

Discourse analysis of the US War on Terror policy in Afghanistan

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Abstract

This paper discusses discourse analysis on the “war on terror” after 9/11. It argues that the USA framed a specific discourse based on securing and legitimizing its political and strategic objectives in the war on terror in Afghanistan. This study uses the qualitative method of discourse analysis to analyse official texts and key statements by the U.S. Government on the war on terror after 9/11. It explains that the U.S. discourse on the war on terror resulted from the geo-strategic overstretch policy. The withdrawal of the U.S. from Afghanistan was a failure of discourse; however, it questioned the rationale of the protracted war on terror. Political and strategic discourses help to frame a policy in an ideational perspective while the reversal of discourses indicates a paradigm shift based on sheer rationality. The study has far-reaching implications for future research particularly in the case of hegemonic discourse which tends to fail or reverse the U.S. discourse about countering terrorism in Afghanistan. It reveals the fact that discourses are constructed much for public consumption and the U.S. strategy of withdrawal from Afghanistan is primarily based on domestic economic and political considerations.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda, strategic depth, geostrategic overstretch, legitimacy, paradigm shift, war failure, ontology.

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1. Introduction

Discourse analysis with specific reference to the “war on terror” after 9/11 has laid down subjective and objective contours of reality. It reveals an existing gap between the U.S. policy choices and critical evaluation of the outcomes during and after the “war on terror.” Peculiar contestations of idealism and rationality characterized the U.S foreign policy to wage a global war on terrorism. It is observed that the construction of discourse on the “war on terror” by the U.S. and its allies along with its embodying ideas, norms and values against Al-Qaeda and Taliban was the trajectory of good vs evil forces. It explains a depth analysis of threats perceptions posed by terrorists and threat construction by the U.S. and its allies based on universal norms and values. Ideological superiority and the benevolent nature of hegemony have been the arching principles of U.S. foreign policy since the end of the cold war. These ingredients, in turn have shaped the identity of the United States and directed its foreign policy (Omidi & Mobidi, 2022). Accordingly, in the framework of ideal American discourse, the signs of exceptionalism, benevolent hegemony, political and economic superiority, as well as the American narrative of liberty, democracy, liberalism and Christianity play an essential role in the survival and continuation of American identity in which the limits of ‘self’ and ‘other’ are delineated (Myrdal, 2022). Discourse on the “war on terror” set forth these underlying ideas and principles that substantiated the U.S. foreign policy post 9/11.

Discourse on the “war on terror” helped the USA devise a strategy based on multilateralism involving most of the European states (Coalition of willingness) to secure legitimacy for launching a global war on terror. The USA manipulated the clash of identity against Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan for the accomplishment of its geo-strategic objectives. European allies were motivated due to shared political norms, values and mutual interests and neighbours to Afghanistan particularly Pakistan joined GWoT due to its geostrategic and economic interests. Pakistan’s decision to join the U.S. was hurriedly made due to the prevalent geostrategic environment. Defiance could have brought horrific consequences for Pakistan. States like Pakistan lacked all possible ways and means to remain either neutral or pursue an independent path. Since India also expressed a desire to extend full support to the U.S. Government on the “war on terror”. Pakistan lacked the means and resources to chart an independent path. In this atmosphere of overwhelming coercion and fear, the only rational choice was total and complete cooperation, the government of Pakistan chose to side with the U.S. unconditionally (Yamin, 2016).

Discourse on the “war on terror” apparently reflected constructed language and careful choice of words by President George W. Bush, President Obama and other European leaders. Hard and soft power capabilities have allowed the USA to follow hegemonic and imperialistic policies since the end of the cold war. It is a dominant player in major international institutions such as the United Nations, NATO, International Monetary Fund and World Bank (Cox, 2002). Soft power capabilities have developed prestige and reputation for the U.S. as a dominant player in international relations. Its cultural and economic influence and its diplomatic relations, output in a prime position for the generation of coalitions in international relations (Nye, 2002; Wallace, 2002).

War on terror spanned almost two decades and the U.S. strategy of withdrawal began after Obama’s regime decided to withdraw troops from Iraq in 2007 and partial withdrawal from Afghanistan. The new U.S. national security strategy, launched in December 2017, includes a

continued commitment to support the Afghan government and the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in the fight against the Taliban and terrorism (Jonegard, 2019). Despite their reaffirmed commitment and the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, the U.S. desire to withdraw their troops after almost 20 years of military intervention has never been more evident, nor more pressing (p. 1). Peace parleys started between the U.S. and the Taliban at the end of 2018 which provided an opportunity for the U.S. to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. Discourse on the “war of terror” exposed the U.S. duality in rhetoric and strategy, ultimately making the conflict protracted and complicated. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 left behind numerous questions of apathy and lassitude of all foreign forces involved in the Afghan quagmire. Discourses based on hegemony tend to fail as happened with the U.S. discourse on the “war on terror” in Afghanistan.

2. Methodology

To examine the selected discourse on the “war on terror”, interpretive research based on discursive acts, starting from description to interpretation and research will be carried out through qualitative methodology. Language is structured while theory and method are intertwined keeping in view ontology and epistemology as philosophical premises to use discourse as an approach in analysis. Data is collected mostly through secondary sources however texts, official statements, documents, websites, and speeches primarily made by the world leaders on the “war on terror” will be taken as the primary sources. Interpretation of data, especially historical analysis, is carried out through causal explanation based on independent and dependent variables. It substantiates post-positivist methodology on the “war on terror” that problematizes a social phenomenon based on ideas and social objects of reality which reinforces the construction of discourse. Finally, it delineates findings and implications for future research.

3. Discourse analysis and the war on terror

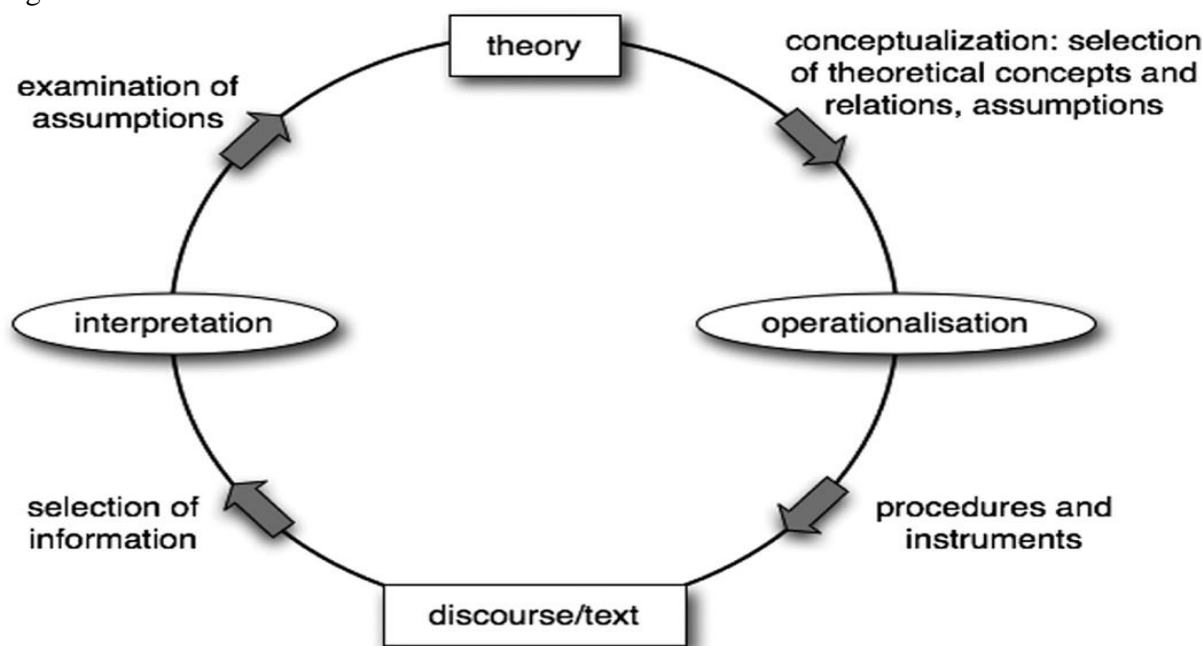
The United States of America pursued policies of multilateralism to unilateralism during the global “war on terror” in Afghanistan. The U.S. policymakers and strategists adopted and propagated different narratives based on the discourse of terrorism and institutions like the President House, State Department, Defence and Pentagon were associated with accomplishing set goals and objectives. They fantasied, disguised and finally fell into a trap due to inherent flaws in discourse and strategy. Discourse can take on a life of its own, forcing political and military leaders and their associated institutions to fall victim to a “discourse trap” (Michaels, 2013). Discourse constructs a specific phenomenon which aims to serve policymakers for desired objectives (p.01). Discourse may be dialectical, which serves the policy makers for framing specific policy, but a policymaker may be compelled to abide by an emerging discourse to justify a course of action taken either by intent or default. The model shows discourse construction and its operationalization within a specific policy frame.

In other instances, the discourse, perhaps out of sheer repetition, creates a “self-fulfilling prophecy” defined as “a false definition of the situation which makes the originally false conception come true and can seriously impair strategic and operational performance (Jervis, 1976).¹ Nevertheless, it should be noted that, similar to Robert K. Merton’s observation that “unforeseen consequences should not be identified with consequences which are necessarily undesirable,” the effects of the “discourse trap” might be undesired but not always undesirable

(Merton, 1936). Discourse generated by the U.S. Governments on the war of terror with specific references to “Global War on Terrorism,” in Afghanistan “Shock and Awe,” “Characterizing the Irregular Adversary in Iraq,” and the “Surge” (Mbao, 2004).²

The success and the failure of a discourse in the war on terror depended on its efficacy, however it created global acceptability in the process of the U.S. design of multilateralism for toppling most discredited regimes both in Afghanistan and Iraq. Discourses on the war of terror accentuated Western ideas, particularly the U.S. idealism of global peace and harmony. Subsequently, these were aligned with the strategic and political motives generally based on Western orientations. It explains multiple meanings and contexts. Discourse on the “war on terror” aimed to uncover the discursive strategies which the U.S. leaders often employed for the construction of the identity of others of the war on terrorism along with their perpetrators, allies and associates after 9/11. The term discourse has acquired many different meanings, but simply refers to the language actors use to discuss certain issues and assign meanings to them (Foucault, 2010).³ When it refers to counter-terrorism discourse in the perspective of Afghan conflict, it is referred to specific department like the U.S. Department of Defence of the war on terror. Bulk of terminologies, texts, speeches, and statements regarding terror, terrorism and counter-terrorism emanated through defence department during the twenty years of the imbroglio.

Figure 1: The recursive nature of critical discourse studies



Source: [Wodak & Meyer \(2015\)](#).

A discourse cannot be changed quite easily if it is a dominant discourse which has become institutionalized and gained reasonable legitimacy within the mainstream audience. Though the discourse on the “war on terror” did not change at once however, narrative within an embedded discourse began to change when the U.S. and its allies attacked Iraq in 2004. Mainstream audience in Europe and America were audience now partially convinced due to poor evidences of the WMD in Iraq as UN watch dog agency IAEA Inspectors report disclosed. UN inspectors found no evidence of prohibited weapons programs (Blix, 2003).⁴ One of the former press

secretary of the president Bush said “*Bush lied and people died*” revealed the truth in his tweeter message in 2019 (Fleischer, 2019).⁵

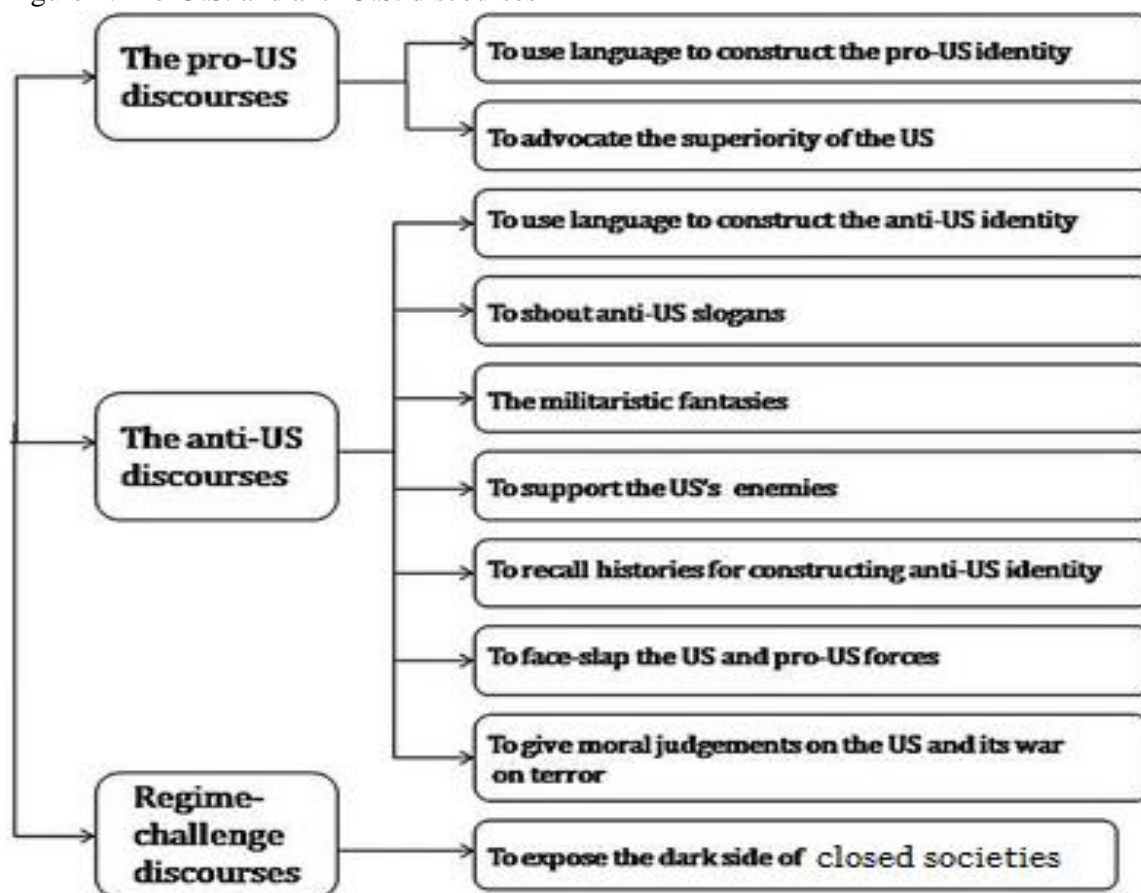
Nevertheless, discourse on the “war on terror” earned legitimacy and became institutionalized from the very outset particularly just after 9/11. When it becomes institutionalized, the consequence of its institutionalization confers legitimacy, which then results in further entrenchment of the discourse (Cortell & Davis, 2000).⁶ Discourse on the “war on terror” started to become marginalized as war entered into a critical phase, policymakers and bureaucracy in USA did not refer to it for policy agenda due to its increasingly less relevance. A balance was attempted to equate with policy preferences and outcomes. Overly propagated success attached with existential threats began to dissipate. Policymakers and bureaucracy attributed failure to a discourse on terrorism unwittingly a consequence of ambitious motives with limited available choices. Dominant discourses based on different narratives and strategies in equating similar motives jeopardized the schema of the “war on terror.”

Smith and Neumann demonstrate how “discourse failure,” defined as “the construction of the language and vocabulary used to identify, analyze and accept that a significant threat existed,” inhibited the United States in the 1990s from countering Al- Qaeda (Smith & Neumann, 2005). The practical effects of the “discourse failure” on the intelligence process were manifold: intelligence collectors devoted resources to irrelevant areas, analysts emphasized issues that seemed to be of higher priority, and policymakers dismissed reports concerning the evolving threat (p. 98). Paradigm shift from one discourse to another is extremely difficult because of abrupt shift where audience is deeply entrenched through discursive act. Yet, it can be reasonably argued that the discourse is merely the product of a political or bureaucratic interest, and therefore when the interest changes, the discourse will change as well (Michaels, 2013).

A political discourse becomes a dominant discourse when it creates harmony of interest between construct of idealism and realism. Political narrative constructed by political elites and institutional or bureaucratic are the manifestation of specific policy construction. A political discourse intended for popular consumption can unwittingly enter the bureaucratic discourse and have unintended consequences. Discourse on the “war on terror” and relevant narratives based on various terms are consciously interwoven to legitimize a stance in an enduring conflict. It claims to be good and doing good for humanity against the perpetrators of inhuman, brutal and evil acts. Careful use of texts, statements and speeches testified the notions and strategies that how multilateral consensual approach was applied for global affirmation and pledges for driving the war away from indigenous to exogenous levels. It sheds light on coercion through consensus which was fallen short through the critical perspectives of terrorism. The impact of coercive discourses on the aftermath of 9/11 was such that the analysis of the events frequently blended around readily acceptable images by avoiding traces of evil and tragedy, John Troyer’s words stand out (Holland, 2012).⁷

With the use of language meanings were fixed to become decisive, and narration was augmented by the media in the context of 9/11. Bewildered public had to accept the integrated official narrative and decisive intervention was unveiled by President George W. Bush in a well thought out invocation. “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbour 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” (p. 02).

Figure 2: Pro-U.S. and anti-U.S. discourses



Source: An (2020)

Diagram shows that pro-U.S. discourses are ideational. It focuses more on the U.S. peculiar identity while anti-US discourses are confrontationist and reactive to the policies of the U.S. rather than based on the strong ideational framework. The absence of a viable discourse to counter a dominant U.S. discourse in the war on terror remained in offing. It motivated the USA to make further expansion from Afghanistan to Iraq. It was the U.S. power and ascendancy that compelled most of the states to follow a dictated course of action after 9/11. As the war progressed, ulterior design of the expansion of the U.S. and overreach to the most strategic places and locations in the world became no more a clandestine adventure.

Though the events of 9/11 were dubbed as an act of war against the civilized world and an attack on freedom. For that, a military response was naturalized against the regression and repression. War on terror was propagated as urgency for the perseverance of global peace, liberty, democracy, and economic progression. As the metaphor harbouring orchestrated in Afghanistan vis a vis ominous threat with the steadfast response and necessary policy were made inevitable. The policy rationale was set forth advertently either “you are with or against us” bolstered the ally’s commitment to the war on terror for unleashed support and alignment. It was not simply Bush’s rhetoric but a bullying tone which haunted allies for the U.S. capacity to act unilaterally however, international institutions under the ambit of multilateralism still matter to the U.S. political and strategic interests. Nye (2020) explains:

“A Jeffersonian, “a decent respect for the opinions of a [human]kind” and the use of institutions that encourage reciprocity by bringing to bear “the long shadow of the future” will be crucial to the success of U.S. foreign policy”.

As Henry Kissinger rightly said, world order depends on the ability of a leading state to combine power and legitimacy, institutions are indispensable to that end (Nye, 2020).⁸ The U.S. policy of unilateralism and pre-emptive strikes were the negation of International Law and the UN Charter despite its undesirable resort to world institutions before an attack on Afghanistan. Materialistic considerations in the backdrop of ideational underpinnings were the catalysts for the U.S. and its allies on its drive of the war on terror upholding a peculiar identity for the sake of legitimacy against the terrorists particularly Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan after 9/11. Hence discourse in the war on terror could be understood in specific construction with its implicit ends and objectives.

4. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan: discourse or policy failure

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan is termed as the failure of an embedded discourse that the United States and its allies particularly European Allies constructed after 9/11 to meet specific strategic and political ends. Discourse on the war on terror motivated the U.S.A and its allies to oust the outlawed regime in Afghanistan that harboured the enemy of Western civilization. The U.S.A and its allies dismantled the Taliban and Al-Qaeda and pledged to build politically and socially stable Afghanistan. Did regime change work in Afghanistan? The answer to this question without an explicit understanding of war or hegemonic discourses seems incompatible and vague. Undoubtedly, terrorism is a threat which is not specific to a specific civilization; it is across the board for all nations and states. Numerous inquiries and a plethora of literature have been found and retrieved; despite the confounding plenty of resources so far spent on combating this threat, viable research seems in sundry and strategies to combat this menace are overly alarming as well as disappointing.

When assessing the effectiveness of overall counterterrorism measures, the answer quite simply is, “we don’t know” (Lum *et al.*, 2006). Facing difficulties in carrying out counterterrorism strategies, including the proper definition, in-depth inquiry and outcomes are not coherently aligned. There stems a gap in policy formulation and execution in the war on terror, which has questioned a policy rationale regarding preferences and outcomes. It is imperative that the consequences of these policies based on discourse have to be examined rationally as well as thoroughly. Compared to natural disasters, policy action has a much higher probability of transitioning towards irrational behaviour when combating terrorism, yet our understanding of effective counterterrorist policies lags far behind our response to natural disasters (p. 55). Terrorism is a threat that creates multi-dimensional threats directed at a larger audience with an unintended target. Like other natural calamities, diseases or disasters echoing public debate and policy knowledge, sustainability of counter-terrorism measures depends much on intended targets instead of probable.

The U.S. presence in Afghanistan spanned over twenty years or more and failure to build Afghanistan as a viable and stable state and polity is the undirected and manipulative orientation of the war on terror. Regime change and the U.S. unilateralism brought an awe and shock aftermaths for states that mainly came under the wrath of the U.S. sponsored and

protracted war without understanding geopolitical and societal sensitivities of Afghanistan and Iraq particularly and neighbours to these states generally.

The war on terror became a liability for the U.S. and its allies and subsequent backtracking and de-securitization visibly put the entire schema on the “war on terror” self-motivating and centric. It questions the efficacy of discourse on the “war on terror” after 9/11 and the U.S. forces’ withdrawal from Iraq in 2007, and Afghanistan in the year 2021. Discourse to uproot the Taliban and Saddam’s threats to world peace and human civilization became a catalyst and driving forces of persuasion and legitimacy on the “war on terror”. Hence, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan spearheaded the Taliban’s victory to taking over Kabul is the testimony of both discourse and policy failure on the “war on terror”. Material considerations overshadowed global ideas, norms and values. From invasion to withdrawal in Afghanistan, the U.S.A carried justifications based on a discourse in varying narratives”. President Biden in his speech on 16th August 2021 states:

“American troops cannot and should not be fighting in a war and dying in a war that Afghan forces are not willing to fight for themselves. We spent over a trillion dollars. We trained and equipped an Afghan military force of some 300,000 strong — incredibly well equipped — a force larger in size than the militaries of many of our NATO allies.”

Post withdrawal narrative was self-embedded in a sense which eroded the multilateral connotations of collective peace and responsibility. Unilateralism is orchestrated in policy shifts and dispels an impression that the U.S. capacity to build Afghan forces was overarching. Huge spending and resources on Afghan forces aimed at counterterrorism instead of counterinsurgencies. Post withdrawal narrative was entrenched in pretensions rather than justifications.

“President Biden argues that I’ve argued for many years that our mission should be narrowly focused on counterterrorism, not counterinsurgency or nation building, that’s why I opposed the surge when it was proposed in 2009 when I was Vice President”.

It reveals that discourse on the “war on terror” based on hegemony and expansionist motives ultimately leaves behind deep fissures of political fragility, terrorism, insurgencies and extremism without nation and state building. The war on terror affected not only states like Afghanistan and Iraq, it affected regional and trans-regional states with multiple ramifications. It truly disturbed the momentum of economic, political and societal progress in different states of the world.

Table-1: Showing the top most affected states of terrorism from 2001 to 2020

S.#.	Country	Score	S.#.	Country	Score	S.#.	Country	Score	S.#.	Country	Score
1	Iraq	9.96	6	Yemen	8.08	11	Ukraine	7.13	16	Niger	6.68
2	Afghanistan	9.44	7	Somalia	7.55	12	Philippines	7.1	17	Congo	6.63
3	Nigeria	9.31	8	India	7.48	13	Cameroon	7	18	Sudan	6.6
4	Pakistan	8.61	9	Egypt	7.33	14	Turkey	6.74	19	Kenya	6.58
5	Syria	8.59	10	Libya	7.28	15	Thailand	6.71			

Source: Institute of World Economics and Peace University of Maryland

States neighbours to both Afghanistan and Iraq even beyond from epicentre had to suffer from massive internal backlash and the price of pro-war narrative and alignment was more compounding and devastating. It questioned the U.S. and NATO forces' capacity and intent to maintain the law-and-order situation in Afghanistan and Iraq. Almost half a million people were killed. All told, between 480,000 and 507,000 people have been killed in the United States' post-9/11 wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (Crawford, 2018).

Pakistan became a front-line state in the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11. Pakistan provided all-out support to the coalition forces against the Taliban regime. States that participated in the “war on terror” suffered internally as well as externally. The cost of war has increased many folds, particularly for Pakistan, which has suffered alarmingly over the last two decades. Internal backlash, men and material losses both in Afghanistan and Pakistan have proved the tenacity of the war and conflict. The attack on the army public school in Peshawar where almost 200 students were killed ruthlessly, is the testimony of cleavages existing both at societal and state levels.

Undoubtedly, the USA invested heavily in security in Afghanistan, but despite being adamant by the hostile forces, overall security did not improve. All war-related costs for the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan over the last two decades are estimated to be \$6.4 trillion (SIGAR, 2021). The war on terror was aimed at counterterrorism however, it shifted from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency. As Ambassador Ryan Crocker told SIGAR, “The ultimate point of failure for our efforts wasn’t an insurgency, it was the weight of endemic corruption.” It exposed many facets of Afghan society that Afghan elites were found in rampant corruption which hindered peace and reconstruction efforts.

One of the recurrent debates on the “war on terror” is that the ends, ways and means were not aligned effectively after 9/11 till the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. There were recurring complaints by U.S. officials and commentators that there was no strategy (Ryan, 2016). President Biden then Vice president in 2009 informed Obama on his return from Afghanistan that if you ask ten questions to ten different people that what we have been here to accomplish, you get ten different answers and this has been on autopilot” (Stewart & Knaus, 2011). Complaints regarding lack of strategy could be addressed if ends, ways and means were articulated keeping in view existing institutions and population in Afghanistan. There [was] a fundamental gap of understanding on the front end, overstated objectives, an overreliance on the military, and a lack of understanding of the resources necessary (Woodward, 2010).

The U.S. officials, planners and agencies had poor know-how about Afghan people, institutions and overall political dispensation. These were ultimately misaligned with the ends, ways and means of war. For example, between 2001 and 2004, according to a former senior State official, we will help these guys set up a government a bit economically and on the humanitarian side. We are not going to do anything that smacks of nation-building...you have to be crazy if you want to get ambitious in Afghanistan (Lute, 2015). Post withdrawal scenario did not change either too due to multiple constraints for the Taliban despite the U.S.A. claims for leaving behind sophisticated weapons and infrastructure to deal with internal quarrels and conflict. Nevertheless, violence is likely and Afghan people are already starved and almost taking off to migrate to neighbouring states by recalling the days when Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan happened perilously in 1990.

5. Findings and recommendations

In the light of the discussion as mentioned above based on research and inquiry, the following viable recommendations are suggested:

- Discourse on the “war on terror” is the reflection of the U.S. grand strategy therefore, it is a dire need to focus on the discourse particularly the U.S.A with trust building and democratization.
- In war discourse, the ultimate loser is common people and they must step forward to counter the narratives of war. We can do this through people-centric policies so that they can raise their voice over the oppressions of terror.
- Alignment of discourses with peace initiatives can be linked through education based on critical thinking and a scientific mindset.
- The discourse on the “war on terror” is linked with conservative ideology. While formulating policy narratives, there is a need to start a critical discourse for overcoming conservative ideology.
- If for withdrawal, the U.S could negotiate with the Taliban with the help of regional states, particularly Pakistan and Iran. These states must be taken on board for their participation in reconstruction and rehabilitation. For that substantial negotiation and dialogue like Doha, parleys are the need of the hour.
- Refugees must not be allowed to migrate to neighbouring states. For that UNCHR must be mandated to coordinate and monitor. If the refugees start pouring into neighbours, particularly Pakistan and Iran, these states won’t be eager to participate in meaningful efforts of reconstruction instead would consume resources, time and energy to look after refugees within their respective states.
- States like India, which pledged to stabilize Afghanistan but were hostile to Pakistan must be side lined in reconstruction efforts.
- China should allow investment through its belt and road initiative in Afghanistan, which could be easily linked with CPEC in Pakistan providing an economic sanctuary or corridor for the Central Asian States and Russia.
- For broader regional and trans-regional interests, narrowly inflicted military doctrines must be avoided. New great game and new cold war stereotype connotations must not be overly projected.
- The USA along with China and Russia must build an alliance for reconstruction in Afghanistan including all regional and international stakeholders

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that a state’s foreign policy may be motivated by the ideational underpinnings that help accomplish material ends. It reveals how a discourse based on ideas, collective good and common identities was constructed and manipulated by the U.S.A and its western allies against Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban for its geo-strategic objectives. The salience of U.S. foreign policy is often characterized as a balanced, collaborative, and institutional policy. But since the advent of 9/11, the policy has undergone a paradigm shift because of the changed ordering principles of world politics primarily focused on defence and security. It overlooked new liberal connotations based on global harmony, cooperation and peace. The policy decisions post 9/11 were based on leaders’ conjectures that appeared narrow, centric,

and polarized. The study focuses on discourse whereby norms, ideas and institutional rules became instrumental for the USA in accomplishing its geo-strategic goals and political objectives.

This study has found that discourse on the “war on terror” ignores the critical frame that abrupt drift and shift in policy agenda and normative backtracking bring forth failures in a specific discourse and policy. It further finds out that discourses of the war on terror are ostensibly constructed for the protection of global norms and values however, it challenges the very modus operandi and engenders gaps in multiple high moral grounds, war of ideas and legitimacy. There seem to be inherent flaws and contradictions in the propagation and strategic operationalization of the “war on terror”. It has been found that the Ideational frame is not in coherence with the material contestations of the war on terror. Materialistic outcomes have weighed down ideational capabilities that eventually delegitimized the entire schema of the “war on terror”. It reveals the truth that terror cannot be fought by the terror and the U.S. policy based on fear has potentially lost its normative credibility. This study highlights that the discourse on “the war on terror” was hegemonic and imperialistic by intent and when it comes to critical discourse, it substantially uncovers hidden motives of the war.

This study is conducted within a traditional realm of discourse analysis in the backdrop of the war on terror and the subsequent withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. Hegemonic discourses tend to fail and do not last long. It brings forth subsequent failure in policy due to over-emphasis on military solutions. The U.S. strategy and policy were based on military prowess that did not follow sustainable reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. This study purports future implications in the field of social science research, where normative standards have emerged as catalysts for gaining legitimacy through coercion and aggression. World public opinion and the international community is evidently wary of referring matters to global regimes and institutions. States have preferred more or less their geo-strategic choices. Credibility and the sustainability of the global norms, values and regulations appear to be weak and manipulative.

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Notes:

¹ Author describes the process of perception (for example, how decision makers learn from history) and then explores common forms of misperception (such as overestimating one's influence). He then tests his ideas through several important events in international relations from nineteenth- and twentieth-century European history. Perception and Misperception in International Politics is essential for understanding international relations today (See, Jervis, 1976).

² The strategic doctrine of pre-emption of enemy, states as graphically demonstrated by 'Operation Shock and Awe' in Iraq. This doctrine posits that the United States of America needs to intimidate countries with its power and assertiveness - always threatening, always denouncing, never showing weakness and by demonstrating that a massive military power can keep the United States of America safe. In its avowed war on terror, the Bush administration has fashioned a one-dimensional view of the world. There is no neutral ground, either you are with us or against us. In this scenario, the Bush administration has appropriated the prerogative to 'smoke them out', 'remove the axis of evil' and to 'crash the shadowy foe, real or imagined'. With the United States-led attack and occupation of Iraq (March 2003- June 2004) as an example, the focus of this article is the question whether a single member state of the UN or the so-called coalition of the 'willing' can decide whether the US could take military action, without prior authorization of the Security Council, either for the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security or, for the enforcement of international law in general (See, Mbaio, 2020).

³ To take one example, for a discussion of the various uses of the term discourse within the work of Michel Foucault, *The archaeology of knowledge ; and, The discourse on language* (New York : Vintage Books ; 2010), 53. (See Sara, 2004).

⁴ Introducing the thirteenth quarterly report of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), Mr. Blix, the Commission's Executive Chairman, said significant quantities of proscribed items had also not been found, apart from the Al Samoud 2 missiles, 50 of which had been destroyed under the Commission's supervision. That did not necessarily mean that such items could not exist. But long lists of items remained unaccounted for and "it is not justified to jump to the conclusion that something exists just because it is unaccounted for". (See, Blix, 2003).

⁵ "The Iraq war began sixteen years ago tomorrow. There is a myth about the war that I have been meaning to set straight for years. After no WMDs were found, the left claimed 'Bush lied. People died.' This accusation itself is a lie. It's time to put it to rest." (See, Fleischer, 2019).

⁶ In terms of understanding the process of institutionalization and its legitimating effect on a discourse (See, Cortell & Davis, 2000).

⁷ The language of everyday life seems entirely irrelevant given the inability to even categorize Sept. 11, 2001, as anything other than Sept. 11, 2001, is a singular day that resides in the present without a proper name, embedding no specific meanings other than that words do not adequately articulate the shock of two planes flying into the World Trade Center, a third plane flying into the Pentagon and a fourth plane crashing in Pennsylvania. The accustomed uses of language to make impossible events seem real for the American public via television, newspaper and radio sources are breaking down (See, Jack, 2012).

⁸ Jeffersonian refers to the principles laid down by President Jefferson in his inaugural address in 1801, "Though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate would be oppression (See, Joseph, 2020).