we consider the generalizability of the PPC framework given it was developed through a focus on counterterrorism policy, an area for future research could include further testing of the PPC framework not only in relation to counterterrorism cases but also other areas of policy – from the COVID-19 pandemic, to great power competition with China, to other major policy areas. Applying the PPC to other public policy issues would enable a better understanding of how to interpret meaning of the policy studied as well as how to apply the PCC. Such an approach would: (1) further refine of the definitional standards of the PPC framework, enabling a more precise understanding of the core elements of the framework and thereby decreasing the interpretative outcomes over time and (2) further test the application of the PPC framework to uncover best practices for assessing policy perspective, mode of thinking, and the other critical factors of the theoretical framework.

Developing specific methods for how the researcher would apply the elements of the PPC would be another area for future research. In doing so, we would address the cautions that Yanow suggested in relation to "interpretative policy analysis." Once methods are established and the application of the definitional elements of the PPC become further refined over time, the researcher would not only be more confident in the analysis but also in a position to higher confidence in the normative judgments made with respect to the observed phenomenon and the idealized profile reflected in the PPC.

11.2.5 Add-on Value of Policy Profiles

Profiles are useful because they integratively explain action and enable us to understand why such actions are being carried out (the expressive dimension of counterterrorism policy). This is useful because profiles allow someone such as a policymaker to profile oneself, so they are able to optimally confront the circumstances in which they find themselves.

A specific example of the add-on value of the PPC can be seen through the analysis of the Obama Administration's decision to surge into Afghanistan in Chapter 7. If one were to conduct a purely rational choice, cost-benefit analysis of Obama's "surge" decision in 2009, the analysis may well be explained through an instrumental lens, describing the "surge" as a way to further maximize the utility of the counterterrorism approaches developed in Iraq. If one were to conduct a bureaucratic politics theoretical analysis, the Obama Administration's decision to

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[1051] Cukier, K., Mayer-Schönberger, V., & de Véricourt, F. (2022). *Framers: Human advantage in an age of technology and turmoil*. Penguin.
[1052] Ibid.

"surge" into Afghanistan may well be explained by the fact that the same players – from General David Petraeus to Secretary of Defense Bob Gates, to General Stanley McChrystal – were involved in and advocated for such an approach within the internal, bureaucratic, interagency process – an approach to counterterrorism that these leaders had executed, led, and embraced in Iraq and saw as part of their legacy. Such analyses would be consistent with Brooks' analysis of US counterterrorism from Chapter 1: "Doing the same thing, but expecting different results."[1053] Yet, through the PPC, we can illuminate a different view of the Obama Administration's decision to "surge" into Afghanistan and the specific factors and conditions that led to the "surge" decision. This is because the PPC does not assume perfect information at the outset of the analysis, as rational choice theory does, or that the bureaucracy has the optimal incentives and/or standing to formulate the ultimate policy, as bureaucratic policy theory does. Rather, the PPC recognizes that the focal point for the analysis is not necessarily the known information or the standing of the bureaucracy, but rather the context within which decisionmaking is occurring, which, when it comes to counterterrorism, is often crisis.

Accordingly, our PPC analysis in Chapter 7 recognized the context of crisis given al-Qaeda's continued capability and capacity to conduct terrorist attacks. The PPC, therefore, explained the Obama Administration's decision to surge into Afghanistan as a way to manage the terrorist group itself, in that case al-Qaeda, which a fundamentally different purpose from that of the Bush Administration's "surge" into Iraq (which was to remake Iraq into a stable democracy in the Middle East). This insight, achieved through the PPC, did not assume the Obama Administration perceived Iraq and Afghanistan as similar contexts in a rational-based, cost-benefit analysis way. Once again, the PPC also did not assume, like bureaucratic politics analysis may suggest, that Obama exclusively listened to – or was bullied by – the bureaucracy of senior military generals such as Petraeus or McChrystal. On the contrary, the PPC analysis suggested that the Obama Administration made its decision to "surge" into Afghanistan based on the desire to manage the crisis of terrorist group – al-Qaeda – and its continued ability launch out-of-area attacks against the West.

This PPC-based analysis appears to more accurately reflect the Obama Administration's thinking and approach through our interviews with administration officials because it captures the administration's ultimate purpose and objective of managing terrorism to avert the ambiguity associated with al-Qaeda's continued terrorism capability to attack the homeland and US interests, which was also the purpose outlined in its National Security and National Defense Strategies and interviews we conducted with a number Obama Administration officials from a former Director of the CIA, General David Petraeus, to a former Senior Director for

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[1053] Rosa Brooks, "U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy Is the Definition of Insanity, Foreign Policy, June 24, 2015; available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/24/u-s-counterterrorism-strategy-is-the-definition-of-insanity/.

Counterterrorism at the White House, Luke Hartig.[1054] [1055] [1056] [1057] [1058] [1059] [1060] [1061] The PPC, unlike rational choice and bureaucratic politics theories, through it is central notion of profile, built on policy perspective and mode of thinking, allowed us to achieve new insights because we not only contemplated instrumental action but also the expressive purpose of that action all within the context of crisis.

A policymaker may adopt a particular profile because it might be the most effective in a particular circumstance. In other words, the perceived utility of a particular profile in relation to the crisis that is being confronted plays a key role in the adoption of a profile and perhaps even the profile's ultimate efficacy. Therefore, the act of choosing a particular profile is key in the ultimate effectiveness of the profile adopted. The profile must match the circumstances.

Similarly, for analysts, through considering the multiple frames of the PPC, we can better understand the underlying factors and assess whether the policymaker made good or bad decisions, which may be reflective of how the policymaker understood the circumstances in the first place. Our framing can help us understand not only what decisions were made but also the how a decision was made; why a decision was made; and the specific associated factors that were contemplated. Therefore, analyzing multiple policy profiles through the PPC can enable us to make normative judgments of the decisions made by policymakers by investigating what was considered (and what was not) and the ultimate efficacy of the profile chosen through the way in which the actor understood the context within which he/she was operating.[1062] In this respect, policy profiles are powerful tools not only because they represent the "basis for human cognition given they are frames," as Cukier et al. explain, but also the fact that they can serve as the foundation for understanding the context within which decisions were made and the ultimate efficacy of the decision and profile chosen given the circumstances.

As noted, policy profiles can help increase the relative efficacy of a policy decision. They can allow a policymaker to profile oneself to more effectively confront the circumstances they face. In other words, if a policymaker holds a structural change policy perspective, through the PPC, she will know the two modes of thinking through which her policymaking could ultimately

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[1054] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2010.

[1055] "National Security Strategy of the United States," *The White House*, 2015.

[1056] Interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Lumpkin, March 30, 2020.

[1057] Interview with former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Dr. Joe Felter, March 18, 2020.

[1058] Interview with former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and military commander in Iraq and Afghanistan, General David Petraeus, May 5-6, 2020.

[1059] Interview with Director of START, University of Maryland, Mr. William Braniff, February 7, 2020.

[1060] Interview with former Senior Director for Counterterrorism, Luke Hartig, National Security Council, March 31, 2020.

[1061] Interview with former Special Operations Officer and Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee, Peter Villano, January 20, 2020.

[1062] Ibid.

be operationalized. Without a framework such as the PPC to understand the universe of options, the policymaker may not match the circumstances to the right policy tools, which may explain why "*The Doctor"* was not chosen during the last 20 years of US counterterrorism policy, as our analysis uncovered. Moreover, under threatening circumstances, there is a bias towards high need for closure and an intuitive mode of thinking. This may also begin to explain why "*The Doctor"* was not chosen by presidential administrations across the 20-year period studied. Indeed, the US national security apparatus may not even be aware of alternative frames for counterterrorism such as "*The Doctor*" without a framework such as the PPC. Moreover, perhaps the US national security apparatus is set up, incentivized, and organized to carry out only one or two of the PPC profiles. Accordingly, if the policymakers are unaware of "*The Doctor*" or unable to carry out the operational approaches for "*The Doctor*" policy perspective-decisionmaking combination due to a bias for what is known during threatening circumstances, then policymakers are, consequently, limited in their ability to counter terrorism.

The PPC, through its notion of profiles, provides us with the opportunity to conceive of new techniques, new approaches, and new policy tools that would enable policymakers to optimize the conditions for rational choice through achieving more perfect information over time and, thereby, enabling the realization of utility maximalization. We will reflect on the potentiality of overcoming the bias for established knowledge and the limitations on information for rational choice through an exploration of the "*The Doctor*" policy profile in the final chapter.

12 FINAL REFLECTION: HOW SHOULD WE PROCEED FROM HERE?

We found over the 20-year period studied that under threatening circumstances, there is a bias towards a high need for closure. High need for closure is best addressed through intuitive thinking because such thinking leverages existing knowledge – what is known, what is comfortable, and, therefore, what will bring psychological closure. However, such an approach may not be optimal or effective because it is based on semi-complete information, leading to policy solutions that inadequately address the actual policy problem and its root causes, thereby, risking an exacerbation of the threat rather than an optimization of information for more effective policy.

This, therefore, presents a critical question: How can policymakers achieve pragmatism in their mode of thinking under threatening circumstances? If policymakers can achieve control over the key factors of policy perspective and mode of thinking for "*The Doctor*" policy profile, they may be able to optimize information with respect to the true nature of the threat, even during crisis circumstances, and, thereby, increase rationality of choice and the associated maximalization of utility of the policy chosen to address the crisis. We will proceed by explaining the opportunities and challenges of implementing "*The Doctor*" policy profile.

12.1 What is "The Doctor"?

"The Doctor" contemplates the broadest factors giving rise to terrorism through a learning-oriented, pragmatic mode of thinking. This policy profile is unique because it is both the most informed yet the most malleable of the policy profiles. *The Doctor* holds the promise of achieving optimal information within an uncertain crisis context because such a policymaker is focused on iteratively experimenting with and testing hypotheses to continuously validate or invalidate such hypotheses in relation to the crisis. The objective of such a policymaker is to achieve an optimized understanding of the information at hand around a threat, crisis, etc. In this respect, "*The Doctor*" policy profile may well support the informational conditions necessary to achieve rational choice and utility maximization over time, consistent with its theoretical tenets discussed in Chapter 2. That said, we are concerned policymakers do not have the tools necessary to access "*The Doctor*" policy profile.

We hypothesize "*The Doctor*" has not been pursued because it is the most challenging of the proposed PPC profiles to implement due its complexity. The complexity is found in the requirement to contemplate the maximum amount of information with the most open decisionmaking mindset. During times of crisis, the contextual factors are often such that there is little opportunity to have perfect information during the immediate onset of a crisis and a

small window of time to extensively reflect on the best course of action for utility maximalization. Further, within the crisis context, there is limited tolerance for experimentation and hypothesis testing to learn and gain more perfect information given the information asymmetries and degradation. Indeed, in times of a crisis, such as following a terrorist attack, society demands definitive answers immediately. Yet, these challenges unique to a crisis can be overcome and, thereby, accessible to policymakers if "*The Doctor"* policy profile is undergirded by expertise and the capacity and capability for diagnosing information. We will discuss this further in the next section.

12.1.1 *"The Doctor,"* Expertise, and Diagnostic Education

Experts approach information differently. They chunk information rather than adjudicate each piece of information. They also weigh sources of information rather than accept all information as equal in salience and relevance.[1063] Experts have the ability to identify information that is more relevant for understanding the overall context, and they frame that information in meaningful ways to take action.[1064] [1065] Expertise would not only enable an understanding of the most important and relevant information to consider – by identifying diagnostic cues with respect to terrorism and the associated counterterrorism required – but also what such information means within the overall strategic context. To fully realize this expert-based approach to counterterrorism policymaking, it requires the ability to rigorously diagnose.

Diagnosing is what medical doctors Andrew Olson and Mark Graber describe in the *Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges* as the "cornerstone of providing safe, efficient, and effective medical care."[1066] Olson and Graber go on to say:

> "A physician's ability to diagnose a patient's illness—that is, arrive at an explanation for a patient's health problem—is one of the hallmarks of medical expertise and is fundamental to assigning correct and effective treatments and delineating accurate prognoses."[1067]

Education is required to achieve such consistent and effective diagnosis in Olson and Graber's view. More specifically, Olson and Graber highlight the need for formalized education that is focused on the process of diagnosis itself. Such a formalized education specific to diagnosing terrorism, counterterrorism response, and policy writ large does not appear to exist as a tool kit course within the United States' governmental training and education system. That

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[1063] De Groot, A. D. (2014). Thought and choice in chess. In *Thought and Choice in Chess*. De Gruyter Mouton.
[1064] Shanteau, J. (1992). How much information does an expert use? Is it relevant? *Acta Psychologica*, *81*(1), 75–86.
[1065] See also De Groot, A. D. (2014). Thought and choice in chess. In *Thought and Choice in Chess*. De Gruyter Mouton.
[1066] Olson, Andrew P.J. MD; Graber, Mark L. MD Improving Diagnosis Through Education, Academic Medicine: August 2020 - Volume 95 - Issue 8 - p 1162-1165.
[1067] Ibid.

said, it is not just the US government that appears to lack this type of diagnostic training and education. Many public policy programs at universities appear to lack tool kit courses specific to the process of diagnosing policy issues within the context of crisis. Moreover, education programs appear to relegate diagnostic training to simulations or practical exercises, which allow students to learn yet are devoid of the theoretical bases and specific pedagogical practices that Olson and Graber suggest are critical to students' ability to learn to diagnose. Olson and Graber described the approach of learning to diagnose through practical exercise as "serendipity of the clinical experiences."[1068] Olson and Graber argue for three improvements to diagnostic education that could be relevant to diagnosing public policy based issues: (1) "focus less on the transmission of facts and more on the acquisition of true diagnostic competence through being able to sift through relevant knowledge, (2) focus less on an individual's ability to diagnose and more on that individual being part of a diagnosis team, and (3) focus less on diagnosing outside of a system and more on diagnosing within the system with all its chaos, flaws, and opportunities."[1069]

Given our apparent dearth of education on diagnosing crises within public policy or other relevant higher education programs and given the unique complexities of 21st century policymaking environment – from technology to disinformation – this may well explain why "*The Doctor*" was not chosen over the 20 years of US counterterrorism policymaking studied in this dissertation. Policymakers may not have the diagnostic skill sets, tools, or associated knowledge to carry out such a policy profile within the context of these complex, asymmetric, and fraught information environments. Olson and Graber related a similar concern within the medical profession.

This type of diagnostic-oriented approach to counterterrorism (and even public policymaking writ large) is a fundamentally different approach to policymaking when one considers the information-dominant, intelligence-based system that remains the governing approach for US policymaking. In fact, increasing the volume information and intelligence gathering, dissemination, and sharing were the key reforms of the 9/11 Commission.[1070] As a result, US counterterrorism today has been built on an information-heavy platform, which can be valuable but also burdensome for decisionmaking particularly within the context of our vast technological advancements, enabling adversarial actors to accelerate the volume of disinformation to create dilemmas for US policymakers, leading to ineffective policy.

Information-reliant, purely intelligence-driven approaches hold both the risk of not "connecting the dots" and/or connecting the wrong dots. To more accurately diagnose the

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[1068] Olson, Andrew P.J. MD; Graber, Mark L. MD Improving Diagnosis Through Education, Academic Medicine: August 2020 - Volume 95 - Issue 8 - p 1162-1165.

[1069] Ibid.

[1070] Kean, T. and Hamilton, L. (2004). *The 9/11 commission report: Final report of the national commission on terrorist attacks upon the United States* (Vol. 3). Government Printing Office.

overall crisis picture and more effectively weigh the sourcing of information, a different style of "reading" situations is required. An example of how to do this "reading" may be found in what is known as "lateral reading."

12.1.2 *"The Doctor"* and Lateral Reading

As noted earlier, expertise is characterized by how an individual evaluates information rather than how much a person knows. This is a critical insight when it comes to *"The Doctor"* policy profile because such a policy profile must contemplate wide swathes of information – not only with respect to the terrorist group itself but also the broader factors in society giving rise to terrorism. Because *"The Doctor"* considers a much broader swath and volume of information than the threat manager while, at the same time, employing a mode of thinking that is focused on testing hypotheses and iterative learning about the overall situation, such an approach to policymaking may well be daunting for policymakers. Our assessment that none of the post-9/11 presidential administrations pursued *"The Doctor"* profile over the 20-year period studied may evidence this reality. And yet, *"The Doctor"* holds the promise of uncovering the most salient factors or cues for understanding terrorism. To realize the promise of *"The Doctor*," the skill of lateral reading is critical because it would enable the policymaker to discern the relevant information to diagnose the nature of a problem or crisis situation.

Lateral reading can be described as an approach in which readers actively evaluate the information presented by carefully weighing the sources and fact-checking in real time.[1071] [1072] Its foil, "vertical reading," is basically the opposite approach in which the individual is reading information as it is presented, implicitly accepting the sourcing of such information and weighing it equally in relation to all other information.[1073] Unlike vertical reading, lateral reading looks to other, outside sources to validate the authenticity or trustworthiness of information. In lateral reading, identifying the origination of the source of information to understand the authenticity or relevancy of such information is the critical task. Accordingly, reading across information sources to create a body of knowledge that validates (or invalidates) some or all of the primary information being considered requires a process of not only being able to identify sources of information but also devising a way to understand the authenticity of such information. Lateral reading is a skill, requiring readers to discern when they need to look to other sources. It also requires the ability to situate such information within the overall context being contemplated. In an intelligence and information heavy environment, the risk of information overload is created, leading to a lack of discernment and lack of understanding of

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[1071] Wineburg, S., & McGrew, S. (2019). Lateral Reading and the Nature of Expertise: Reading Less and Learning More When Evaluating Digital Information. *Teachers College Record (1970)*, *121*(11), 1–40.
[1072] "Civic Online Reasoning: Teaching Lateral Reading," *Stanford*; available from https://cor.stanford.edu/curriculum/collections/teaching-lateral-reading/.
[1073] Ibid.

the overall contextual picture. This can lead policymakers towards falling back on high need for closure decisionmaking even if the information they have is incomplete.

This dynamic of information overload would likely be extremely pronounced within the context of the structural change policy perspective of "*The Doctor*" due to the broad lens through which such a perspective contemplates information. Although the aggregation and sharing of information was reformed following 9/11 through the important recommendations of the 9/11 Commission; we may be unable to effectively discern the most important pieces of information and the authenticity of such information to diagnose the overall situation. The lateral reading process holds the potential to identify false-positives, false-negatives, and plain old false information and to contextualize such information within a broader context. This would be useful when it comes to "*The Doctor*" because it could lead such a policymaker towards more perfect information over time, thereby increasing the potentiality for rational choice and utility maximalization. Therefore, because lateral reading and diagnostics focus on triaging and treating information rather than simply accepting the information as it is presented, lateral reading would be a critical skill set for policymakers, policy analysis, and policy higher education because it is directly linked to the relative efficacy of the policy ultimately chosen. Lateral reading and diagnostics merit further research and exploration because, as this dissertation reveals through the study of counterterrorism; crises, asymmetry of information, and uncertainty are the hallmarks of policymaking in a modern context.

12.2 What Does "*The Doctor*" Prescribe for the Future US Counterterrorism?

Let's imagine for a moment there is another 9/11 (we hope there is not). How would the United States respond? After all the money spent on post-9/11 reforms, after all the lives lost and treasure spent to fight terrorism, after pulling out of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and "bringing the US troops home;" what would the United States do? What should it do? And what would be policies of "*The Doctor*"?

We have found through this analysis that controlling for uncertainty and ambiguity, the psychological effects of crisis, and the need for closure are critical for truly understanding public policymaking. Therefore, we can surmise from the analysis in Chapters 6 – 10 that for policies of "*The Doctor*" to be effective within the context of a "new 9/11," it requires two specific elements: (1) comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty and (2) capacity to diagnose problems through indicators and cues rather than purely informational and intelligence streams (which can be overwhelming and inadvertently mask the broader picture).

To achieve these elements within policymaking, it may well require an outside body that is both expert in counterterrorism and distant from the immediate political pressures of response. An outside body could not only provide expertise by identifying the best cues and clues for comprehending the nature of the terrorist threat or terrorism event but also create political space such that policymakers do not feel pressure to immediately respond, controlling

for the high need for closure phenomenon. Policymakers could also turn to this outside body to explain policy options and the value of such options to the public, which would free up space – both in terms of politics and time – for the policymaker to diagnose the crisis rather than immediately respond. We will now discuss implications for policy practice through our proposed Counterterrorism Policy Board.

12.2.1 A Counterterrorism Policy Board

A Counterterrorism Policy Board could enable a diagnostic capability for US counterterrorism policymaking. The guidepost for such a board and its diagnostic capability could be informed by Olsen and Graber's analysis of diagnostic education, which included: (1) a skill set of sifting through relevant knowledge and information and (2) a focus on the ability to understand what such relevant knowledge and cues means within the system.[1074]

Any outside entity with influence and direction over US policy would require specific authorization from Congress. A potential model for such a body could be the US Federal Reserve. The US Federal Reserve was authorized by Congress in 1913.[1075] [1076] "The Fed" was chartered with focusing on two general areas: (1) the stability of the economic system and (2) the promotion of maximum employment.[1077] These elements suggest that "The Fed" is guarding against a negative outcome (economic instability) while trying to optimize a positive outcome (employment maximalization). This general "guard and maximalization" framework could prove useful in contemplating how to "govern" US counterterrorism.

As we learned through this dissertation, counterterrorism policy must balance the expressive, political features terrorism with its instrumental necessities. It must do so within the context of need for closure (particularly following an attack). Such an outside counterterrorism body – what we are terming the "Counterterrorism Policy Board" – could operate much like the US Federal Reserve Board and have a similar board of regional governors to support policymaking by not only providing advice and input to the President of the United States on counterterrorism policies and responses but also monitor the efficacy of counterterrorism responses and share that information across board of governor regions within the United States and with US partners and allies. While some would point to the fact that Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) and other homeland security and law enforcement entities are already established in the United States and may play a similar role, the issue with such entities is they operate within and are subject to the formal policymaking system, which means they do

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[1074] Olson, Andrew P.J. MD; Graber, Mark L. MD Improving Diagnosis Through Education, Academic Medicine: August 2020 - Volume 95 - Issue 8 - p 1162-1165.
[1075] "Federal Reserve Act Signed into Law," Federal Reserve History; available from https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/federal-reserve-act-signed.
[1076] See also Broz, J. L. (2018). *The international origins of the Federal Reserve System*. Cornell University Press.
[1077] "About the Fed," *Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System*; available from https://www.federalreserve.gov/aboutthefed.htm.

not necessarily hold an outside, independent perspective.[1078] In other words, they are directly subject to the politics and policy preferences of the presidential administration in office. A Counterterrorism Policy Board could aggregate best practices and make recommendations for more optimally knitting together US government counterterrorism activities to help the President monitor, manage, and make decisions with respect to US counterterrorism.

A Counterterrorism Policy Board could also enable a more diagnostically-oriented approach to counterterrorism policy. As the United States has now extricated itself from counterterrorism conflicts of the last 20 years (as we most recently saw in the hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021), this context could provide the opportunity to re-balance US efforts towards a mandate that maximizes stability in US counterterrorism policy while guarding against the short-sightedness that often comes following a terrorist event. This could be achieved through a such a board because it would be insulated from direct elective politics and have a mandate to continuously investigate the evolving nature of the counterterrorism challenge through a learning-based approach – thereby enabling the creation of knowledge around impending threats rather than merely reacting to information, which can lead to cycles in public policymaking as reflected through the shift we observed within the PPC framework over the 20-year period. Such a continuous diagnostic approach could also enable the ability to get ahead of terrorism rather than react to it. Moreover, Congress could charge the Counterterrorism Policy Board with the requirement to assess the efficacy of US counterterrorism and direct it to support other US grand strategy objectives such as strategic competition with China. This would provide the United States with the ability to focus on two critical strategic activities at the same time – counterterrorism and strategic competition with China and Russia – without bureaucrats and policymakers having to choose between one or the other as currently is perceived to be the case in Washington DC.

12.3 Beyond Counterterrorism: Policy Profiles, Democracy, and Society

The PPC may reflect a new way to analyze policymaking in the 21st century. Given the uncertainty and ambiguity of modern society, such a theoretical framework that integrates policy perspective of the policymaker with the reality of decisionmaking in crisis is the type of framework required for the complexities and challenges of 21st century policymaking. "*The Doctor"* policy profile may be the optimal profile to adopt as the United States enters a new paradigm of national security – pivoting from the dominance of counterterrorism over the last 20 years to the primacy of competing with authoritarian regimes such as Russia and China.

Although the PPC framework is specifically related to counterterrorism, future research may well be suited towards understanding not only how the PPC can be better implemented

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[1078] Joint Terrorism Task Forces," Federal Bureau of Investigation; available from https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism/joint-terrorism-task-forces.

but also how it could serve as a framework towards better understanding policymaking within a democratic system. Such an approach could perhaps engender more confidence in the US political system because the public may be able to categorize policymakers through profiles, which would provide insight into how they may make decisions rather than simply what they say. In fact, given the decreasing saliency of political parties within US political system due to the critique they fail to reflect the actions that elected policymakers ultimately take, policy profiles may be a better way to categorize policymakers than presidential party affiliation or ideology.[1079]

In the final analysis, future research with respect to the PPC and policy profiles may uncover new ways to better understand decisionmaking during crisis in democratic political systems and increase the efficacy of such systems in public policymaking to better meet the challenge of continuous ambiguity and crisis – which may well be the central characteristic of 21st century policymaking. The PPC framework is intended to serve as a contribution to both theory and practice in this respect and, thereby, underpin democratic institutions and democratic political systems within the ever-increasing complex context of policymaking in the 21st century.

[1079] Mike Cummings, "Polarization in U.S. politics starts with weak political parties," *Yale News*, November 17, 2020; available from https://news.yale.edu/2020/11/17/polarization-us-politics-starts-weak-political-parties.

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Dutch Summary

De terroristische aanslagen van 11 september 2001 vormden een cruciale gebeurtenis in de Amerikaanse geschiedenis en dienden als de katalysator voor een periode van twintig jaar waarin het bestrijden van terrorisme tot de hoogste prioriteit werd verheven. Toch blijft ons begrip van het Amerikaanse beleid inzake terrorismebestrijding en de factoren die de evolutie ervan sturen, beperkt. Rosa Brooks karakteriseerde het Amerikaanse terrorismebestrijdingsbeleid bijvoorbeeld als "knettergek" en "hetzelfde doen maar andere resultaten verwachten", terwijl Daniel Byman het Amerikaanse terrorismebestrijdingsbeleid beschouwde als "verschillende dingen doen maar dezelfde resultaten verwachten". Deze uiteenlopende en veelal diametraal tegenovergestelde beschouwingen suggereren dat er behoefte is aan een grondiger begrip van het Amerikaanse terrorismebestrijdingsbeleid in het post-9/11-tijdperk. Dit leidde ons tot drie belangrijke vragen: (1) is er sinds 11 september sprake van continuïteit of verandering in het Amerikaanse terrorismebestrijdingsbeleid; (2) welke factoren hebben geleid tot deze continuïteit of verandering, en (3) hoe classificeren we dergelijke continuïteit of verandering?

In dit proefschrift betoog ik dat er in de afgelopen twintig jaar op twee specifieke momenten en langs twee belangrijke dimensies veranderingen hebben plaatsgevonden in het Amerikaanse terrorismebestrijdingsbeleid. De eerste dimensie betreft het beleidsperspectief. Tijdens de regering van George W. Bush lag de focus op het uitroeien van terrorisme door de onderliggende oorzaken en maatschappelijke factoren aan te pakken, een perspectief dat we aanduiden als "structurele veranderingsperspectief". Vanaf het aantreden van Barack Obama als president verschoof de focus naar het beheersen van terrorisme door de terroristische groeperingen zelf aan te pakken, hetgeen we aanduiden als een "dreigingsbeheersingsperspectief". De tweede dimensie betreft de denkstijl: In het tweede decennium van het onderzoek vond er een verschuiving plaats van een intuïtieve denkstijl tijdens de regering(en) van Obama (en Bush), gebaseerd op historische kennis en beelden om crises aan te pakken, naar een pragmatische denkstijl tijdens de regering van Donald Trump, gericht op experimenteren met nieuwe manieren om met de dreiging om te gaan.

Deze verschuivingen kunnen worden verklaard door een samenspel van factoren. De verschuiving in het beleidsperspectief van de regering-Bush naar de regering-

Obama werd veroorzaakt door: (1) het waargenomen gebrek aan doeltreffendheid van het beleid van de vorige regering (in dit geval de regering-Bush), (2) de verandering in factoren die de aard van het terrorisme beïnvloedden tijdens de onderzoeksperiode (bredere onderliggende oorzakelijke factoren in de samenleving versus de terroristische groeperingen zelf), en (3) het aandienen van andere, concurrerende crises (zoals de huizencrisis en de financiële crisis toen president Obama aantrad). De verschuiving in denkstijl van Obama naar Trump werd veroorzaakt door: (1) het strategische belang van het beleidsthema terrorisme, (2) de waargenomen afgenomen relevantie van de terroristische dreiging, en (3) de ernst van de crisis op het moment van beleidsvorming inzake terrorismebestrijding.

Voorafgaand aan het onderzoek hebben we theoretische modellen overwogen die rekening houden met het beleidsperspectief van de beleidsmaker, besluitvorming tijdens crises, en de voorkeur voor operationele benaderingen. Dit leidde tot de ontwikkeling van een 2x2-theoretisch raamwerk, dat mogelijkheden biedt voor het classificeren van beleid ten aanzien van terrorismebestrijding. Binnen het raamwerk worden vier profielen beschreven die ieder van metaforen van labels zijn voorzien. Het 2x2-raamwerk classificeert beleidsmakers op basis van hun beleidsperspectief - of een beleidsmaker een perspectief hanteert dat gericht is op structurele verandering of dreigingsbeheersing - en hun denkstijl - of een beleidsmaker beslissingen neemt tijdens crises op basis van ervaringen uit het verleden (intuïtieve denkstijl) of experimenteert met nieuwe mogelijkheden (pragmatische denkstijl). Ieder van deze vier profielen wordt bovendien gekenschetst door een eigen operationele benadering.

Het metaforische label van 'de Commandant' wordt gebruikt om een beleidsmaker te beschrijven die het perspectief van structurele verandering combineert met een intuïtieve denkstijl, en een operationele benadering gericht op het uitschakelen van terroristen en/of het identificeren van de dieperliggende oorzaken van terrorisme. Het label van 'arts' wordt gebruikt om een beleidsmaker te beschrijven die streeft naar structurele verandering door middel van een pragmatische denkstijl, gecombineerd met een voorkeur voor operationele benaderingen gericht op het delegitimeren van terroristen en het versterken van de maatschappelijke verdediging. Het metaforische label van 'de aanklager' wordt gebruikt bij een beleidsmaker die zich richt op dreigingsbeheer via een intuïtieve denkstijl, gecombineerd met een voorkeur voor operationele benaderingen gericht op het aanvallen van terroristische leiders. Het label 'de onderhandelaar' wordt gebruikt

om een beleidsmaker te beschrijven die streeft naar dreigingsbeheersing door middel van een pragmatische denkstijl, gecombineerd met een voorkeur voor operationele benaderingen gericht op verzoening en onderhandelingen met terroristen.

In dit proefschrift passen we het 2x2 raamwerk, de Policy Profile Code (PPC), toe. Na een inleidend hoofdstuk introduceren we in Hoofdstuk 2 bestaande theoretische perspectieven die licht kunnen werpen op de analyse van het terrorismebestrijdingsbeleid. In Hoofdstuk 3 zetten we de eerste stap om deze theorieën aan te vullen door de verschillen te bespreken tussen wat we omschrijven als de structurele verandering en de dreiging perspectieven op managementbeleid. In Hoofdstuk 4 beschouwen we besluitvorming, en identificeren we intuïtieve versus pragmatische denkwijzen als kritische dimensie om te begrijpen hoe beleidsmakers keuzes maken tijdens een crisis. Ook geven we in Hoofdstuk 4 een overzicht van de PPC, met toelichting. In Hoofdstuk 5 bespreken we de methodologische aanpak voor deze analyse, inclusief data management, en mogelijke beperkingen van de onderzoeksmethodologie. Vervolgens analyseren we in de Hoofdstukken 6 tot en met 10 aan de hand van de kerndimensies van de PPC, de continuïteit en verandering in het terrorismebestrijdingsbeleid te begrijpen. We onderzoeken ieder van de vijf presidentiële regeringen die tussen 2001 en 2021 het Amerikaanse terrorismebestrijdingsbeleid hebben vormgegeven. In Hoofdstukken 6 en 7 bespreken de regering Bush I en Bush 2. In Hoofdstukken 8 en 9 bestuderen we de regeringen Obama I en Obama II. In hoofdstuk 10 bestuderen we Trump-regering. We bieden ook een algemene reflectie op de evolutie van het Amerikaanse terrorismebestrijdingsbeleid in het post-9/11-tijdperk. Er lijkt een algehele verandering opgetreden in het Amerikaanse terrorismebestrijdingsbeleid en dat de regeringen van Bush, Obama en Trump met behulp van ons PPC-raamwerk respectievelijk kunnen worden geclassificeerd als 'de commandant', 'de aanklager' en 'de onderhandelaar'. We constateren ook dat geen van de vijf presidentiële regeringen gedurende de onderzochte twintig jaar het 'arts'-beleidsprofiel heeft aangenomen. We bespreken deze bevindingen in Hoofdstuk 11. Ook geven we in hoofdstuk 12 een reflectie op de implicaties van deze bevindingen voor beleidsvorming en toekomstig onderzoek.

Biography

Alex Gallo, born in Morristown, New Jersey on November 17, 1977, has a career that spans public service, higher education, national security, and entrepreneurship.

Gallo graduated from Blair Academy in 1996 and then pursued higher education at the United States Military Academy at West Point, graduating just three months before the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001. This event had an immediate and deep influence on his professional journey.

Gallo has served as a military officer, Professional Staff Member with the House Armed Services Committee in the US Congress, and Fellow at esteemed institutions such as George Mason University's National Security Institute and West Point's Combating Terrorism Center. Additionally, Gallo teaches national and international security professionals as an adjunct Assistant Professor in the Master's in Security Studies Program at Georgetown University.

Gallo currently serves as the Senior Vice President for Government Relations and Public Policy at the NobleReach Foundation. Prior to this role, Gallo served as the Executive Director of the Common Mission Project, a non-profit responsible for the pedagogy, curriculum, and delivery of a university program initiated at Stanford University called Hacking for Defense, which is taught at 75 universities across the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

Gallo's public service began as a U.S. Army officer. During his military service, he deployed as part of a UN peacekeeping mission in Kosovo in 2002. He also served a combat tour in Iraq in 2004.

Alex Gallo earned a B.S. in American politics, policy, and strategy from the United States Military Academy at West Point and a master's degree in public policy, focusing on international security and political economy, from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

His work and insights have been featured in *The Washington Post*, *The Hill, Foreign Affairs, The Economist, Modern War Institute, Defence Studies, The Cipher Brief,* and *CTC Sentinel*.