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**US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN:
STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALIST ANALYSIS of POST 9/11
INVOLVEMENT**

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Introduction

The end of the 20th Century and the Cold War has not brought the end of the history, as it was predicted by Francis Fukuyama in his landmark work “End of History and the Last Mane” (1992). Instead, the world stepped into a more complex international arrangement, which was initially erroneously dubbed as the “unipolar moment” and myriad of forces, which were violently suppressed under the competition between the capitalist and communist worlds, have been unleashed. Of these forces, perhaps one of most widespread, appealing and dangerous is a religious extremism, which as of today continues to fuel radical terrorist groups throughout the world.

The War in Afghanistan, which is the principal topic (taken as a case study) of this dissertation, is a direct consequence of global religious extremism in action. The shocking terror attacks on 9/11 against the US targets in New York and elsewhere have been instrumental in shaping the world’s politics for almost two decades and provide a clear watershed between the 20th and 21st centuries. To a certain extent these events are of equal importance to attacks on Pearl Harbour or sinking of Lusitania, because of comprehensive recalibration of the American foreign policy and fundamental impact they left on the course of world history.

As America has always cherished its undisputed security, corroborated by the geographic factor of two surrounding oceans, the ruthless strike in the American heartland has entailed profound consequences. The War in Afghanistan, which was fought by the two US Presidents and five Secretaries of Defense for 14 consecutive years to avenge for this attack and prevent other ones, has exposed many characteristic traits of the Washington’s policy-making. The study of those traits, their interaction and influence on the world political community up to the present day remains a favorite enterprise for historians, economists and political scientists alike.

For George W. Bush, whose presidential campaign was mostly focused around the domestic issues, 9/11 and subsequent decision to invade Afghanistan completely altered his presidency. The War on Terror, launched in light of overwhelming support of the American population, gradually lost its popularity as well as rationale and became a liability for the Republican administration. The parallel War in Iraq, absorbing the bulk of the US Armed Forces manpower and weaponry, seriously impacted the American war-fighting capacity in Afghanistan. In light of these circumstances, President George W. Bush have had to navigate through the complex web of domestic and international politics, which eventually harmed both his personal approval ratings and justification of War in Afghanistan.

The 44th President of the USA, Barack Obama, came to end the protracted military involvements of the USA and shifted focus on nation-building at home. However, he had to handle both of the inherited wars

and whilst he did not hesitate to promptly withdraw US forces from Iraq, it took almost his both of presidential terms to end America's combat mission in Afghanistan. Similar to George Bush, Barack Obama also has had to do it against dissenting voices at home, frustrated allies abroad and rapidly evolving international environment, which required daily decision-making at a strategic level.

Similar to many democratic countries, these two Presidents were not alone in spearheading the US foreign policy and were sometimes critically dependent on important institutions inside the country. Of these institutions political parties, media and public groups/public opinion are among the biggest players which influence the US politics. The War in Afghanistan was no exception as those factors/institutions were instrumental in defining, postulating and executing the US foreign policy, especially in regard to Afghanistan.

The importance and value of the institutions within the system was most meticulously pushed forward by Gabriel Almond, who argued that politics should be studied as a system of interactions, i.e., political system and analyzed political system as a set of structures performing functions. The overarching idea is that there are a number of actors in the national political system (political parties, bureaucracies, the military, etc.) and that the actions of all these different actors affect each other as well as the system. In other words, institutional interest groups (which generally consist of legislatures, executives, bureaucracies, etc.) articulate interests (of their own) in various ways and exert pressure upon the authority for the realization of interests.

At the same time, Almond pays a particular attention to the attitude of the American population to the foreign policy formulation, and asserts that the mood of Americans is a defining factor when it comes to their approach to foreign policy. Almond also hypothesizes that American moods are affected by two variables: 1) changes in the domestic and foreign political-economic situation involving the presence or absence of external threat in varying degrees, and 2) the characterological predisposition of the population. As argued by Verba, Pye and Eulau, "By mood Almond meant a rather pliable and formless reaction to an ambiguous context that was particularly pronounced in foreign affairs" (2005, p. 8). In this manner, Almond seeks to demonstrate that public opinion, which is almost always reactive, still plays an important role for the US statesmen in charge of foreign policy (Almond, 1950).

Through the lenses of G. Almond's theoretical approach the purpose of this dissertation is to study the interaction and outcome of this interrelation between the US institutions on the one hand, examine their impact on George W. Bush's and Barack Obama's "handling of War" in Afghanistan and to introduce the public opinion/mood as one of the most significant variable which affects both domestic institutions and foreign policy in overall.

After 16 years since the beginning of the War in Afghanistan, much was discussed and written in regard to multiple aspects of that war as well as policies of the presidential administrations which were responsible for its conduct. However, the significance and enduring impact of the War in Afghanistan still provides an impetus for the researches to explore the new theoretical approaches and analytical frames, which could be useful for the existing scholarship in regard to multifaceted problem which is War in Afghanistan. This dissertation represents a modest attempt to make a contribution in this regard.

Goals of the Research

Aim of this research is to reflect on comparative study of U.S. foreign policy towards Afghanistan during George W. Bush and Barack Obama Administrations in practice and theory. The scope of the study encompasses questioning the continuity or change in discourse, decisions and practice the U.S. foreign policy of G. W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations from the ground levels in a patterning behavior and to measure the consistency between the U.S. foreign policy practice, theory and its discourse prior and after the 9/11 attacks.

Apart from the comparative analysis of both administrations, the dissertation is focused on how the US foreign policy works in theory of Gabriel Almonds, by unfolding the US decision making process by other actors that influence(d) and affect(ed) American foreign policy in Afghanistan. In other words, the role of population and political institutions in foreign policy decision-making process is examined and checked.

One of the most important goals of the research is to apply Gabriel Almond's structural functionalist theory on US foreign-policy making process towards Afghanistan. In light of this theoretical framework, interaction of different important actors/institutions are analyzed and put in context. The mechanism of foreign policy elaboration is outlined through the example of War in Afghanistan, and particular focus is made on illustrating the US-Afghan involvement in different and novel perspective.

At the end, this dissertation, which unfolds Almond's theory while comparing two US presidents' policies towards Afghanistan, aims to present several major inferences from the theory's merger with practical realities. This enables us to outline the basic structure of the US political system in action as well as roles and functions within it, which serves as foundation for further research and as a potential guide for foreign policy practitioners.

Problem Questions

The problem questions which this dissertation aims to answer are as follows:

- How did the American people perceive the War in Afghanistan?

- How the public opinion/mood affected the US foreign policy towards Afghanistan?
- How was the foreign policy decision making process towards Afghanistan conducted during George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations? What constitutes change and continuity in the election campaigns and periods of presidencies?
- How the US foreign policy decision-making process given in Gabriel Almond's theory

Hypothesis

There are three interconnected research hypothesis in this dissertation:

- ❖ The US foreign policy-making mechanism is not a monolithic and solid structure and it is subject of pressure from multiple actors/institution
- ❖ The US population's public opinion almost always bears a reactive character in terms of foreign policy, although can exert critical influence if sufficiently mobilized by a very strong external shock;
- ❖ In spite of many similarities between George W. Bush and Barack Obama's Afghanistan policies, the former's policy at the initial stage was largely stipulated by stronger public reaction, favoring strong and rigid US response. Public pressure was not so overwhelming during Barack Obama's presidency and there were many other factors he had to take into account, although increasingly negative attitude of US population towards the lengthy role, did play certain role in his decision-making calculus.

Practical Importance of the Research

It is often argued that US invasion of Afghanistan (and later Iraq) was instrumental in unleashing the extremist powers and radicalization of Muslim people. Some of the theories goes beyond that, asserting that global dominance of the US should come to an end by violent means if necessary. There is a tendency that present warfare is asymmetric and of intra-state nature, instead of more conventional warfare between the states in the past.

Afghanistan has been and is a crucial country, in the past as well as until the present day, for United States and international community. The country experienced years of war because of its regional importance lying in the heart of Asia, and linking three major geographic regions and being a crossroad to multiple rival powers and empires. Most importantly, Afghanistan captured the world's interests when after 9/11 became a top foreign policy issue for George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

Against this backdrop, study of the US policy towards Afghanistan can offer a very useful historical lesson in handling the country, sheltering large groups of terrorists with considerable part of the population sympathetic to their cause. It also gives an understanding how the nature of modern warfare is changed, how the public opinion affects the policy of the superpower and how the key elements within

the system/structure influence the US foreign policy decision-making process. It is useful and applicable both for policy decision-makers at national and international levels as well as for scholars who study this region and related subjects.

Novelty

Despite the rich bibliography, on George W. Bush's and Barack Obama's Afghan policies taken separately, there is a visible gap in comprehensive analysis. Specifically, there are very few serious attempts to put George W. Bush and Barack Obama into a historical narrative and make careful examination of their policies towards Afghanistan. This includes both their election campaigns and presidential tenures.

Moreover, there is an extreme scarcity of those materials, which would analyze the interaction of media, political parties and public opinion and their role in determining the US foreign policy. Therefore this dissertation's approach employs very rarely used concepts in this context and presents its findings and conclusions on George W. Bush and Barack Obama's policies in rather unorthodox theoretical lenses.

Taking into account the existing academic works, the novelty of this dissertation is to offer a new approach to look and analyze a particular, but very important aspect of George W. Bush and Barack Obama's policy. This is done on a very solid theoretical basis, with a clearly defined research goals and objectives. The work bellow attempts to unify the historical realities with the existing circumstances on the ground and by examining the works and functions of US institutions, determine their impact upon the policy-making of George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

Methods of Research

The scope and overarching design of this dissertation naturally necessitated to opt for the qualitative research. This type of research implies thorough preliminary study of wide array of accessible literature and further exploration. Additionally, it prioritizes the interpretation, constructions and discourses. It also involves methods of analysis, explanation and argument building which involve understandings of complexity, detail and context.

The dissertation also employs the method of *Case Study*. Some very important inferences are drawn as a result of two Case Studies – the first Case Study is about the evolution of political platforms of the major American political parties (Republican Party and Democratic Party) and their adaptation to the fundamentally altered circumstances on the ground. Another one concerns the informal doctrinal aspects of George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

Another method is a *Comparative Analysis*. This includes comparison of the two presidential administrations' foreign policies and strategies towards Afghanistan, while their actions and experience provides an opportunity to draw conclusions how to what extent can differences and similarities be identified and to evaluate their decisions and policies through strength and weaknesses, with final assessment of the performance of main actors in US foreign decision-making process towards Afghanistan. Additionally, In order to measure the very important variable – impact of public opinion upon the US foreign policy and its historical trends in the period of 2001 – 2017, this dissertation uses already published and available polling data, compiled and authored by several authoritative polling companies.

One of the primary methods of the dissertation is the *Content Analysis*. It includes review and assessment of major foreign and defense policy related documents, US intelligence and defense community-prepared reports on worldwide threat assessments, national security strategies, regular briefs of the Department of State and White House as well as important journalist pieces, including the interviews of the Presidents.

It is important to note that the dissertation also involves Structured Interview method. The expertise and in-depth theoretical as well as practical knowledge of US engagement in Afghanistan, attach those interviews paramount significance in delineation of complicated policy process. The interpretations and information collected from the selected respondents have been critical in identifying some analytical gaps and providing answers to the complicated questions.

Finally, this dissertation employs *Descriptive Statistical Analysis*. This envisions collection of the statistical data through observing the frequency of words (e.g. war against terrorism, national security, etc.) in George W. Bush's and Barack Obama's domestic and international speeches and other written statements to capture the basic similarities and differences between the rhetoric of the 43rd and 44th Presidents of the USA

Theoretical Value

The overarching theoretical framework which is used in this dissertation is Gabriel Almond's structural functionalism. According to Davies and Lewis (1972) "the Structural-Functional analysis is a form of systemic analysis which looks at political systems as coherent wholes which influence and are, in turn influenced by their environment" (p.73). [In other words] each political system is characterized by 'legitimate force' which is the basis of all its activities.

According to G. Almond, a political system is a system of action, empirically observable behavior of political system affected by the norms or institutions. Political institutions or persons performing political

roles are viewed in terms of what it is that they do, why they do it and how what they do, is related to and affects what others do. A political system is a system of action, empirically observable behavior of political system affected by the norms or institutions. Political institutions or persons performing political roles are viewed in terms of what it is that they do, why they do it and how what they do is related to and affects what others do. At the same time, the concept of role can include formal offices, informal offices, families, electorates, mobs, casual as well as persistent groupings, and the like, is so far as they enter into and affect the political system and decision in foreign policy of both presidents.

One more important facet of Almond's interesting the works of system in general and American political system in particular is the impact of public mood. In particular, Almond argued that generally disinterested in foreign policy Americans can play an instrumental role in defining the foreign policy considering the "foreign political-economic situation involving the presence or absence of threat in varying degrees." Therefore, Almond's theory's peculiar and interesting features, made it suitable for this dissertation's topic, which aims not only analysis of George W. Bush and Barack Obama's policies towards Afghanistan, but the systemic process between the major institutions of the American polity.

Moreover, conducting research under Almond's model, specifically, using its input and output conversion scheme may show well how the "two-level decisions" in foreign policy work. American people represented in interest groups is selected for input level, i.e. how did they support/accept or oppose political decisions regarding the specific policies in Afghanistan, and for the output level policies of both presidents' administrations is compared. In the process, Almond's categorization such as political "action", "perception", "cathexis", would be helpful to further study the role of society, political parties or national interest while comparing both presidents' policies and strategies towards Afghanistan.

Finally, Almond's concepts are rarely used in scholarly articles or books while researches focused on Putnam's two-level games, or other theoretical approaches are more frequently used in international relations. Nevertheless, despite labeling this theoretical model as classical or old, it is obvious that Almond's theory has survived the decades and rapidly changing globalization age, which should be instructive of its high theoretical value.

Theoretical Background of the Dissertation

For the theoretical framework of the dissertation, major works on Gabriel Almond's structural functionalism have been selected. Specifically, the works like "The Politics of the Developing Areas" (1960), "A Developmental Approach to Political Systems" (1965), "Crisis, Choice and Change –

Historical Studies of Political Development” (1973), “Comparative Politics – A Developmental Approach” (1966) and “The Civic Culture “ (Almond and Verba, 1963) present the basic shapes of Almond’s theory, which is focused on political system and policy elaboration process within the system, which is largely accomplished by interactions of different institutions. Additionally, Almond’s (1950) “The American People and Foreign Policy” is also included, for its sharp insight on impact of public mood upon the foreign policy decision-making.

Of note is that the bibliography of this dissertation also includes an overview and analysis of some of the most prominent theories of foreign policy analysis, such as Rational Actor Model (or Rational Actor Approach), Bureaucratic Politics, Individual Decision-maker and Groupthink Theory. While these theories are not by any means constitute a comprehensive list of all the available theoretical alternatives, it does give a general understanding of the mainstream theoretical currents and provides basic argumentation on why Gabriel Almond’s structural functionalism was given a preference over the other theories.

Of the particular research aims of this dissertation, is to study the attitude and interaction of the political parties. This dissertation absorbs some of the general overview of political parties’ role. Of the same note is literature about the role of US media, telling about its attitude towards the War in Afghanistan and influence it has upon the people and policy officials. Last but not least, multiple surveys of authoritative polling agencies provide invaluable information/statistical data to measure the popular ideas and notions. In addition, the list of literature contains number of memoirs of US presidents/high-ranking officials, variety of reports on nation building and NATO efforts as well as numerous think-tank publications, official statistical data, scientific articles, policy documents, political platforms, selected speeches etc.

The list of available literature on this topic is indeed quite rich and comprehensive, which is stipulated by the strong interest both on academic and practical side. The modest contribution of this dissertation is to offer a retrospective analysis and overview of the evolution of US foreign policy towards Afghanistan, with the strongest emphasis on 2001-2016 periods. Some of the novelties which this dissertation brings to the existing scholarship are increased scrutiny on interaction between the political parties, media and the chief executives (presidents) and on impact of this interaction of formulation/shaping and advocating the foreign policy course. It also offers comparative analysis of George W. Bush’s and Barack Obama’s Afghan policies and provides analysis based on original research of president’s speeches, political party platforms and national threat assessment documents.

Limitations of the Research

The scope and nature of this dissertation naturally necessitates the emphasis on qualitative research, while there is lack of quantitative analysis component. This is because considering the research questions, the quantification of the variables could have been a very complicated process and hardly contributing to novelties.

The time-span within the dissertation is longer than it would be appropriate, although, this is also necessitated by the focus on comparative analysis. It is well-understood that the War in Afghanistan has been a very complex and multi-faced process, and the detailed analysis of US foreign policy to that country could possibly take volumes.

There are inevitable limitations when it comes to processing and incorporating each and every major part of information/analysis within the dissertation that has been written for the last 16-17 years. The newly-found scholarly interest to Afghanistan after 9/11 has resulted in extraordinary written output in this regard. They cover all aspects of the War in Afghanistan and most of them have their own unique scientific and practical value. However, taking into account the space limits of this dissertation, it was unable to fully incorporate each and every major piece of writing about Afghan War thematic.

This applies to the speeches and interviews of the US presidents as well. Undoubtedly, all the major speeches of George W. Bush and Barack Obama are properly studied and provided here. Although, there are many more which has accumulated throughout their presidencies. The selection of the speeches could contain the bias of the author and it is strongly recommended for the future research to use the full spectrum of American president's rhetoric.

Last but not least, it needs to be emphasized that assessment and analysis of the War in Afghanistan taken separately from multitude of other important public policy issues facing George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Apart from significant challenges at domestic policy, the War in Iraq has arguably the biggest impact upon the conduct of War in Afghanistan. Moreover, these two wars are often considered to be the part of one overarching foreign policy endeavor and used to be analyzed in combination. While this dissertation clearly focused on War in Afghanistan and the associated processes, it is duly acknowledged that incorporation of Iraq War thematic was sometimes absolutely warranted.

BRIEF CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

CHAPTER I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FOREIGN POLICY ELABORATION FROM A FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

The first chapter is set to outline some basic directions of the theoretical approach which is employed to explain the political processes which have taken place under George W. Bush and Barack Obama's tenures as the Presidents of the USA. Specifically, it is a review of formation of Gabriel Almond's structural functionalism and the methods of its application to for the continuous systemic analysis. The principal goal of usage the structural functionalism theory is to go beyond the well-established frameworks of international relations theories and provide more structured and nuanced understanding of a political system and policy elaboration process within the system. This involves particular focus and analytical efforts to study the interaction between the different influential political actors within the system and measure the outcome in foreign policy.

It is important to note that for Almond, political system is a system of action, empirically observable behavior of political system affected by the norms or institutions. Political institutions or persons performing political roles are viewed in terms of what it is that they do, why they do it and how what they do, is related to and affects what others do. More specifically, the process involves perception, or cognition; preference, involvement, or affect (cathexis) as well as evaluation of choice through the application of standards or values. It is also a way to compare different political systems in general and move further the rudimentary analysis of institutions

Major tenets of Almond's theoretical approach are based on questions in regard to structures and functions. It is interested in the existence of functions and results which comes from interaction and friction of these functions. It is assumed that Almond's theoretical categorizations such as political "action", "perception", and "cathexis" are the integral measurements to study and understand this complicated process. More specifically, it is an attempt to specify a set of identifiable elements and complex relations between those elements at a given time, which usually determines and shapes the course of policy.

Taking into account the fact that Almond developed his structural functionalism theory from anthropology into a political science, was one of the major points of the theory's critics. Among other things, Almond's model was criticized for being overly reductionist/simplistic and unfit for more developed and institutionally mature countries. However, the serious advantages offered by structural

functionalism, which enables more structured and patterned analysis have been validated and praised as useful for systemic analysis at tactical level.

Therefore, considering the peculiarities of Almond's theoretical model, which attempts to show the input-output based policy conversion process, is particularly useful to analyze and compare George W. Bush's and Barack Obama's policies in regard to War in Afghanistan. Apart from dissection the characteristics of foreign policy elaboration process, it provides an opportunity to conduct a general comparative analysis of US foreign policy, stressing on main actors in foreign policy decision making process and assess the various aspects of American political system and process.

CHAPTER II. REGIONAL REALITY: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND WASHINGTON'S VISION ABOUT AFGHANISTAN

The second chapter of the dissertation is a review of Afghanistan's historical and geographical, as well as geopolitical importance. It identifies the major trends within the course of Afghanistan's historical importance, provides an overview of its involvement in regional and imperial disputes between the major powers and the wars it had to fight.

The emergence of independent Afghanistan in the mid 17th Century, known as Durrani Empire, was destined to become a flash-point in the confrontation between Russian and British Empires both of which competed for influence in Central Asia, where the control over Afghanistan featured big in both Moscow's and London's geopolitical and military schemes. However, as neither Great Britain nor Russia were interested to have head-to-head military confrontation with each-other, Afghanistan has largely survived as an independent and formally sovereign state, with its own authority and armed forces.

After the Great Britain relieved Afghanistan from the colonial yoke, the newly independent country again became a scene from internal rivalries and instability. After the onset of the Cold War, both USA and the USSR have become involved in competition to gain influence over Afghanistan. For Washington it was a safeguard to protect Pakistan, its strategic ally in the South-West Asia, while for the USSR it was country sharing a border and a natural target to spread communism and have it politically subjugated.

As a result, after the communist coup d'état in Afghanistan, the country was transformed into a full-fledged Soviet satellite, with openly Marxist-Leninist government. Nevertheless, Soviet leadership soon became increasingly suspicious of the Afghan's communists' ties with the West and sent troops to Afghanistan in 1979, to overthrow the incumbent leader and install a Soviet puppet, marking the beginning of Soviet intervention in the country, which put to an end through US-funded efforts.

To overview briefly the historical and regional importance of Afghanistan, it is important to understand that Afghanistan is of crucial importance not only for big powers, but for almost of its neighbors. Of particular importance is that Afghanistan is bordered by several nuclear powers, who are seeking not only regional dominance, but transformation into a separate pole of power as well. These countries are China with its vast population, unlimited economic capacities and rapidly modernizing military, which is able to offer significant challenges to any contending power in the East Asia and in Pacific. It is followed by India, with almost the same advantages as mentioned before, albeit with relatively modest military strength. The third and perhaps the most important one is Pakistan, which is widely regarded as the country with the biggest impact upon Afghanistan.

Of particular importance here is the influence Pakistan over Afghanistan's radical extremist groups, most notably Taliban. It is assumed that Pakistan helps those groups to maintain its control over Afghanistan's politics on the one hand and prevent the strengthening of India's influence on the other hand. In its turn, India is also interested to have a ground in Afghanistan and showers it with lucrative trade deals and financial assistance.

As a result, the overview of Afghanistan's history and geography, as well as social and economic situation illustrates that poor, underdeveloped and landlocked country, suffering from drug trade, human trafficking, illicit arms trade and religious extremism, could still have a huge geopolitical importance. Indeed the country is a target for every neighbor, which in combination of Afghanistan's already chaotic and unstable political environment, poses further risks of constant confrontation.

CHAPTER III. "PERCEPTION" OF THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

In accordance with the dissertation's theoretical approach, this chapter is mostly focused on perception. In other words, it analyzes the ways American people/voters perceived the War in Afghanistan. Therefore this chapter is divided into the following parts:

- US invasion of Afghanistan
- War on Terror
- NATO's peace-keeping mission
- Nation Building through the promotion of democracy

The election campaign and manifested policy of George W. Bush indicates that the latter was more prone to become the inward-oriented president rather than a foreign policy hawk. However the shocking 9/11 attacks on the US soil and Afghanistan's refusal to hand over the perpetrators, pushed the US to launch a military operation.

Of note is that, the US Department of State carried out a very extensive preparation works in an extremely limited time. The invasion/bombing campaign started on 7 November 2001 and it was focused on providing air support to US-allied North Alliance, composed of various ethnic groups hostile to Taliban. Their ground allies were CIA's clandestine operatives who transmitted the signals for US air force and US special force squads, who decimated the Taliban forces. As a result US promptly achieved a complete victory – Taliban and al-Qaeda were ousted, Afghanistan was liberated and US-client government was installed. All of these happened at a very low cost both in financial terms and in terms of casualties.

However, the continuous internal instability in Afghanistan and fear of another major terrorist attack on US soil, spurred Washington to prolong its military presence in Afghanistan indefinitely. The War in Afghanistan was proclaimed as War on Terrors (as announced by President Bush on 20 September 2001). The overarching idea, which was dominating the mindset of the American people, as well as key decision-makers, was that US was in war with something bigger than one single country, no matter how troublesome and hostile that country's regime was. On the other hand, the War in Afghanistan was a "good" war. It was warranted by unprovoked terrorist attacks against innocent civilians and broad international support.

It is noteworthy mention that in 2003 US launched another war in Iraq, which was also framed as part of War on Terror, although Iraq regimes ties with terrorists were not tangible. This caused massive dissatisfaction throughout the Muslim countries, which thought US policy to be modern-day crusade and inside the US population as well, which did not have an appetite for another costly and lengthy war. These factors have had a significant impact upon the conduct of War in Afghanistan.

In the end, as proclaimed by the Bush administration, the results of War on Terror have been the following: 1) Dismantled the repressive Taliban regime 2) Denied al-Qaida safe-haven from which to plan, train, and conduct operations 3) Nearly two-thirds of the senior al-Qaida leaders, operational managers, and key facilitators have been killed or taken into custody 4) Almost all of those directly involved in orchestrating the September 11 attacks are now in custody or confirmed dead 6) Numerous al-Qaida associates have been detained in over 100 countries.

However, while American's used to support the Washington's initiated combat mission, they were reluctant to bear this burden exclusively by themselves. This is why it was extremely important for George W. Bush and Barack Obama's administrations to give it another layer of legitimacy, i.e. strong, universally authorized international mandate.

Considering the fact that 9/11 attacks was unconditionally perceived by the western community as an act of aggression against the US, the international support for the US cause was overwhelming. It pushed NATO to invoke the article 5 in defense of the US and to provide thousands of troops for the war efforts in Afghanistan. The initial NATO mission in Afghanistan was named as International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) and its mandate included assistance of the Afghan government in extending its authority across the country, conduct of stability and security operations, elaboration of security sector reform process and supervision of building the Afghan army.

Apart from military involvement, NATO has also provided the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PTR) to help rebuilding civilian infrastructure and Afghan government's internal capabilities. This, however, was marked with inconsistency and was largely aimed on solution of military tasks rather than civilian, which naturally caused mistrust from Afghan population. This was one of the crucial reasons, of partial failure of ISAF's activities.

At the same time, as the War in Afghanistan dragged on and Taliban started to make a come-back, most NATO member countries became increasingly unwilling to commit more troops in Afghanistan. The reason behind that was internal pressure in most cases, which in turn was galvanized by the rising number of casualties. As a result, some of NATO troop contributing countries started to use caveats, effectively reducing their combat effectiveness. Since 2015 there is a new NATO mission in Afghanistan, (Resolute Support Mission) which has relatively narrow-defined goals and is not supposed to carry out combat mission.

Another important priority of the US government in regard to War in Afghanistan was to prevent transformation of Afghanistan into the Taliban's stronghold again. To this aim, despite the initial reluctance, President George W. Bush undertook a massive nation-building effort. This envisioned modernization of the country's infrastructure and rebuilding country's most important institutions, such as army, police and schools. As of June 2014, US had spent USD 100 billion for Afghanistan's reconstruction process.

In contrast to his predecessor, President Barack Obama was not much interested in nation-building effort, opting to concentrate on military component and multilateral efforts more. However, he was unable to complete abandon the already launched endeavor and apart from military objectives, US and NATO forces were also tasked to combat corruption, albeit on a limited scale. President Obama has also kept the President Bush's democracy promotion efforts down, believing it was overstressing US resources and alienated US Muslim allies, who feared they would be the next target.

It would be unfair to argue that US nation-building and democratization efforts in Afghanistan have failed completely. Without help of the US and NATO member countries, Afghanistan would be cut off from important regional enterprises. Nowadays, there are intense ongoing construction works to build railways, highways and pipelines, connecting Afghanistan to every neighbor and almost every major regional power, including the routes leading to the Caucasus and Black Sea. Additionally, One would not forget that progress Afghanistan experienced in democracy and elections, achievements in eradication of illiteracy and empowerment of the women. Considering the rampant corruption, unfettered drug trade and unhealed wounds from the bitter civil confrontation, Afghanistan still manages to prevent itself from transforming into a failed state, but the challenges are still there.

Generally, this four-fold perception prism is used to explain the fluctuating rate of support of US population and other actors towards the War in Afghanistan. Namely, the War in Afghanistan has never been perceived in a one single way and it always incorporated variety of interconnected efforts. However, the research on perception demonstrated that population was more willing to support relatively legitimate causes, such as peace-keeping operation, as opposed to pursue an elusive concept of War on Terror or nation building which is no clear-cut end and for many lacks mission rationale.

CHAPTER IV. ANALYSIS OF US POLITICAL ACTION – “CATHEXIS” – IN AFGHANISTAN

Chapter IV deals with components as envisioned by Gabriel Almond’s theoretical model. Specifically, it offers analysis of the three most important components for the political system. In case of this dissertation these three components, selected upon their influence over the America’s political process are as follows:

- Major political parties
- Media outlets
- Public opinion

Out of dozens of political parties which are currently registered in the US, Republican Party and Democratic Party are the most influential, resourceful and authoritative political entities. Throughout most of the history of the US, these political parties were involved in fierce competition for the political power. Their representatives have been the ones who usually fill the seats of Senate, House of Representatives and the White House.

Indeed there are very clear-cut differences between the philosophies of the Republican Party and Democratic Party. The former adheres to fiscal and social conservatism and advocates active US involvement overseas, while the latter is more social liberal and progressive, with bigger focus on human rights. These differences notwithstanding, the parties always strive to target the moderate voters and offer

balanced stances of every policy issues. The rise of extremist groups on both sides (Tea Party on the right and Occupy Wall Street on the left) has exerted moderate influence on these schemes.

Of important note is that when it comes to US interests abroad, both Republicans and Democrats favor active engagement, although post WWII Republican Party has been characterized to be more hawkish as compared to its major rival. Therefore, when it comes to competence in dealing with foreign affairs, American voters are keen to give preference to Republican Party's leadership skills, while Democrats are favored in the issues of social rights and most of the domestic policies. Therefore the parties have to adapt on the changing circumstances to offer their stances on most important to American electorate issues.

The War in Afghanistan has brought the political platforms of Republican and Democratic Parties closer to each other. The reasons behind that was Republican Party's undisputed dominance in the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks. In particular, the approval ratings for President Bush and his associates skyrocketed and gave them comfortable to advantage to have majority in the US congress. This was not left unnoticed by the Democratic Party, which relatively hardened its foreign policy rhetoric and put the War on Terror and protection of US as the main priorities of the political agenda. The convergence of Democratic and Republican Parties manifested foreign political strategies in regard to Afghanistan was particularly evident in the early years of the War in Afghanistan. The national-level politicians have regularly rallied behind the War in Afghanistan. They sensed the overwhelming national sentiment and sought to capitalize on that.

This illustrated that American political parties, despite their edge in foreign policy making and lack of competition from other players, are oftentimes followers of the public opinion. The content-analysis of the Democratic and Republican Parties' political platforms as well as major speeches of top foreign policy decision-makers in the period of War in Afghanistan serve as clear examples of this tendency. It further illustrated that partisan politics could be utterly divisive (Iraq War) and unifying (Afghanistan War) at the same time.

In light of US population's obsession with the media, the latter is one of most influential factor, affecting myriad foreign and domestic policies. The overwhelming presence enables media to shape and mold public opinion and set a political agenda. However, most interestingly, media itself is not immune from overwhelming influence of public opinion and is sometimes forced to respond adequately to the most important trends.

This was the case for US media after the 9/11 attacks, when the US public opinion became completely dominated by the fear of next terrorist attacks. In turn, this swelled the demand on terrorism-related topics where the voters would be assured that they were well-protected and US was fighting a "good war."

Furthermore, the magnitude and psychological effect of the terrorist attacks, effectively pushed the media to be on the US government's side, covering the War in Afghanistan as a positive and necessary undertaking and making emphasis on initial low costs and casualties associated with the war.

These attitudes of the media towards the War in Afghanistan were more or less kept throughout George W. Bush and Barack Obama presidencies. However, the shift in the American public opinion, which became weary of the lengthy war, was reflected upon the media too. They started to respond the public mood – maintained generally supportive tone for the war but offered criticism for its conduct, levels of involvement and ambiguity of the mission. This was further augmented by the emergence of new media (social networks), which were much more hostile to US foreign involvement and started to offer these kind of views to American news consumers. It is now believed that this shift has also facilitated Washington's decision to start withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan

In the process of analysis the influential institutions of the system, the role of public opinion has featured significantly. As the business is always ready to adapt to new realities, the same applies with political class and media, who have to meet the demands of their customers – voters and buyers respectively, thereby making public opinion a heavyweight variable in any kind of political scheme, be it domestic or foreign.

It is clear now that the terrorist attacks on 9/11 have had a lasting and profound impact upon the American public opinion. The authoritative surveys demonstrated that for many years, Americans were obsessed with the possibility of another terrorist attacks and therefore demonstrated complete support to Washington's efforts, be it air campaigns, clandestine operations or ground invasion, which was properly used by the both presidents to justify their policies.

However, the research identifies an important correlation between the American's willingness to support the War in Afghanistan (war on terror in general) and their perception of imminence of another terrorist attacks. In other words, the more Americans felt threatened by the possibility of next big terrorist attacks, more inclined they were to support aggressive policies and vice versa. Another important finding is that the more time has passed from 9/11, the less threatened Americans have become in regard to another large-scale terrorist attack.

Overall, the research identified several key components in determining the co-relation between the public attitude and policy decisions. It is clear the public attitude was most profoundly impacted by the 9/11 as well as by fear of another terrorist attack and destruction on massive scale, threatening the American way of life itself. In turn, both media and political elites responded to those overwhelming public sentiments by rallying behind the flag when it came to War in Afghanistan, adjusting their editorial policy (blatantly

pro-American, pro-military) and policy platforms (elevating fight to terrorism and overseas military engagements) to a prominent place.

Our analysis demonstrated that apart from high costs associated with foreign military operations, the gradual shift in public attitude was caused by association of War in Afghanistan to War in Iraq, altering the threat perception of American population in regard to imminent terrorist attack, redefinition of US mission from narrowly limited “defeating al-Qaeda and killing Osama” to broader nation-building and absence of large-scale terrorist attack on US soil, which pushed the American population to become more concerned with the state of the economy instead of crippled al-Qaeda.

Finally, theoretical reflection of Gabriel Almond’s structural functionalism concludes this chapter by acknowledgment of vastly important roles that structures play within the political system. Interaction and relation between the political parties, media and public opinion have helped them to fulfill their function of interest articulation, political communication and interest aggregation. This in turn contributed to input-put conversion process, when public demand and needs, shaped and influenced by external factors and media have been absorbed, processed, channeled, and affected by the political parties and ultimately enacted by the Presidents of the country.

CHAPTER V. EVALUATION OF US FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN UNDER GEORGE W. BUSH AND BARACK OBAMA ADMINISTRATIONS

The concluding chapter of this dissertation is devoted to the comparative analysis of George W. Bush and Barack Obama’s Afghan policies. It also reviews the major trends of US foreign and security policy in a 16 year perspective and gives understanding of prevalent mode of thinking in the US intelligence community. The chapter is divided accordingly:

- George W. Bush’s policy towards Afghanistan
- Barack Obama’s policy towards Afghanistan
- National security policy in terms of threat perception

Like for many of his compatriots, the 9/11 terrorist attacks was a watershed in the policy and political philosophy of George W. Bush. The 43rd President, who has had a very modest foreign policy credentials, suddenly found himself at the helm of the country at war and had to redesign his foreign, defense and security policy agenda.

At the same time, George W. Bush was surrounded by the group of neo-conservative officials, whose manifested ideology was to promote the American ideals, in particular the representative democracy abroad. Therefore they advocated straightforward and muscular US foreign policy, by using the military

force if necessary. Some of the most influential persons in the Bush administration were the Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz.

The catchphrase which best characterized George W. Bush's policy was the "Freedom Agenda" which envisioned multi-pronged efforts not only to decimate the terrorist groups but to foster America-friendly regimes in the target countries. Therefore, it is possible to put George W. Bush's policy into two broad categories focusing on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Terrorism and Promotion of Democracy and nation building.

In this regard, the major ideological principles upon which the Bush presidency was based can be found in his doctrine. As a set of the 43rd President's foreign policy objectives and priorities the Bush Doctrine enshrined four major pillars such as Unilateralism, Pre-emptive War, Ending Tyranny and enhancing American Hegemony. These principles are highlighted in almost every major foreign and defense policy speech of the President, as well as the country-level documents on defense and security.

As compared to the President Bush, President Obama has been more of a realist in terms of foreign policy thinking. He did not champion the idea to forcefully spread the American values abroad and declared that not a single country has the authority or right to do so. Instead, Barack Obama was more focused on domestic issues and very much favored cutting the US military commitments overseas.

One thing that was common between George W. Bush and Barack Obama was their inexperience in foreign policy. However, both of these Presidents were tasked to handle one of the most complicated foreign policy crises in the modern history – War in Afghanistan and problem of international terrorism.

To this aim, President Obama surrounded himself with the similar-minded foreign policy realists, who argued that US should focus on achieving more narrowly defined goals, rather than entangle itself in messy and costly nation-building efforts. Barack Obama duly took this advice and initially had fully withdrawn the US forces from Iraq and after the initial surge in Afghanistan, ended the combat mission there in 2014.

The biggest difference between George W. Bush's and Barack Obama's handling of War in Afghanistan was the amount of attention and level of priority given to that war. Indeed, President Bush was more concentrated on War in Iraq and this resulted in lack of focus on War in Afghanistan. However, President Obama has always been against War in Iraq and never thought it worth fighting. On the other hand, he was an ardent supporter of War in Afghanistan and stepped up the US efforts to break the Taliban's momentum before launching the phased withdrawal.

The analysis of Obama Doctrine is instructive to identify some qualitative differences as compared to his predecessor's. Namely, Obama was more focused on engagement rather than unilateralism. Additionally he believed that leading from behind strategy was more pragmatic and productive than being at the forefront of every world crisis. Finally, he was a foreign policy realist and therefore found the idealism of President Bush's administration as reckless and detrimental to US foreign policy.

However, despite this obvious differences, the comprehensive analysis of Bush and Obama Presidencies demonstrate that visible similarities in these presidents' Afghan policy. This model of policy inheritance is perhaps best described by the phrase of "strategic continuity." Both of the Presidents never questioned the legitimacy of the War in Afghanistan, nor had they declared it was not worth to fight for. Instead, they acknowledged that fundamental US interests was at stake in Afghanistan. This is why, despite much complicated War in Iraq, President Bush never cut down the number of US troops in Afghanistan and President Obama despite ending the combat mission decided to maintain several thousand US troops there to ensure that Afghanistan will never become a failed state again.

It can also be argued that the policies of both Presidents were largely determined by the influence of the institutions (media and political parties) and pressure from the public opinion. As demonstrated in the previous chapters Analysis of shifts in public opinion as well as major foreign and domestic policy developments were crucial in determining the basic tenets of their policies. It would be incorrect to assume that the presidents have blindly followed either public opinion, or political elites and media, but content analysis of their interviews and speeches are instructive to detect the impact, which unfortunately is not easily quantifiable concept. It does, however, manifest itself in the major foreign policy documents, national security strategies and US intelligence community's annual threat assessments.

The US intelligence community's annual threat assessments are probably the most reflective documents to understand the threat perception in the US. At the initial stage the Central Intelligence Agency and subsequently the Office of Director for National Intelligence offered a nuanced view of threats and challenges to US interests worldwide. It is notable that they start to particularly emphasis terrorism only after the 9/11 and are almost completely focused on terrorism and Islamic radicalism during the next few years. However, the trend of fading the global terrorist threat and American people's preoccupation with different kinds of challenges (economic, cyber, new challenges in Syria) gradually shifted the focus of attention from Afghanistan elsewhere.

The incumbent President of the US, Donald Trump, has yet to articulate his comprehensive foreign policy strategy. However, as the terrorism makes a comeback in the Middle East, and fighters of Islamic State make inroads in Afghanistan, Washington is once again forced to pay attention to that region. This is why

Donald Trump decided to increase US military contingent by 3,000 troops instead of completely cutting them down, as promised during his election campaign. The lessons from Afghanistan, as well successes and failures of George W. Bush and Barack Obama's Afghan policies are instructive in this case and warrant a very carefully calibrated Afghan policy in light of heightened threats of terrorism.

Conclusion

The scope of this dissertation aimed to compare the President George W. Bush's and President Barack Obama's policies towards the War in Afghanistan, analyzed within the Gabriel Almond's structural functionalist theoretical framework. The analysis demonstrated that the influential political institutions (in this case political parties and media) as well as public opinion do indeed play a very important role in determining the foreign policy of the United States.

At the same time it showed that the external events/occurrences are capable to significantly affect the all these major institutions, because in democratic and free-market environment all kinds of forces react to adapt to the changed circumstances in order to evolve and survive. This is why the policies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations were molded in interaction of major US political institutions, while all of them were inclined to take the public opinion into account.

On a theoretical side, this dissertation outlined and illustrated how relevant institutions – public groups, media and political parties are all engaged in “input-output” policy conversion mechanism. It also offers a perspective how this mechanism affects the actual foreign policy decision-making in the White House (occupied either Democrats or Republican), especially in the example of War in Afghanistan, which is a perfect case to validate the dissertation's hypotheses.

The War in Afghanistan is yet to become the part of contemporary history and there are plenty work to do in order to fully comprehend its significance and impact on the course of history. As the classified materials, as well as more hidden details are about emerge in the future, this research can permanently be revised and renewed in light of present circumstances.

List of Publications:

- Karazanishvili, T., (2017). *Public Mood and Its Influence on US Afghan Policy during G. W. Bush and B. Obama Administrations – G. Almond's Structural-Functional Approach*. 10th International Conference on American Studies. Tbilisi, Georgia. pp. 57-67.
- Karazanishvili, T., (2012). *Limits of U.S. Power in the Current Global World*. Journal of Social Sciences, Volume 1, Issue 1. pp. 44-52.

- Karazanishvili, T., (2012). *Current Challenges and Perspectives of U.S. Global Role in World Affairs*. Proceedings of the 7th Silk Road Conference. Tbilisi-Batumi, Georgia. pp. 393-398.
- Karazanishvili, T., (2010). *Promotion of American Policy in Afghanistan: Challenges and Problems*. Annual International Conference on American Studies. Tbilisi, Georgia. pp. 66-71.